In Search Of The Castaways

by

Jules Verne

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By

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In Search of the Castaways

Jules Verne

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In Search of the Castaways

by Jules Verne

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Note: I have made the following changes to the text:

PAGE	LINE	ORIGINAL	CHANGED TO
5	31	drank	drunk
13	22	shores.	shores."
13	27	Lady Glenarvan.	Lord Glenarvan.
16	29	up ,Halbert."	up, Halbert."
25	13	_sang froid_.	SANG-FROID.
25	26	maneuvring	maneuvering
31	12	unmistakingly	unmistakably
34	19	Celedonian	Caledonian
36	27	France.	France."
40	28	occular	ocular
51	38	exceptions	exception
52	6	prisoniers,	prisonniers,
53	34	reconnoitred	reconnoitered
54	38	Corientes	Corrientes
56	10	Colts	Colt's
63	32	have attempted	would have attempted

67	30	Mount Blanc.	Mont Blanc.
67	36	Nevados	Nevadas
62	38	impassible."	impassable."
83	20	returns	returned
83	38	Cameans,	Camoens,
87	12	Argentile	Argentine
96	25	sore of	sort of
98	26	had drank	had drunk
99	18	Vantana,	Ventana,
100	21	drank	drunk
102	19	minute's	minutes'
103	29	comrades'	comrade's
104	21	them.	them."
104	24	_rio a ramada_	_rio a ramada_
109	21	time.	time."
110	34	wolf	wolf;
112	33	never!	never!"
113	38	RAMADO,	RAMADA,
116	13	drank	drunk
116	15	nandou	NANDOU
118	30	estancias,	ESTANCIAS,
120	28	TOLDERAI,	TOLDERIA,
133	28	fugitive	fugitives
134	21	tumultous	tumultuous
135	21	hilgueros,	HILGUEROS,
144	1	thegonie,	theogonie,
144	30	Glascow	Glasgow
144	36	prisoniers	prisonniers
144	39	aplied	applied
147	15	sub-species.	sub-species."
152	4	aproaching	approaching
153	17	mation.	mation."
156	36	terra firma.	_terra firma_.
159	1	Glenarvan.	Glenarvan,
176	40	Mangle's	Mangles'
178	16	DEBRIS	DEBRIS
180	8	ports	port
187	33	Purday-Moore	Purdy-Moore
190	5	longtitude	longitude
191	37	warning	warring
193	10	DENOUEMENT	DENOUEMENT
195	19	rectillinear	rectilinear
196	31	Pour	"Pour
199	20	shipwrecked.	shipwrecked
200	33	Britany.	Britanny.
202	24	handsbreath.	handsbreadth.
205	16	kow	know
205	39	37 degrees"	37 degrees."
206	42	Glasglow	Glasgow
214	41	ROLE	role
218	10	mounteback's	mountebank's
219	18	day's	days'
222	13	monothremes;	monotremes;
223	21	mleancholy	melancholy
232	35	Glenarvan,	Glenarvan
234	32	able but	ible but
243	10	Pomoton?"	Pomotou?"
243	37	Britanic	Britannic
249	6	McNabb's	McNabbs

250	24	midst.	mist.
251	40	but	"but
253	29	terrestial	terrestrial
256	11	his oasis,	this oasis,
261	28	continuel	continual
268	33	alluvion,	alluvium,
271	26	aerial	aerial
272	3	wagan,	wagon,
272	7	gastralobium,	gastrolobium,
272	34	Wimmero."	Wimmera."
273	37	_sang	_sang-
273	41	wo-	woe-
274	40	two	"two
280	11	disapepared.	disappeared.
281	6	DENOUEMENT	DENOUEMENT
281	13	Joye,	Joyce,
282	29	It it	It is
284	9	sorrrow,	sorrow,
284	23	eurus	emus
287	35	37 degree	37th degree
288	15	_sang froid_	_sang-froid_
312	29	wretches?"	wretches!"
314	24	impassible.	impassive.
316	41	fancy.	fancy."
326	35	impossisble	impossible
327	41	him.	him."
335	27	patience.	patience."
339	15	1864.	1864."
339	41	Tarankai	Taranaki
340	10	Taranak	Taranaki
341	15	Taranki	Taranaki
347	11	Waikato?"	Waikato!"
347	18	buscuit	biscuit
348	30	irrefragable	irrefragible
348	37	musquito.	mosquito.
350	35	Adressing	Addressing
352	42	lines of	line of
356	41	Tohongo,	Tohonga,
357	8	tuers	tures
360	24	McNabb's	McNabbs'
364	20	orgie	orgy
374	5	piron-	Piron-
378	36	Ikana-Mani	Ika-na-Mani
386	41	soup ,which	soup, which
395	10	"moas'	"moas"
402	14	exciting	excited
418	13	JUIN ,1862	JUIN, 1862

On page 390 I have omitted the following redundant line 40,
which properly begins page 391, as in the original text:
and his wonderful instinct shone out anew in this difficult

In addition, I have made the following changes to the chapter headings
and running heads:

PAGE	ORIGINAL	CHANGED TO
24	DUNCAN	"DUNCAN"
25	DUNCAN	"DUNCAN"
27	DUNCAN	"DUNCAN"
35	JAQUES	JACQUES

37	JAQUES	JACQUES
204	BRITANNIA	"BRITANNIA"
398	DUNCAN	"DUNCAN"

WORKS
of
JULES VERNE

EDITED BY

CHARLES F. HORNE, Ph.D.

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NEW ZEALAND 305

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ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME FOUR

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME FOUR

THE three books gathered under the title "In Search of the Castaways" occupied much of Verne's attention during the three years following 1865. The characters used in these books were afterwards reintroduced in "The Mysterious Island," which was in its turn a sequel to "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea." Thus this entire set of books form a united series upon which Verne worked intermittently during ten years.

"In Search of the Castaways," which has also been published as "The Children of Captain Grant" and as "A Voyage Around the World," is perhaps most interesting in connection with the last of these titles. It is our author's first distinctly geographical romance. By an ingenious device he sets before the rescuers a search which compels their circumnavigation of the globe around

a certain parallel of the southern hemisphere. Thus they cross in turn through South America, Australia and New Zealand, besides visiting minor islands.

The three great regions form the sub-titles of the three books which compose the story. In each region the rescuers meet with adventures characteristic of the land. They encounter Indians in America; bushrangers in Australia; and Maoris in New Zealand. The passage of the searching party gives ground,--one is almost tempted to say, excuse,--for a close and careful description of each country and of its inhabitants, step by step. Even the lesser incidents of the story are employed to emphasise the distinctive features of each land. The explorers are almost frozen on the heights of the Andes, and almost drowned in the floods of the Patagonian Pampas. An avalanche sweeps some of them away; a condor carries off a lad. In Australia they are stopped by jungles and by quagmires; they hunt kangaroos. In New Zealand they take refuge amid hot sulphur springs and in a house "tabooed"; they escape by starting a volcano into eruption.

Here then are fancy and extravagance mixed with truth and information. Verne has done a vast and useful work in stimulating the interest not only of Frenchmen but of all civilised nations, with regard to the lesser known regions of our globe. He has broadened knowledge and guided study. During the years following 1865 he even, for a time, deserted his favorite field of labor, fiction, and devoted himself to a popular semi-scientific book, now superseded by later works, entitled "The Illustrated Geography of France and her Colonies."

Verne has perhaps had a larger share than any other single individual in causing the ever-increasing yearly tide of international travel. And because with mutual knowledge among the nations comes mutual understanding and appreciation, mutual brotherhood; hence Jules Verne was one of the first and greatest of those teachers who are now leading us toward International Peace.

In Search of the Castaways

or

The Children of Captain Grant

South America

CHAPTER I THE SHARK

ON the 26th of July, 1864, a magnificent yacht was steaming along the North Channel at full speed, with a strong breeze blowing from the N. E. The Union Jack was flying at the mizzen-mast, and a blue standard bearing the initials E. G., embroidered in gold, and surmounted by a ducal coronet, floated from the topgallant head of the main-mast. The name of the yacht was the DUNCAN, and the owner was Lord Glenarvan, one of the sixteen Scotch peers who sit in the Upper House, and the most distinguished member of the Royal Thames Yacht Club, so famous throughout the United Kingdom.

Lord Edward Glenarvan was on board with his young wife, Lady Helena, and one of his cousins, Major McNabbs.

The DUNCAN was newly built, and had been making a trial trip a few miles outside the Firth of Clyde. She was returning to Glasgow, and the Isle of Arran already loomed in the distance, when the sailor on watch caught sight of an enormous fish sporting in the wake of the ship. Lord Edward, who was immediately apprised of the fact, came up on the poop a few minutes after with his cousin, and asked John Mangles, the captain, what sort of an animal he thought it was.

"Well, since your Lordship asks my opinion," said Mangles, "I think it is a shark, and a fine large one too."

"A shark on these shores!"

"There is nothing at all improbable in that," returned the captain. "This fish belongs to a species that is found in all latitudes and in all seas. It is the 'balance-fish,' or hammer-headed shark, if I am not much mistaken. But if your Lordship has no objections, and it would give the smallest pleasure to Lady Helena to see a novelty in the way of fishing, we'll soon haul up the monster and find out what it really is."

"What do you say, McNabbs? Shall we try to catch it?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

"If you like; it's all one to me," was his cousin's cool reply.

"The more of those terrible creatures that are killed the better, at all events," said John Mangles, "so let's seize the chance, and it will not only give us a little diversion, but be doing a good action."

"Very well, set to work, then," said Glenarvan.

Lady Helena soon joined her husband on deck, quite charmed at the prospect of such exciting sport. The sea was splendid, and every movement of the shark was distinctly visible. In obedience to the captain's orders, the sailors threw a strong rope over the starboard side of the yacht, with a big hook at the end of it, concealed in a thick lump of bacon. The bait took at once, though the shark was full fifty yards distant. He began to make rapidly for the yacht, beating the waves violently with his fins, and keeping his tail in a perfectly straight line. As he got nearer, his great projecting eyes could be seen inflamed with greed, and his gaping jaws with their quadruple row of teeth. His head was large, and shaped like a double hammer at the end of a handle. John Mangles was right. This was evidently a balance-fish-- the most voracious of all the SQUALIDAE species.

The passengers and sailors on the yacht were watching all the animal's movements with the liveliest interest. He soon came within reach of the bait, turned over on his back to make a good dart at it, and in a second bacon and contents had disappeared. He had hooked himself now, as the tremendous jerk he gave the cable proved, and the sailors began to haul in the monster by means of tackle attached to the mainyard. He struggled desperately, but his captors were prepared for his violence, and had a long rope ready with a slip knot,

which caught his tail and rendered him powerless at once.
In a few minutes more he was hoisted up over the side of the yacht
and thrown on the deck. A man came forward immediately,
hatchet in hand, and approaching him cautiously, with one powerful
stroke cut off his tail.

This ended the business, for there was no longer any fear of the shark.
But, though the sailors' vengeance was satisfied, their curiosity
was not; they knew the brute had no very delicate appetite,
and the contents of his stomach might be worth investigation.
This is the common practice on all ships when a shark is captured, but
Lady Glenarvan declined to be present at such a disgusting exploration,
and withdrew to the cabin again. The fish was still breathing;
it measured ten feet in length, and weighed more than six hundred pounds.
This was nothing extraordinary, for though the hammer-headed shark
is not classed among the most gigantic of the species, it is always
reckoned among the most formidable.

The huge brute was soon ripped up in a very unceremonious fashion.
The hook had fixed right in the stomach, which was found to be
absolutely empty, and the disappointed sailors were just going to throw
the remains overboard, when the boatswain's attention was attracted
by some large object sticking fast in one of the viscera.

"I say! what's this?" he exclaimed.

"That!" replied one of the sailors, "why, it's a piece of rock
the beast swallowed by way of ballast."

"It's just a bottle, neither more nor less, that the fellow has got
in his inside, and couldn't digest," said another of the crew.

"Hold your tongues, all of you!" said Tom Austin, the mate
of the DUNCAN. "Don't you see the animal has been such
an inveterate tippler that he has not only drunk the wine,
but swallowed the bottle?"

"What!" said Lord Glenarvan. "Do you mean to say it is a bottle
that the shark has got in his stomach."

"Ay, it is a bottle, most certainly," replied the boatswain,
"but not just from the cellar."

"Well, Tom, be careful how you take it out," said Lord Glenarvan,
"for bottles found in the sea often contain precious documents."

"Do you think this does?" said Major McNabbs, incredulously.

"It possibly may, at any rate."

"Oh! I'm not saying it doesn't. There may perhaps be some secret in it,"
returned the Major.

"That's just what we're to see," said his cousin. "Well, Tom."

"Here it is," said the mate, holding up a shapeless lump he had managed
to pull out, though with some difficulty.

"Get the filthy thing washed then, and bring it to the cabin."

Tom obeyed, and in a few minutes brought in the bottle and laid it on the table, at which Lord Glenarvan and the Major were sitting ready with the captain, and, of course Lady Helena, for women, they say, are always a little curious. Everything is an event at sea. For a moment they all sat silent, gazing at this frail relic, wondering if it told the tale of sad disaster, or brought some trifling message from a frolic-loving sailor, who had flung it into the sea to amuse himself when he had nothing better to do.

However, the only way to know was to examine the bottle, and Glenarvan set to work without further delay, so carefully and minutely, that he might have been taken for a coroner making an inquest.

He commenced by a close inspection of the outside. The neck was long and slender, and round the thick rim there was still an end of wire hanging, though eaten away with rust. The sides were very thick, and strong enough to bear great pressure. It was evidently of Champagne origin, and the Major said immediately, "That's one of our Clicquot's bottles."

Nobody contradicted him, as he was supposed to know; but Lady Helena exclaimed, "What does it matter about the bottle, if we don't know where it comes from?"

"We shall know that, too, presently, and we may affirm this much already-- it comes from a long way off. Look at those petrifactions all over it, these different substances almost turned to mineral, we might say, through the action of the salt water! This waif had been tossing about in the ocean a long time before the shark swallowed it."

"I quite agree with you," said McNabbs. "I dare say this frail concern has made a long voyage, protected by this strong covering."

"But I want to know where from?" said Lady Glenarvan.

"Wait a little, dear Helena, wait; we must have patience with bottles; but if I am not much mistaken, this one will answer all our questions," replied her husband, beginning to scrape away the hard substances round the neck. Soon the cork made its appearance, but much damaged by the water.

"That's vexing," said Lord Edward, "for if papers are inside, they'll be in a pretty state!"

"It's to be feared they will," said the Major.

"But it is a lucky thing the shark swallowed them, I must say," added Glenarvan, "for the bottle would have sunk to the bottom before long with such a cork as this."

"That's true enough," replied John Mangles, "and yet it would have been better to have fished them up in the open sea. Then we might have found out the road they had come by taking the exact latitude and longitude, and studying the atmospheric and submarine currents; but with such a postman as a shark, that goes against wind and tide, there's no clew whatever to the starting-point."

"We shall see," said Glenarvan, gently taking out the cork.
A strong odor of salt water pervaded the whole saloon,
and Lady Helena asked impatiently: "Well, what is there?"

"I was right!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "I see papers inside.
But I fear it will be impossible to remove them," he added,
"for they appear to have rotted with the damp, and are sticking
to the sides of the bottle."

"Break it," said the Major.

"I would rather preserve the whole if I could."

"No doubt you would," said Lady Helena; "but the contents
are more valuable than the bottle, and we had better sacrifice
the one than the other."

"If your Lordship would simply break off the neck, I think we
might easily withdraw the papers," suggested John Mangles.

"Try it, Edward, try it," said Lady Helena.

Lord Glenarvan was very unwilling, but he found there
was no alternative; the precious bottle must be broken.
They had to get a hammer before this could be done, though,
for the stony material had acquired the hardness of granite.
A few sharp strokes, however, soon shivered it to fragments,
many of which had pieces of paper sticking to them.
These were carefully removed by Lord Glenarvan, and separated
and spread out on the table before the eager gaze of his
wife and friends.

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."

CHAPTER III THE CAPTAIN'S CHILDREN

LORD GLENARVAN'S fortune was enormous, and he spent it entirely in doing good. His kindheartedness was even greater than his generosity, for the one knew no bounds, while the other, of necessity, had its limits. As Lord of Luss and "laird" of Malcolm, he represented his county in the House of Lords; but, with his Jacobite ideas, he did not care much for the favor of the House of Hanover, and he was looked upon coldly by the State party in England, because of the tenacity with which he clung to the traditions of his forefathers, and his energetic resistance to the political encroachments of Southerners. And yet he was not a man behind the times, and there was nothing little or narrow-minded about him; but while always keeping open his ancestral county to progress, he was a true Scotchman at heart, and it was for the honor of Scotland that he competed in the yacht races of the Royal Thames Yacht Club.

Edward Glenarvan was thirty-two years of age. He was tall in person, and had rather stern features; but there was an exceeding sweetness in his look, and a stamp of Highland poetry about his whole bearing. He was known to be brave to excess, and full of daring and chivalry-- a Fer-gus of the nineteenth century; but his goodness excelled every other quality, and he was more charitable than St. Martin himself, for he would have given the whole of his cloak to any of the poor Highlanders.

He had scarcely been married three months, and his bride was Miss Helena Tuffnell, the daughter of William Tuffnell, the great traveler, one of the many victims of geographical science and of the passion for discovery. Miss Helena did not belong to a noble family, but she was Scotch, and that was better than all nobility in the eyes of Lord Glenarvan; and she was, moreover, a charming, high-souled, religious young woman.

Lord Glenarvan did not forget that his wife was the daughter of a great traveler, and he thought it likely that she would inherit her father's predilections. He had the DUNCAN built expressly that he might take his bride to the most beautiful lands in the world, and complete their honeymoon by sailing up the Mediterranean, and through the clustering islands of the Archipelago.

However, Lord Glenarvan had gone now to London. The lives of the shipwrecked men were at stake, and Lady Helena was too much concerned herself about them to grudge her husband's temporary absence. A telegram next day gave hope of his speedy return, but in the evening a letter apprised her of the difficulties his proposition had met with, and the morning after brought another, in which he openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the Admiralty.

Lady Helena began to get anxious as the day wore on. In the evening, when she was sitting alone in her room, Mr. Halbert, the house steward, came in and asked if she would see a young girl and boy that wanted to speak to Lord Glenarvan.

"Some of the country people?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, madame," replied the steward, "I do not know them at all. They came by rail to Balloch, and walked the rest of the way to Luss."

"Tell them to come up, Halbert."

In a few minutes a girl and boy were shown in. They were evidently brother and sister, for the resemblance was unmistakable. The girl was about sixteen years of age; her tired pretty face, and sorrowful eyes, and resigned but courageous look, as well as her neat though poor attire, made a favorable impression. The boy she held by the hand was about twelve, but his face expressed such determination, that he appeared quite his sister's protector.

The girl seemed too shy to utter a word at first, but Lady Helena quickly relieved her embarrassment by saying, with an encouraging smile: "You wish to speak to me, I think?"

"No," replied the boy, in a decided tone; "not to you, but to Lord Glenarvan."

"Excuse him, ma'am," said the girl, with a look at her brother.

"Lord Glenarvan is not at the castle just now," returned Lady Helena; "but I am his wife, and if I can do anything for you--"

"You are Lady Glenarvan?" interrupted the girl.

"I am."

"The wife of Lord Glenarvan, of Malcolm Castle, that put an announcement in the TIMES about the shipwreck of the BRITANNIA?"

"Yes, yes," said Lady Helena, eagerly; "and you?"

"I am Miss Grant, ma'am, and this is my brother."

"Miss Grant, Miss Grant!" exclaimed Lady Helena, drawing the young girl toward her, and taking both her hands and kissing the boy's rosy cheeks.

"What is it you know, ma'am, about the shipwreck? Tell me, is my father living? Shall we ever see him again? Oh, tell me," said the girl, earnestly.

"My dear child," replied Lady Helena. "Heaven forbid that I should answer you lightly such a question; I would not delude you with vain hopes."

"Oh, tell me all, tell me all, ma'am. I'm proof against sorrow. I can bear to hear anything."

"My poor child, there is but a faint hope; but with the help of almighty Heaven it is just possible you may one day see your father once more."

The girl burst into tears, and Robert seized Lady Glenarvan's hand and covered it with kisses.

As soon as they grew calmer they asked a complete string of questions, and Lady Helena recounted the whole story of the document, telling them that their father had been wrecked on the coast of Patagonia, and that he and two sailors, the sole survivors, appeared to have reached the shore, and had written an appeal for help in three languages and committed it to the care of the waves.

During the recital, Robert Grant was devouring the speaker with his eyes, and hanging on her lips. His childish imagination evidently retraced all the scenes of his father's shipwreck. He saw him on the deck of the BRITANNIA, and then struggling with the billows, then clinging to the rocks, and lying at length exhausted on the beach.

More than once he cried out, "Oh, papa! my poor papa!" and pressed close to his sister.

Miss Grant sat silent and motionless, with clasped hands, and all she said when the narration ended, was: "Oh, ma'am, the paper, please!"

"I have not it now, my dear child," replied Lady Helena.

"You haven't it?"

"No. Lord Glenarvan was obliged to take it to London, for the sake of your father; but I have told you all it contained, word for word, and how we managed to make out the complete sense from the fragments of words left--all except the longitude, unfortunately."

"We can do without that," said the boy.

"Yes, Mr. Robert," rejoined Lady Helena, smiling at the child's decided tone. "And so you see, Miss Grant, you know the smallest details now just as well as I do."

"Yes, ma'am, but I should like to have seen my father's writing."

"Well, to-morrow, perhaps, to-morrow, Lord Glenarvan will be back. My husband determined to lay the document before the Lords of the Admiralty, to induce them to send out a ship immediately in search of Captain Grant."

"Is it possible, ma'am," exclaimed the girl, "that you have done that for us?"

"Yes, my dear Miss Grant, and I am expecting Lord Glenarvan back every minute now."

"Oh, ma'am! Heaven bless you and Lord Glenarvan," said the young girl, fervently, overcome with grateful emotion."

"My dear girl, we deserve no thanks; anyone in our place would have done the same. I only trust the hopes we are leading you to entertain may be realized, but till my husband returns, you will remain at the Castle."

"Oh, no, ma'am. I could not abuse the sympathy you show to strangers."

"Strangers, dear child!" interrupted Lady Helena; "you and your brother are not strangers in this house, and I should like Lord Glenarvan to be able on his arrival to tell the children of Captain Grant himself, what is going to be done to rescue their father."

It was impossible to refuse an invitation given with such heart, and Miss Grant and her brother consented to stay till Lord Glenarvan returned.

CHAPTER IV LADY GLENARVAN'S PROPOSAL

LADY HELENA thought it best to say nothing to the children about the fears Lord Glenarvan had expressed in his letters respecting the decisions of the Lords of the Admiralty with regard to the document. Nor did she mention the probable captivity of Captain Grant among the Indians of South America. Why sadden the poor children, and damp their newly cherished hopes? It would not in the least alter the actual state of the case; so not a word was said, and after answering all Miss Grant's questions, Lady Helena began to interrogate in her turn, asking her about her past life and her present circumstances.

It was a touching, simple story she heard in reply, and one which increased her sympathy for the young girl.

Mary and Robert were the captain's only children. Harry Grant lost his wife when Robert was born, and during his long voyages he left his little ones in charge of his cousin, a good old lady. Captain Grant was a fearless sailor. He not only thoroughly understood navigation, but commerce also--a two-fold qualification eminently useful to skippers in the merchant service. He lived in Dundee, in Perthshire, Scotland. His father, a minister of St. Katrine's Church, had given him a thorough education,

as he believed that could never hurt anybody.

Harry's voyages were prosperous from the first, and a few years after Robert was born, he found himself possessed of a considerable fortune.

It was then that he projected the grand scheme which made him popular in Scotland. Like Glenarvan, and a few noble families in the Lowlands, he had no heart for the union with England. In his eyes the interests of his country were not identified with those of the Anglo-Saxons, and to give scope for personal development, he resolved to found an immense Scotch colony on one of the ocean continents. Possibly he might have thought that some day they would achieve their independence, as the United States did--an example doubtless to be followed eventually by Australia and India. But whatever might be his secret motives, such was his dream of colonization. But, as is easily understood, the Government opposed his plans, and put difficulties enough in his way to have killed an ordinary man. But Harry would not be beaten. He appealed to the patriotism of his countrymen, placed his fortune at the service of the cause, built a ship, and manned it with a picked crew, and leaving his children to the care of his old cousin set off to explore the great islands of the Pacific. This was in 1861, and for twelve months, or up to May, 1862, letters were regularly received from him, but no tidings whatever had come since his departure from Callao, in June, and the name of the BRITANNIA never appeared in the Shipping List.

Just at this juncture the old cousin died, and Harry Grant's two children were left alone in the world.

Mary Grant was then only fourteen, but she resolved to face her situation bravely, and to devote herself entirely to her little brother, who was still a mere child. By dint of close economy, combined with tact and prudence, she managed to support and educate him, working day and night, denying herself everything, that she might give him all he needed, watching over him and caring for him like a mother.

The two children were living in this touching manner in Dundee, struggling patiently and courageously with their poverty. Mary thought only of her brother, and indulged in dreams of a prosperous future for him. She had long given up all hope of the BRITANNIA, and was fully persuaded that her father was dead. What, then, was her emotion when she accidentally saw the notice in the TIMES!

She never hesitated for an instant as to the course she should adopt, but determined to go to Dumbartonshire immediately, to learn the best and worst. Even if she were to be told that her father's lifeless body had been found on a distant shore, or in the bottom of some abandoned ship, it would be a relief from incessant doubt and torturing suspense.

She told her brother about the advertisement, and the two children started off together that same day for Perth, where they took the train, and arrived in the evening at Malcolm Castle.

Such was Mary Grant's sorrowful story, and she recounted it in so simple and unaffected a manner, that it was evident she never thought her conduct had been that of a heroine through those long trying years.

But Lady Helena thought it for her, and more than once she put her arms round both the children, and could not restrain her tears.

As for Robert, he seemed to have heard these particulars for the first time. All the while his sister was speaking, he gazed at her with wide-open eyes, only knowing now how much she had done and suffered for him; and, as she ended, he flung himself on her neck, and exclaimed, "Oh, mamma! My dear little mamma!"

It was quite dark by this time, and Lady Helena made the children go to bed, for she knew they must be tired after their journey. They were soon both sound asleep, dreaming of happy days.

After they had retired. Lady Helena sent for Major McNabbs, and told him the incidents of the evening.

"That Mary Grant must be a brave girl," said the Major.

"I only hope my husband will succeed, for the poor children's sake," said his cousin. "It would be terrible for them if he did not."

"He will be sure to succeed, or the Lords of the Admiralty must have hearts harder than Portland stone."

But, notwithstanding McNabbs's assurance, Lady Helena passed the night in great anxiety, and could not close her eyes.

Mary Grant and her brother were up very early next morning, and were walking about in the courtyard when they heard the sound of a carriage approaching. It was Lord Glenarvan; and, almost immediately, Lady Helena and the Major came out to meet him.

Lady Helena flew toward her husband the moment he alighted; but he embraced her silently, and looked gloomy and disappointed--indeed, even furious.

"Well, Edward?" she said; "tell me."

"Well, Helena, dear; those people have no heart!"

"They have refused?"

"Yes. They have refused me a ship! They talked of the millions that had been wasted in search for Franklin, and declared the document was obscure and unintelligible. And, then, they said it was two years now since they were cast away, and there was little chance of finding them. Besides, they would have it that the Indians, who made them prisoners, would have dragged them into the interior, and it was impossible, they said, to hunt all through Patagonia for three men--three Scotchmen; that the search would be vain and perilous, and cost more lives than it saved. In short, they assigned all the reasons that people invent who have made up their minds to refuse. The truth is, they remembered Captain Grant's projects, and that is the secret of the whole affair. So the poor fellow is lost for ever."

"My father! my poor father!" cried Mary Grant, throwing herself on her knees before Lord Glenarvan, who exclaimed in amazement:

"Your father? What? Is this Miss--"

"Yes, Edward," said Lady Helena; "this is Miss Mary Grant and her brother, the two children condemned to orphanage by the cruel Admiralty!"

"Oh! Miss Grant," said Lord Glenarvan, raising the young girl, "if I had known of your presence--"

He said no more, and there was a painful silence in the courtyard, broken only by sobs. No one spoke, but the very attitude of both servants and masters spoke their indignation at the conduct of the English Government.

At last the Major said, addressing Lord Glenarvan: "Then you have no hope whatever?"

"None," was the reply.

"Very well, then," exclaimed little Robert, "I'll go and speak to those people myself, and we'll see if they--" He did not complete his sentence, for his sister stopped him; but his clenched fists showed his intentions were the reverse of pacific.

"No, Robert," said Mary Grant, "we will thank this noble lord and lady for what they have done for us, and never cease to think of them with gratitude; and then we'll both go together."

"Mary!" said Lady Helena, in a tone of surprise.

"Go where?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

"I am going to throw myself at the Queen's feet, and we shall see if she will turn a deaf ear to the prayers of two children, who implore their father's life."

Lord Glenarvan shook his head; not that he doubted the kind heart of her Majesty, but he knew Mary would never gain access to her. Suppliants but too rarely reach the steps of a throne; it seems as if royal palaces had the same inscription on their doors that the English have on their ships: _Passengers are requested not to speak to the man at the wheel_.

Lady Glenarvan understood what was passing in her husband's mind, and she felt the young girl's attempt would be useless, and only plunge the poor children in deeper despair. Suddenly, a grand, generous purpose fired her soul, and she called out:
"Mary Grant! wait, my child, and listen to what I'm going to say."

Mary had just taken her brother by the hand, and turned to go away; but she stepped back at Lady Helena's bidding.

The young wife went up to her husband, and said, with tears in her eyes, though her voice was firm, and her face beamed with animation:
"Edward, when Captain Grant wrote that letter and threw it into the sea, he committed it to the care of God. God has sent it to us--to us! Undoubtedly God intends us to undertake the rescue of these poor men."

"What do you mean, Helena?"

"I mean this, that we ought to think ourselves fortunate if we
can begin our married life with a good action. Well, you know,
Edward, that to please me you planned a pleasure trip;
but what could give us such genuine pleasure, or be so useful,
as to save those unfortunate fellows, cast off by their country?"

"Helena!" exclaimed Lord Glenarvan.

"Yes, Edward, you understand me. The DUNCAN is a good strong ship,
she can venture in the Southern Seas, or go round the world if necessary.
Let us go, Edward; let us start off and search for Captain Grant!"

Lord Glenarvan made no reply to this bold proposition, but smiled,
and, holding out his arms, drew his wife into a close, fond embrace.
Mary and Robert seized her hands, and covered them with kisses;
and the servants who thronged the courtyard, and had been witnesses
of this touching scene, shouted with one voice, "Hurrah for the Lady
of Luss. Three cheers for Lord and Lady Glenarvan!"

CHAPTER V THE DEPARTURE OF THE "DUNCAN"

WE have said already that Lady Helena was a brave, generous woman,
and what she had just done proved it in-disputably. Her husband
had good reason to be proud of such a wife, one who could
understand and enter into all his views. The idea of going
to Captain Grant's rescue had occurred to him in London when his
request was refused, and he would have anticipated Lady Helena,
only he could not bear the thought of parting from her.
But now that she herself proposed to go, all hesitation was at an end.
The servants of the Castle had hailed the project with loud acclamations--
for it was to save their brothers--Scotchmen, like themselves--
and Lord Glenarvan cordially joined his cheers with theirs,
for the Lady of Luss.

The departure once resolved upon, there was not an hour to be lost.
A telegram was dispatched to John Mangles the very same day,
conveying Lord Glenarvan's orders to take the DUNCAN immediately
to Glasgow, and to make preparations for a voyage to the Southern Seas,
and possibly round the world, for Lady Helena was right in her
opinion that the yacht might safely attempt the circumnavigation
of the globe, if necessary.

The DUNCAN was a steam yacht of the finest description.
She was 210 tons burden--much larger than any of the first
vessels that touched the shores of the New World, for the largest
of the four ships that sailed with Columbus was only 70 tons.
She had two masts and all the sails and rigging of an ordinary clipper,
which would enable her to take advantage of every favorable wind,
though her chief reliance was on her mechanical power. The engine,
which was constructed on a new system, was a high-pressure one,
of 160-horse power, and put in motion a double screw.
This gave the yacht such swiftness that during her trial
trip in the Firth of Clyde, she made seventeen miles
an hour, a higher speed than any vessel had yet attained.
No alterations were consequently needed in the DUNCAN herself;
John Mangles had only to attend to her interior arrangements.

His first care was to enlarge the bunkers to carry as much coal
as possible, for it is difficult to get fresh supplies _en route_.
He had to do the same with the store-rooms, and managed so well
that he succeeded in laying in provisions enough for two years.
There was abundance of money at his command, and enough remained to buy
a cannon, on a pivot carriage, which he mounted on the forecastle.
There was no knowing what might happen, and it is always well to be
able to send a good round bullet flying four miles off.

John Mangles understood his business. Though he was only
the captain of a pleasure yacht, he was one of the best skippers
in Glasgow. He was thirty years of age, and his countenance expressed
both courage and goodness, if the features were somewhat coarse.
He had been brought up at the castle by the Glenarvan family,
and had turned out a capital sailor, having already given proof,
in some of his long voyages, of his skill and energy and _sang-froid_.
When Lord Glenarvan offered him the command of the DUNCAN, he accepted
it with right good will, for he loved the master of Malcolm Castle,
like a brother, and had hitherto vainly sought some opportunity
of showing his devotion.

Tom Austin, the mate, was an old sailor, worthy of all confidence.
The crew, consisting of twenty-five men, including the captain
and chief officer, were all from Dumbartonshire, experienced sailors,
and all belonging to the Glenarvan estate; in fact, it was a regular clan,
and they did not forget to carry with them the traditional bagpipes.
Lord Glenarvan had in them a band of trusty fellows, skilled in their
calling, devoted to himself, full of courage, and as practiced in handling
fire-arms as in the maneuvering of a ship; a valiant little troop,
ready to follow him any where, even in the most dangerous expeditions.
When the crew heard whither they were bound, they could not restrain
their enthusiasm, and the rocks of Dumbarton rang again with their joyous
outbursts of cheers.

But while John Mangles made the stowage and provisioning
of the yacht his chief business, he did not forget to fit
up the rooms of Lord and Lady Glenarvan for a long voyage.
He had also to get cabins ready for the children of Captain Grant,
as Lady Helena could not refuse Mary's request to accompany her.

As for young Robert, he would have smuggled himself in somewhere
in the hold of the DUNCAN rather than be left behind. He would
willingly have gone as cabin-boy, like Nelson. It was impossible
to resist a little fellow like that, and, indeed, no one tried.
He would not even go as a passenger, but must serve in some capacity,
as cabin-boy, apprentice or sailor, he did not care which,
so he was put in charge of John Mangles, to be properly trained
for his vocation.

"And I hope he won't spare me the 'cat-o-nine-tails' if I don't
do properly," said Robert.

"Rest easy on that score, my boy," said Lord Glenarvan, gravely; he did
not add, that this mode of punishment was forbidden on board the DUNCAN,
and moreover, was quite unnecessary.

To complete the roll of passengers, we must name Major McNabbs. The Major
was about fifty years of age, with a calm face and regular features--a man
who did whatever he was told, of an excellent, indeed, a perfect temper;

modest, silent, peaceable, and amiable, agreeing with everybody on every subject, never discussing, never disputing, never getting angry. He wouldn't move a step quicker, or slower, whether he walked upstairs to bed or mounted a breach. Nothing could excite him, nothing could disturb him, not even a cannon ball, and no doubt he will die without ever having known even a passing feeling of irritation.

This man was endowed in an eminent degree, not only with ordinary animal courage, that physical bravery of the battle-field, which is solely due to muscular energy, but he had what is far nobler--moral courage, firmness of soul. If he had any fault it was his being so intensely Scotch from top to toe, a Caledonian of the Caledonians, an obstinate stickler for all the ancient customs of his country. This was the reason he would never serve in England, and he gained his rank of Major in the 42nd regiment, the Highland Black Watch, composed entirely of Scotch noblemen.

As a cousin of Glenarvan, he lived in Malcolm Castle, and as a major he went as a matter of course with the DUNCAN.

Such, then, was the PERSONNEL of this yacht, so unexpectedly called to make one of the most wonderful voyages of modern times. From the hour she reached the steamboat quay at Glasgow, she completely monopolized the public attention. A considerable crowd visited her every day, and the DUNCAN was the one topic of interest and conversation, to the great vexation of the different captains in the port, among others of Captain Burton, in command of the SCOTIA, a magnificent steamer lying close beside her, and bound for Calcutta. Considering her size, the SCOTIA might justly look upon the DUNCAN as a mere fly-boat, and yet this pleasure yacht of Lord Glenarvan was quite the center of attraction, and the excitement about her daily increased.

The DUNCAN was to sail out with the tide at three o'clock on the morning of the 25th of August. But before starting, a touching ceremony was witnessed by the good people of Glasgow. At eight o'clock the night before, Lord Glenarvan and his friends, and the entire crew, from the stokers to the captain, all who were to take part in this self-sacrificing voyage, left the yacht and repaired to St. Mungo's, the ancient cathedral of the city. This venerable edifice, so marvelously described by Walter Scott, remains intact amid the ruins made by the Reformation; and it was there, beneath its lofty arches, in the grand nave, in the presence of an immense crowd, and surrounded by tombs as thickly set as in a cemetery, that they all assembled to implore the blessing of Heaven on their expedition, and to put themselves under the protection of Providence. The Rev. Mr. Morton conducted the service, and when he had ended and pronounced the benediction, a young girl's voice broke the solemn silence that followed. It was Mary Grant who poured out her heart to God in prayer for her benefactors, while grateful happy tears streamed down her cheeks, and almost choked her utterance. The vast assembly dispersed under the influence of deep emotion, and at ten o'clock the passengers and crew returned on board the vessel.

CHAPTER VI AN UNEXPECTED PASSENGER

THE ladies passed the whole of the first day of the voyage in their berths, for there was a heavy swell in the sea, and toward evening the wind blew pretty fresh, and the DUNCAN tossed and pitched considerably.

But the morning after, the wind changed, and the captain ordered the men to put up the foresail, and brigantine and foretopsail, which greatly lessened the rolling of the vessel.
Lady Helena and Mary Grant were able to come on deck at daybreak, where they found Lord Glenarvan, Major McNabbs and the captain.

"And how do you stand the sea, Miss Mary?" said Lord Glenarvan.

"Pretty well, my Lord. I am not very much inconvenienced by it. Besides I shall get used to it."

"And our young Robert!"

"Oh, as for Robert," said the captain, "whenever he is not poking about down below in the engine-room, he is perched somewhere aloft among the rigging. A youngster like that laughs at sea-sickness. Why, look at him this very moment! Do you see him?"

The captain pointed toward the foremast, and sure enough there was Robert, hanging on the yards of the topgallant mast, a hundred feet above in the air. Mary involuntarily gave a start, but the captain said:

"Oh, don't be afraid, Miss Mary; he is all right, take my word for it; I'll have a capital sailor to present to Captain Grant before long, for we'll find the worthy captain, depend upon it."

"Heaven grant it, Mr. John," replied the young girl.

"My dear child," said Lord Glenarvan, "there is something so providential in the whole affair, that we have every reason to hope. We are not going, we are led; we are not searching, we are guided. And then see all the brave men that have enlisted in the service of the good cause. We shall not only succeed in our enterprise, but there will be little difficulty in it. I promised Lady Helena a pleasure trip, and I am much mistaken if I don't keep my word."

"Edward," said his wife, "you are the best of men."

"Not at all," was the reply; "but I have the best of crews and the best of ships. You don't admire the DUNCAN, I suppose, Miss Mary?"

"On the contrary, my lord, I do admire her, and I'm a connoisseur in ships," returned the young girl.

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have played all my life on my father's ships. He should have made me a sailor, for I dare say, at a push, I could reef a sail or plait a gasket easily enough."

"Do you say so, miss?" exclaimed John Mangles.

"If you talk like that you and John will be great friends,
for he can't think any calling is equal to that of a seaman;
he can't fancy any other, even for a woman. Isn't it true, John?"

"Quite so," said the captain, "and yet, your Lordship, I must confess
that Miss Grant is more in her place on the poop than reefing a topsail.
But for all that, I am quite flattered by her remarks."

"And especially when she admires the DUNCAN," replied Glenarvan.

"Well, really," said Lady Glenarvan, "you are so proud of your yacht
that you make me wish to look all over it; and I should like to go
down and see how our brave men are lodged."

"Their quarters are first-rate," replied John, "they are as comfortable
as if they were at home."

"And they really are at home, my dear Helena,"
said Lord Glenarvan. "This yacht is a portion of our old Caledonia,
a fragment of Dumbartonshire, making a voyage by special favor,
so that in a manner we are still in our own country.
The DUNCAN is Malcolm Castle, and the ocean is Loch Lomond."

"Very well, dear Edward, do the honors of the Castle then."

"At your service, madam; but let me tell Olbinett first."

The steward of the yacht was an excellent _maitre d'hotel_,
and might have been French for his airs of importance, but for all
that he discharged his functions with zeal and intelligence.

"Olbinett," said his master, as he appeared in answer to
his summons, "we are going to have a turn before breakfast.
I hope we shall find it ready when we come back."

He said this just as if it had been a walk to Tarbert or Loch Katrine
they were going, and the steward bowed with perfect gravity in reply.

"Are you coming with us, Major?" asked Lady Helena.

"If you command me," replied McNabbs.

"Oh!" said Lord Glenarvan; "the Major is absorbed in his cigar;
"you mustn't tear him from it. He is an inveterate smoker,
Miss Mary, I can tell you. He is always smoking, even while he sleeps."

The Major gave an assenting nod, and Lord Glenarvan and his
party went below.

McNabbs remained alone, talking to himself, as was his habit,
and was soon enveloped in still thicker clouds of smoke.
He stood motionless, watching the track of the yacht.
After some minutes of this silent contemplation he turned round,
and suddenly found himself face to face with a new comer.
Certainly, if any thing could have surprised him, this RENCONTRE would,
for he had never seen the stranger in his life before.

He was a tall, thin, withered-looking man, about forty years
of age, and resembled a long nail with a big head. His head

was large and massive, his forehead high, his chin very marked.
His eyes were concealed by enormous round spectacles, and in his
look was that peculiar indecision which is common to nyctalopes,
or people who have a peculiar construction of the eye,
which makes the sight imperfect in the day and better at night.
It was evident from his physiognomy that he was a lively,
intelligent man; he had not the crabbed expression of those grave
individuals who never laugh on principle, and cover their
emptiness with a mask of seriousness. He looked far from that.
His careless, good-humored air, and easy, unceremonious manners,
showed plainly that he knew how to take men and things on their
bright side. But though he had not yet opened his mouth,
he gave one the impression of being a great talker, and moreover,
one of those absent folks who neither see though they are looking,
nor hear though they are listening. He wore a traveling cap,
and strong, low, yellow boots with leather gaiters.
His pantaloons and jacket were of brown velvet, and their
innumerable pockets were stuffed with note-books, memorandum-books,
account-books, pocket-books, and a thousand other things equally
cumbersome and useless, not to mention a telescope in addition,
which he carried in a shoulder-belt.

The stranger's excitement was a strong contrast to the Major's placidity.
He walked round McNabbs, looking at him and questioning him with his
eyes without eliciting one remark from the imperturbable Scotchman,
or awakening his curiosity in the least, to know where he came from,
and where he was going, and how he had got on board the DUNCAN.

Finding all his efforts baffled by the Major's indifference,
the mysterious passenger seized his telescope, drew it out
to its fullest extent, about four feet, and began gazing at
the horizon, standing motionless with his legs wide apart.
His examination lasted some few minutes, and then he lowered
the glass, set it up on deck, and leaned on it as if it had been
a walking-stick. Of course, his weight shut up the instrument
immediately by pushing the different parts one into the other,
and so suddenly, that he fell full length on deck, and lay
sprawling at the foot of the mainmast.

Any one else but the Major would have smiled, at least,
at such a ludicrous sight; but McNabbs never moved a muscle
of his face.

This was too much for the stranger, and he called out,
with an unmistakably foreign accent:

"Steward!"

He waited a minute, but nobody appeared, and he called again,
still louder, "Steward!"

Mr. Olbinett chanced to be passing that minute on his way from the galley,
and what was his astonishment at hearing himself addressed like this
by a lanky individual of whom he had no knowledge whatever.

"Where can he have come from? Who is he?" he thought to himself.
"He can not possibly be one of Lord Glenarvan's friends?"

However, he went up on the poop, and approached the unknown personage,

who accosted him with the inquiry, "Are you the steward of this vessel? "

"Yes, sir," replied Olbinett; "but I have not the honor of--"

"I am the passenger in cabin Number 6."

"Number 6!" repeated the steward.

"Certainly; and your name, what is it?"

"Olbinett."

"Well, Olbinett, my friend, we must think of breakfast, and that pretty quickly. It is thirty-six hours since I have had anything to eat, or rather thirty-six hours that I have been asleep-- pardonable enough in a man who came all the way, without stopping, from Paris to Glasgow. What is the breakfast hour?"

"Nine o'clock," replied Olbinett, mechanically.

The stranger tried to pull out his watch to see the time; but it was not till he had rummaged through the ninth pocket that he found it.

"Ah, well," he said, "it is only eight o'clock at present. Fetch me a glass of sherry and a biscuit while I am waiting, for I am actually falling through sheer inanition."

Olbinett heard him without understanding what he meant for the voluble stranger kept on talking incessantly, flying from one subject to another.

"The captain? Isn't the captain up yet? And the chief officer? What is he doing? Is he asleep still? It is fine weather, fortunately, and the wind is favorable, and the ship goes all alone."

Just at that moment John Mangles appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Here is the captain!" said Olbinett.

"Ah! delighted, Captain Burton, delighted to make your acquaintance," exclaimed the unknown.

John Mangles stood stupefied, as much at seeing the stranger on board as at hearing himself called "Captain Burton."

But the new comer went on in the most affable manner.

"Allow me to shake hands with you, sir; and if I did not do so yesterday evening, it was only because I did not wish to be troublesome when you were starting. But to-day, captain, it gives me great pleasure to begin my intercourse with you."

John Mangles opened his eyes as wide as possible, and stood staring at Olbinett and the stranger alternately.

But without waiting for a reply, the rattling fellow continued:

"Now the introduction is made, my dear captain, we are old friends. Let's have a little talk, and tell me how you like the SCOTIA?"

"What do you mean by the SCOTIA?" put in John Mangles at last.

"By the SCOTIA? Why, the ship we're on, of course--a good ship
that has been commended to me, not only for its physical qualities,
but also for the moral qualities of its commander, the brave
Captain Burton. You will be some relation of the famous
African traveler of that name. A daring man he was, sir.
I offer you my congratulations."

"Sir," interrupted John. "I am not only no relation of Burton
the great traveler, but I am not even Captain Burton."

"Ah, is that so? It is Mr. Burdness, the chief officer,
that I am talking to at present."

"Mr. Burdness!" repeated John Mangles, beginning to
suspect how the matter stood. Only he asked himself
whether the man was mad, or some heedless rattle pate?
He was beginning to explain the case in a categorical manner,
when Lord Glenarvan and his party came up on the poop.
The stranger caught sight of them directly, and exclaimed:

"Ah! the passengers, the passengers! I hope you are going to introduce
me to them, Mr. Burdness!"

But he could not wait for any one's intervention, and going up to them
with perfect ease and grace, said, bowing to Miss Grant, "Madame;" then
to Lady Helena, with another bow, "Miss;" and to Lord Glenarvan, "Sir."

Here John Mangles interrupted him, and said, "Lord Glenarvan."

"My Lord," continued the unknown, "I beg pardon for presenting myself
to you, but at sea it is well to relax the strict rules of etiquette
a little. I hope we shall soon become acquainted with each other,
and that the company of these ladies will make our voyage in the SCOTIA
appear as short as agreeable."

Lady Helena and Miss Grant were too astonished to be able to utter
a single word. The presence of this intruder on the poop of the DUNCAN
was perfectly inexplicable.

Lord Glenarvan was more collected, and said, "Sir, to whom have I
the honor of speaking?"

"To Jacques Eliacin Francois Marie Paganel, Secretary of the
Geographical Society of Paris, Corresponding Member of the Societies
of Berlin, Bombay, Darmstadt, Leipsic, London, St. Petersburg, Vienna,
and New York; Honorary Member of the Royal Geographical and
Ethnographical Institute of the East Indies; who, after having
spent twenty years of his life in geographical work in the study,
wishes to see active service, and is on his way to India to gain
for the science what information he can by following up the footsteps
of great travelers."

CHAPTER VII JACQUES PAGANEL IS UNDECEIVED

THE Secretary of the Geographical Society was evidently an amiable personage, for all this was said in a most charming manner. Lord Glenarvan knew quite well who he was now, for he had often heard Paganel spoken of, and was aware of his merits. His geographical works, his papers on modern discoveries, inserted in the reports of the Society, and his world-wide correspondence, gave him a most distinguished place among the LITERATI of France.

Lord Glenarvan could not but welcome such a guest, and shook hands cordially.

"And now that our introductions are over," he added, "you will allow me, Monsieur Paganel, to ask you a question?"

"Twenty, my Lord, " replied Paganel; "it will always be a pleasure to converse with you."

"Was it last evening that you came on board this vessel?"

"Yes, my Lord, about 8 o'clock. I jumped into a cab at the Caledonian Railway, and from the cab into the SCOTIA, where I had booked my cabin before I left Paris. It was a dark night, and I saw no one on board, so I found cabin No. 6, and went to my berth immediately, for I had heard that the best way to prevent sea-sickness is to go to bed as soon as you start, and not to stir for the first few days; and, moreover, I had been traveling for thirty hours. So I tucked myself in, and slept conscientiously, I assure you, for thirty-six hours."

Paganel's listeners understood the whole mystery, now, of his presence on the DUNCAN. The French traveler had mistaken his vessel, and gone on board while the crew were attending the service at St. Mungo's. All was explained. But what would the learned geographer say, when he heard the name and destination of the ship, in which he had taken passage?

"Then it is Calcutta, M. Paganel, that you have chosen as your point of departure on your travels?"

"Yes, my Lord, to see India has been a cherished purpose with me all my life. It will be the realization of my fondest dreams, to find myself in the country of elephants and Thugs."

"Then it would be by no means a matter of indifference to you, to visit another country instead."

"No, my Lord; indeed it would be very disagreeable, for I have letters from Lord Somerset, the Governor-General, and also a commission to execute for the Geographical Society."

"Ah, you have a commission."

"Yes, I have to attempt a curious and important journey, the plan of which has been drawn up by my learned friend and colleague, M. Vivien de Saint Martin. I am to pursue the track of the Schlaginweit Brothers; and Colonels Waugh and Webb, and Hodgson; and Huc and Gabet, the missionaries;

and Moorecroft and M. Jules Remy, and so many celebrated travelers.
I mean to try and succeed where Krick, the missionary
so unfortunately failed in 1846; in a word, I want to follow
the course of the river Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou, which waters Thibet
for a distance of 1500 kilometres, flowing along the northern
base of the Himalayas, and to find out at last whether this
river does not join itself to the Brahmapoutre in the northeast
of As-sam. The gold medal, my Lord, is promised to the traveler
who will succeed in ascertaining a fact which is one of the greatest
DESIDERATA to the geography of India."

Paganel was magnificent. He spoke with superb animation, soaring away
on the wings of imagination. It would have been as impossible to stop
him as to stop the Rhine at the Falls of Schaffhausen.

"Monsieur Jacques Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, after a
brief pause, "that would certainly be a grand achievement,
and you would confer a great boon on science, but I should not
like to allow you to be laboring under a mistake any longer,
and I must tell you, therefore, that for the present at least,
you must give up the pleasure of a visit to India."

"Give it up. And why?"

"Because you are turning your back on the Indian peninsula."

"What! Captain Burton."

"I am not Captain Burton," said John Mangles.

"But the SCOTIA."

"This vessel is not the SCOTIA."

It would be impossible to depict the astonishment of Paganel. He stared
first at one and then at another in the utmost bewilderment.

Lord Glenarvan was perfectly grave, and Lady Helena and Mary showed their
sympathy for his vexation by their looks. As for John Mangles, he could
not suppress a smile; but the Major appeared as unconcerned as usual.
At last the poor fellow shrugged his shoulders, pushed down his spectacles
over his nose and said:

"You are joking."

But just at that very moment his eye fell on the wheel of the ship,
and he saw the two words on it:

Duncan.
Glasgow.

"The DUNCAN! the DUNCAN!" he exclaimed, with a cry of despair,
and forthwith rushed down the stairs, and away to his cabin.

As soon as the unfortunate SAVANT had disappeared, every one,
except the Major, broke out into such peals of laughter that
the sound reached the ears of the sailors in the forecastle.
To mistake a railway or to take the train to Edinburgh when you
want to go to Dumbarton might happen; but to mistake a ship
and be sailing for Chili when you meant to go to India--

that is a blunder indeed!

"However," said Lord Glenarvan, "I am not much astonished
at it in Paganel. He is quite famous for such misadventures.
One day he published a celebrated map of America, and put Japan in it!
But for all that, he is distinguished for his learning,
and he is one of the best geographers in France."

"But what shall we do with the poor gentleman?" said Lady Helena;
"we can't take him with us to Patagonia."

"Why not?" replied McNabbs, gravely. "We are not responsible
for his heedless mistakes. Suppose he were in a railway train,
would they stop it for him?"

"No, but he would get out at the first station."

"Well, that is just what he can do here, too, if he likes;
he can disembark at the first place where we touch."

While they were talking, Paganel came up again on the poop,
looking very woebegone and crestfallen. He had been making
inquiry about his luggage, to assure himself that it was all
on board, and kept repeating incessantly the unlucky words,
"The DUNCAN! the DUNCAN!"

He could find no others in his vocabulary. He paced restlessly
up and down; sometimes stopping to examine the sails,
or gaze inquiringly over the wide ocean, at the far horizon.
At length he accosted Lord Glenarvan once more, and said--

"And this DUNCAN--where is she going?"

"To America, Monsieur Paganel," was the reply.

"And to what particular part?"

"To Concepcion."

"To Chili! to Chili!" cried the unfortunate geographer.
"And my mission to India. But what will M. de Quatre-fages,
the President of the Central Commission, say?
And M. d' Avezac? And M. Cortanbert? And M. Vivien de
Saint Martin? How shall I show my face at the SEANCES
of the Society?"

"Come, Monsieur Paganel, don't despair. It can all be managed;
you will only have to put up with a little delay, which is relatively
of not much importance. The Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou will wait for you
still in the mountains of Thibet. We shall soon put in at Madeira,
and you will get a ship there to take you back to Europe."

"Thanks, my Lord. I suppose I must resign myself to it;
but people will say it is a most extraordinary adventure,
and it is only to me such things happen. And then, too, there is
a cabin taken for me on board the SCOTIA."

"Oh, as to the SCOTIA, you'll have to give that up meantime."

"But the DUNCAN is a pleasure yacht, is it not?" began Paganel again,
after a fresh examination of the vessel.

"Yes, sir," said John Mangles, "and belongs to Lord Glenarvan."

"Who begs you will draw freely on his hospitality," said Lord Glenarvan.

"A thousand thanks, my Lord! I deeply feel your courtesy,
but allow me to make one observation: India is a fine country,
and can offer many a surprising marvel to travelers.
These ladies, I suppose, have never seen it. Well now,
the man at the helm has only to give a turn at the wheel,
and the DUNCAN will sail as easily to Calcutta as to Concepcion;
and since it is only a pleasure trip that you are--"

His proposal was met by such grave, disapproving shakes of the head,
that he stopped short before the sentence was completed;
and Lady Helena said:

"Monsieur Paganel, if we were only on a pleasure trip, I should reply,
'Let us all go to India together,' and I am sure Lord Glenarvan would
not object; but the DUNCAN is going to bring back shipwrecked mariners
who were cast away on the shores of Patagonia, and we could not alter
such a destination."

The Frenchman was soon put in possession of all the circumstances
of the case. He was no unmoved auditor, and when he heard
of Lady Helena's generous proposition, he could not help saying,

"Madame, permit me to express my admiration of your conduct throughout--
my unreserved admiration. Let your yacht continue her course.
I should reproach myself were I to cause a single day's delay."

"Will you join us in our search, then?" asked Lady Helena.

"It is impossible, madame. I must fulfill my mission.
I shall disembark at the first place you touch at,
wherever it may be."

"That will be Madeira," said John Mangles.

"Madeira be it then. I shall only be 180 leagues from Lisbon,
and I shall wait there for some means of transport."

"Very well, Monsieur Paganel, it shall be as you wish; and, for my
own part, I am very glad to be able to offer you, meantime,
a few days' hospitality. I only hope you will not find our
company too dull."

"Oh, my Lord," exclaimed Paganel, "I am but too happy
to have made a mistake which has turned out so agreeably.
Still, it is a very ridiculous plight for a man to be in,
to find himself sailing to America when he set out to go
to the East Indies!"

But in spite of this melancholy reflection, the Frenchman submitted
gracefully to the compulsory delay. He made himself amiable and merry,
and even diverting, and enchanted the ladies with his good humor.
Before the end of the day he was friends with everybody.

At his request, the famous document was brought out.
He studied it carefully and minutely for a long time, and finally
declared his opinion that no other interpretation of it was possible.
Mary Grant and her brother inspired him with the most lively interest.
He gave them great hope; indeed, the young girl could not help
smiling at his sanguine prediction of success, and this odd way
of foreseeing future events. But for his mission he would have made
one of the search party for Captain Grant, undoubtedly.

As for Lady Helena, when he heard that she was a daughter of
William Tuffnell, there was a perfect explosion of admiring epithets.
He had known her father, and what letters had passed between them
when William Tuffnell was a corresponding member of the Society! It was
he himself that had introduced him and M. Malte Brun. What a _rencontre_
this was, and what a pleasure to travel with the daughter of Tuffnell.

He wound up by asking permission to kiss her, which Lady Helena granted,
though it was, perhaps, a little improper.

CHAPTER VIII THE GEOGRAPHER'S RESOLUTION

MEANTIME the yacht, favored by the currents from the north
of Africa, was making rapid progress toward the equator.
On the 30th of August they sighted the Madeira group of islands,
and Glenarvan, true to his promise, offered to put in there,
and land his new guest.

But Paganel said:

"My dear Lord, I won't stand on ceremony with you. Tell me,
did you intend to stop at Madeira before I came on board?"

"No," replied Glenarvan.

"Well, then, allow me to profit by my unlucky mistake. Madeira is
an island too well known to be of much interest now to a geographer.
Every thing about this group has been said and written already.
Besides, it is completely going down as far as wine growing is concerned.
Just imagine no vines to speak of being in Madeira! In 1813,
22,000 pipes of wine were made there, and in 1845 the number fell
to 2,669. It is a grievous spectacle! If it is all the same to you,
we might go on to the Canary Isles instead."

"Certainly. It will not the least interfere with our route."

"I know it will not, my dear Lord. In the Canary Islands, you see,
there are three groups to study, besides the Peak of Teneriffe,
which I always wished to visit. This is an opportunity,
and I should like to avail myself of it, and make the ascent
of the famous mountain while I am waiting for a ship to take
me back to Europe."

"As you please, my dear Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, though he could
not help smiling; and no wonder, for these islands are scarcely 250
miles from Madeira, a trifling distance for such a quick sailer
as the DUNCAN.

Next day, about 2 P. M., John Mangles and Paganel were walking on the poop. The Frenchman was assailing his companion with all sorts of questions about Chili, when all at once the captain interrupted him, and pointing toward the southern horizon, said:

"Monsieur Paganel?"

"Yes, my dear Captain."

"Be so good as to look in this direction. Don't you see anything?"

"Nothing."

"You're not looking in the right place. It is not on the horizon, but above it in the clouds."

"In the clouds? I might well not see."

"There, there, by the upper end of the bowsprit."

"I see nothing."

"Then you don't want to see. Anyway, though we are forty miles off, yet I tell you the Peak of Teneriffe is quite visible yonder above the horizon."

But whether Paganel could not or would not see it then, two hours later he was forced to yield to ocular evidence or own himself blind.

"You do see it at last, then," said John Mangles.

"Yes, yes, distinctly," replied Paganel, adding in a disdainful tone, "and that's what they call the Peak of Teneriffe!"

"That's the Peak."

"It doesn't look much of a height."

"It is 11,000 feet, though, above the level of the sea."

"That is not equal to Mont Blanc."

"Likely enough, but when you come to ascend it, probably you'll think it high enough."

"Oh, ascend it! ascend it, my dear captain! What would be the good after Humboldt and Bonplan? That Humboldt was a great genius. He made the ascent of this mountain, and has given a description of it which leaves nothing unsaid. He tells us that it comprises five different zones--the zone of the vines, the zone of the laurels, the zone of the pines, the zone of the Alpine heaths, and, lastly, the zone of sterility. He set his foot on the very summit, and found that there was not even room enough to sit down. The view from the summit was very extensive, stretching over an area equal to Spain. Then he went right down into the volcano, and examined the extinct crater. What could I do, I should like you to tell me, after that great man?"

"Well, certainly, there isn't much left to glean.

That is vexing, too, for you would find it dull work waiting
for a vessel in the Peak of Teneriffe."

"But, I say, Mangles, my dear fellow, are there no ports
in the Cape Verde Islands that we might touch at?"

"Oh, yes, nothing would be easier than putting you off at Villa Praya."

"And then I should have one advantage, which is by no
means inconsiderable--I should find fellow-countrymen
at Senegal, and that is not far away from those islands.
I am quite aware that the group is said to be devoid
of much interest, and wild, and unhealthy; but everything
is curious in the eyes of a geographer. Seeing is a science.
There are people who do not know how to use their eyes,
and who travel about with as much intelligence as a shell-fish.
But that's not in my line, I assure you."

"Please yourself, Monsieur Paganel. I have no doubt geographical science
will be a gainer by your sojourn in the Cape Verde Islands. We must
go in there anyhow for coal, so your disembarkation will not occasion
the least delay."

The captain gave immediate orders for the yacht to continue her route,
steering to the west of the Canary group, and leaving Teneriffe on
her larboard. She made rapid progress, and passed the Tropic of Cancer
on the second of September at 5 A. M.

The weather now began to change, and the atmosphere became damp
and heavy. It was the rainy season, "_le tempo das aguas_,"
as the Spanish call it, a trying season to travelers, but useful
to the inhabitants of the African Islands, who lack trees and
consequently water. The rough weather prevented the passengers
from going on deck, but did not make the conversation any less
animated in the saloon.

On the 3d of September Paganel began to collect his luggage
to go on shore. The DUNCAN was already steaming among
the Islands. She passed Sal, a complete tomb of sand lying
barren and desolate, and went on among the vast coral reefs
and athwart the Isle of St. Jacques, with its long chain
of basaltic mountains, till she entered the port of Villa Praya
and anchored in eight fathoms of water before the town.
The weather was frightful, and the surf excessively violent,
though the bay was sheltered from the sea winds.
The rain fell in such torrents that the town was scarcely visible
through it. It rose on a plain in the form of a terrace,
buttressed on volcanic rocks three hundred feet high.
The appearance of the island through the thick veil of rain
was mournful in the extreme.

Lady Helena could not go on shore as she had purposed;
indeed, even coaling was a difficult business, and the passengers
had to content themselves below the poop as best they might.
Naturally enough, the main topic of conversation was the weather.
Everybody had something to say about it except the Major,
who surveyed the universal deluge with the utmost indifference.
Paganel walked up and down shaking his head.

"It is clear enough, Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, "that the elements are against you."

"I'll be even with them for all that," replied the Frenchman.

"You could not face rain like that, Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena.

"Oh, quite well, madam, as far as I myself am concerned. It is for my luggage and instruments that I am afraid. Everything will be ruined."

"The disembarking is the worst part of the business. Once at Villa Praya you might manage to find pretty good quarters. They wouldn't be over clean, and you might find the monkeys and pigs not always the most agreeable companions. But travelers are not too particular, and, moreover, in seven or eight months you would get a ship, I dare say, to take you back to Europe."

"Seven or eight months!" exclaimed Paganel.

"At least. The Cape Verde Islands are not much frequented by ships during the rainy season. But you can employ your time usefully. This archipelago is still but little known."

"You can go up the large rivers," suggested Lady Helena.

"There are none, madam."

"Well, then, the small ones."

"There are none, madam."

"The running brooks, then."

"There are no brooks, either."

"You can console yourself with the forests if that's the case," put in the Major.

"You can't make forests without trees, and there are no trees."

"A charming country!" said the Major.

"Comfort yourself, my dear Paganel, you'll have the mountains at any rate," said Glenarvan.

"Oh, they are neither lofty nor interesting, my Lord, and, beside, they have been described already."

"Already!" said Lord Glenarvan.

"Yes, that is always my luck. At the Canary Islands, I saw myself anticipated by Humboldt, and here by M. Charles Sainte-Claire Deville, a geologist."

"Impossible!"

"It is too true," replied Paganel, in a doleful voice.
"Monsieur Deville was on board the government corvette,
La Decidee, when she touched at the Cape Verde Islands,
and he explored the most interesting of the group, and went
to the top of the volcano in Isle Fogo. What is left for me
to do after him?"

"It is really a great pity," said Helena. "What will become
of you, Monsieur Paganel?"

Paganel remained silent.

"You would certainly have done much better to have landed at Madeira,
even though there had been no wine," said Glenarvan.

Still the learned secretary was silent.

"I should wait," said the Major, just as if he had said,
"I should not wait."

Paganel spoke again at length, and said:

"My dear Glenarvan, where do you mean to touch next?"

"At Concepcion."

"Plague it! That is a long way out of the road to India."

"Not it! From the moment you pass Cape Horn, you are getting
nearer to it."

"I doubt it much."

"Beside," resumed Lord Glenarvan, with perfect gravity,
"when people are going to the Indies it doesn't matter much
whether it is to the East or West."

"What! it does not matter much?"

"Without taking into account the fact that the inhabitants
of the Pampas in Patagonia are as much Indians as the natives
of the Punjaub."

"Well done, my Lord. That's a reason that would never have
entered my head!"

"And then, my dear Paganel, you can gain the gold medal anyway.
There is as much to be done, and sought, and investigated,
and discovered in the Cordilleras as in the mountains of Thibet."

"But the course of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou--what about that?"

"Go up the Rio Colorado instead. It is a river but little known,
and its course on the map is marked out too much according
to the fancy of geographers."

"I know it is, my dear Lord; they have made grave mistakes. Oh, I make
no question that the Geographical Society would have sent me to Patagonia
as soon as to India, if I had sent in a request to that effect.

But I never thought of it."

"Just like you."

"Come, Monsieur Paganel, will you go with us?" asked Lady Helena,
in her most winning tone.

"Madam, my mission?"

"We shall pass through the Straits of Magellan, I must tell you,"
said Lord Glenarvan.

"My Lord, you are a tempter."

"Let me add, that we shall visit Port Famine."

"Port Famine!" exclaimed the Frenchman, besieged on all sides.
"That famous port in French annals!"

"Think, too, Monsieur Paganel, that by taking part in our enterprise,
you will be linking France with Scotland."

"Undoubtedly."

"A geographer would be of much use to our expedition, and what can
be nobler than to bring science to the service of humanity?"

"That's well said, madam."

"Take my advice, then, and yield to chance, or rather providence.
Follow our example. It was providence that sent us the document,
and we set out in consequence. The same providence brought you
on board the DUNCAN. Don't leave her."

"Shall I say yes, my good friends? Come, now, tell me,
you want me very much to stay, don't you?" said Paganel.

"And you're dying to stay, now, aren't you, Paganel?" returned Glenarvan.

"That's about it," confessed the learned geographer; "but I was afraid
it would be inconsiderate."

CHAPTER IX THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MAGELLAN

THE joy on board was universal when Paganel's resolution was made known.

Little Robert flung himself on his neck in such tumultuous delight
that he nearly threw the worthy secretary down, and made him say,
"Rude _petit bonhomme_. I'll teach him geography."

Robert bade fair to be an accomplished gentleman some day,
for John Mangles was to make a sailor of him, and the Major
was to teach him _sang-froid_, and Glenarvan and Lady Helena were
to instil into him courage and goodness and generosity, while Mary
was to inspire him with gratitude toward such instructors.

The DUNCAN soon finished taking in coal, and turned her back

on the dismal region. She fell in before long with the current
from the coast of Brazil, and on the 7th of September entered
the Southern hemisphere.

So far, then, the voyage had been made without difficulty.
Everybody was full of hope, for in this search for Captain Grant,
each day seemed to increase the probability of finding him.
The captain was among the most confident on board, but his confidence
mainly arose from the longing desire he had to see Miss Mary happy.
He was smitten with quite a peculiar interest for this young girl,
and managed to conceal his sentiments so well that everyone on board
saw it except himself and Mary Grant.

As for the learned geographer, he was probably the happiest
man in all the southern hemisphere. He spent the whole day
in studying maps, which were spread out on the saloon table,
to the great annoyance of M. Olbinett, who could never get
the cloth laid for meals, without disputes on the subject.
But all the passengers took his part except the Major,
who was perfectly indifferent about geographical questions,
especially at dinner-time. Paganel also came across
a regular cargo of old books in the chief officer's chest.
They were in a very damaged condition, but among them he raked
out a few Spanish volumes, and determined forthwith to set
to work to master the language of Cer-vantes, as no one on
board understood it, and it would be helpful in their search
along the Chilian coast. Thanks to his taste for languages,
he did not despair of being able to speak the language fluently
when they arrived at Concepcion. He studied it furiously,
and kept constantly muttering heterogeneous syllables.

He spent his leisure hours in teaching young Robert, and instructed
him in the history of the country they were so rapidly approaching.

On the 25th of September, the yacht arrived off
the Straits of Magellan, and entered them without delay.
This route is generally preferred by steamers on their way to
the Pacific Ocean. The exact length of the straits is 372 miles.
Ships of the largest tonnage find, throughout, sufficient depth of water,
even close to the shore, and there is a good bottom everywhere,
and abundance of fresh water, and rivers abounding in fish,
and forests in game, and plenty of safe and accessible harbors;
in fact a thousand things which are lacking in Strait Lemaire
and Cape Horn, with its terrible rocks, incessantly visited
by hurricane and tempest.

For the first three or four hours--that is to say, for about
sixty to eighty miles, as far as Cape Gregory--the coast on
either side was low and sandy. Jacques Paganel would not lose
a single point of view, nor a single detail of the straits.
It would scarcely take thirty-six hours to go through them,
and the moving panorama on both sides, seen in all the clearness
and glory of the light of a southern sun, was well worth the trouble
of looking at and admiring. On the Terra del Fuego side, a few
wretched-looking creatures were wandering about on the rocks,
but on the other side not a solitary inhabitant was visible.

Paganel was so vexed at not being able to catch a glimpse of
any Patagonians, that his companions were quite amused at him.

He would insist that Patagonia without Patagonians was not Patagonia at all.

But Glenarvan replied:

"Patience, my worthy geographer. We shall see the Patagonians yet."

"I am not sure of it."

"But there is such a people, anyhow," said Lady Helena.

"I doubt it much, madam, since I don't see them."

"But surely the very name Patagonia, which means 'great feet' in Spanish, would not have been given to imaginary beings."
"Oh, the name is nothing," said Paganel, who was arguing simply for the sake of arguing. "And besides, to speak the truth, we are not sure if that is their name."

"What an idea!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "Did you know that, Major?"

"No," replied McNabbs, "and wouldn't give a Scotch pound-note for the information."

"You shall hear it, however, Major Indifferent. Though Magellan called the natives Patagonians, the Fuegians called them Tiremenen, the Chilians Caucalhues, the colonists of Carmen Tehuelches, the Araucans Huiliches; Bougainville gives them the name of Chauha, and Falkner that of Tehuelhets. The name they give themselves is Inaken. Now, tell me then, how would you recognize them? Indeed, is it likely that a people with so many names has any actual existence?"

"That's a queer argument, certainly," said Lady Helena.

"Well, let us admit it," said her husband, "but our friend Paganel must own that even if there are doubts about the name of the race there is none about their size."

"Indeed, I will never own anything so outrageous as that," replied Paganel.

"They are tall," said Glenarvan.

"I don't know that."

"Are they little, then?" asked Lady Helena.

"No one can affirm that they are."

"About the average, then?" said McNabbs.

"I don't know that either."

"That's going a little too far," said Glenarvan. "Travelers who have seen them tell us."

"Travelers who have seen them," interrupted Paganel, "don't agree at all in their accounts. Magellan said that his head scarcely

reached to their waist."

"Well, then, that proves."

"Yes, but Drake declares that the English are taller than
the tallest Patagonian?"

"Oh, the English--that may be," replied the Major, disdainfully, "but we
are talking of the Scotch."

"Cavendish assures us that they are tall and robust,"
continued Paganel. "Hawkins makes out they are giants.
Lemaire and Shouten declare that they are eleven feet high."

"These are all credible witnesses," said Glenarvan.

"Yes, quite as much as Wood, Narborough, and Falkner, who say they
are of medium stature. Again, Byron, Giraudais, Bougainville, Wallis,
and Carteret, declared that the Patagonians are six feet six inches tall."

"But what is the truth, then, among all these contradictions?"
asked Lady Helena.

"Just this, madame; the Patagonians have short legs, and a large bust;
or by way of a joke we might say that these natives are six feet high
when they are sitting, and only five when they are standing."

"Bravo! my dear geographer," said Glenarvan. "That is very well put."

"Unless the race has no existence, that would reconcile all statements,"
returned Paganel. "But here is one consolation, at all events:
the Straits of Magellan are very magnificent, even without Patagonians."

Just at this moment the DUNCAN was rounding the peninsula of Brunswick
between splendid panoramas.

Seventy miles after doubling Cape Gregory, she left on her starboard
the penitentiary of Punta Arena. The church steeple and the Chilian
flag gleamed for an instant among the trees, and then the strait
wound on between huge granitic masses which had an imposing effect.
Cloud-capped mountains appeared, their heads white with eternal snows,
and their feet hid in immense forests. Toward the southwest,
Mount Tarn rose 6,500 feet high. Night came

V. IV Verne on after a long lingering twilight, the light insensibly
melting away into soft shades. These brilliant constellations
began to bestud the sky, and the Southern Cross shone out.
There were numerous bays along the shore, easy of access, but the yacht
did not drop anchor in any; she continued her course fearlessly
through the luminous darkness. Presently ruins came in sight,
crumbling buildings, which the night invested with grandeur, the sad
remains of a deserted settlement, whose name will be an eternal
protest against these fertile shores and forests full of game.
The DUNCAN was passing Fort Famine.

It was in that very spot that Sarmiento, a Spaniard, came in 1581,
with four hundred emigrants, to establish a colony.
He founded the city of St. Philip, but the extreme severity
of winter decimated the inhabitants, and those who had

struggled through the cold died subsequently of starvation. Cavendish the Corsair discovered the last survivor dying of hunger in the ruins.

After sailing along these deserted shores, the DUNCAN went through a series of narrow passes, between forests of beech and ash and birch, and at length doubled Cape Froward, still bristling with the ice of the last winter. On the other side of the strait, in Terra del Fuego, stood Mount Sarmiento, towering to a height of 6,000 feet, an enormous accumulation of rocks, separated by bands of cloud, forming a sort of aerial archipelago in the sky.

It is at Cape Froward that the American continent actually terminates, for Cape Horn is nothing but a rock sunk in the sea in latitude 52 degrees. At Cape Momax the straits widened, and she was able to get round Narborough Isles and advance in a more southerly direction, till at length the rock of Cape Pilares, the extreme point of Desolation Island, came in sight, thirty-six hours after entering the straits. Before her stem lay a broad, open, sparkling ocean, which Jacques Paganel greeted with enthusiastic gestures, feeling kindred emotions with those which stirred the bosom of Ferdinand de Magellan himself, when the sails of his ship, the TRINIDAD, first bent before the breeze from the great Pacific.

CHAPTER X THE COURSE DECIDED

A WEEK after they had doubled the Cape Pilares, the DUNCAN steamed into the bay of Talcahuano, a magnificent estuary, twelve miles long and nine broad. The weather was splendid. From November to March the sky is always cloudless, and a constant south wind prevails, as the coast is sheltered by the mountain range of the Andes. In obedience to Lord Glenarvan's order, John Mangles had sailed as near the archipelago of Chiloe as possible, and examined all the creeks and windings of the coast, hoping to discover some traces of the shipwreck. A broken spar, or any fragment of the vessel, would have put them in the right track; but nothing whatever was visible, and the yacht continued her route, till she dropped anchor at the port of Talcahuano, forty-two days from the time she had sailed out of the fogs of the Clyde.

Glenarvan had a boat lowered immediately, and went on shore, accompanied by Paganel. The learned geographer gladly availed himself of the opportunity of making use of the language he had been studying so conscientiously, but to his great amazement, found he could not make himself understood by the people. "It is the accent I've not got," he said.

"Let us go to the Custom-house," replied Glenarvan.

They were informed on arriving there, by means of a few English words, aided by expressive gestures, that the British Consul lived at Concepcion, an hour's ride distant. Glenarvan found no difficulty in procuring two fleet horses, and he and Paganel were soon within the walls of the great city, due to the enterprising genius of Valdivia, the valiant comrade

of the Pizarros.

How it was shorn of its ancient splendor! Often pillaged by the natives, burned in 1819, it lay in desolation and ruins, its walls still blackened by the flames, scarcely numbering 8,000 inhabitants, and already eclipsed by Talcahuano. The grass was growing in the streets, beneath the lazy feet of the citizens, and all trade and business, indeed any description of activity, was impossible. The notes of the mandolin resounded from every balcony, and languishing songs floated on the breeze. Concepcion, the ancient city of brave men, had become a village of women and children. Lord Glenarvan felt no great desire to inquire into the causes of this decay, though Paganel tried to draw him into a discussion on the subject. He would not delay an instant, but went straight on to the house of Mr. Bentic, her Majesty's Consul, who received them very courteously, and, on learning their errand, undertook to make inquiries all along the coast.

But to the question whether a three-mast vessel, called the BRITANNIA, had gone ashore either on the Chilian or Araucanian coast, he gave a decided negative. No report of such an event had been made to him, or any of the other consuls. Glenarvan, however, would not allow himself to be disheartened; he went back to Talcahuano, and spared neither pains nor expense to make a thorough investigation of the whole seaboard. But it was all in vain. The most minute inquiries were fruitless, and Lord Glenarvan returned to the yacht to report his ill success. Mary Grant and her brother could not restrain their grief. Lady Helena did her best to comfort them by loving caresses, while Jacques Paganel took up the document and began studying it again. He had been poring over it for more than an hour when Glenarvan interrupted him and said:

"Paganel! I appeal to your sagacity. Have we made an erroneous interpretation of the document? Is there anything illogical about the meaning?"

Paganel was silent, absorbed in reflection.

"Have we mistaken the place where the catastrophe occurred?" continued Glenarvan. "Does not the name Patagonia seem apparent even to the least clear-sighted individual?"

Paganel was still silent.

"Besides," said Glenarvan, "does not the word INDIEN prove we are right?"

"Perfectly so," replied McNabbs.

"And is it not evident, then, that at the moment of writing the words, the shipwrecked men were expecting to be made prisoners by the Indians?"

"I take exception to that, my Lord," said Paganel; "and even if your other conclusions are right, this, at least, seemed to me irrational."

"What do you mean?" asked Lady Helena, while all eyes were fixed on the geographer.

"I mean this," replied Paganel, "that Captain Grant is _now
a prisoner among the Indians_, and I further add that the document
states it unmistakably."

"Explain yourself, sir," said Mary Grant.

"Nothing is plainer, dear Mary. Instead of reading the document
seront prisonniers, read _sont prisonniers_, and the whole
thing is clear."

"But that is impossible," replied Lord Glenarvan.

"Impossible! and why, my noble friend?" asked Paganel, smiling.

"Because the bottle could only have been thrown into the sea just when
the vessel went to pieces on the rocks, and consequently the latitude
and longitude given refer to the actual place of the shipwreck."

"There is no proof of that," replied Paganel, "and I see nothing
to preclude the supposition that the poor fellows were dragged
into the interior by the Indians, and sought to make known
the place of their captivity by means of this bottle."

"Except this fact, my dear Paganel, that there was no sea,
and therefore they could not have flung the bottle into it."

"Unless they flung it into rivers which ran into the sea,"
returned Paganel.

This reply was so unexpected, and yet so admissible, that it
made them all completely silent for a minute, though their
beaming eyes betrayed the rekindling of hope in their hearts.
Lady Helena was the first to speak.

"What an idea!" she exclaimed.

"And what a good idea," was Paganel's naive rejoinder to her exclamation.

"What would you advise, then?" said Glenarvan.

"My advice is to follow the 37th parallel from the point where it
touches the American continent to where it dips into the Atlantic,
without deviating from it half a degree, and possibly in some part
of its course we shall fall in with the shipwrecked party."

"There is a poor chance of that," said the Major.

"Poor as it is," returned Paganel, "we ought not to lose it.
If I am right in my conjecture, that the bottle has been carried
into the sea on the bosom of some river, we cannot fail to find
the track of the prisoners. You can easily convince yourselves
of this by looking at this map of the country."

He unrolled a map of Chili and the Argentine provinces as he spoke,
and spread it out on the table.

"Just follow me for a moment," he said, "across the American continent.
Let us make a stride across the narrow strip of Chili,
and over the Cordilleras of the Andes, and get into the heart of

the Pampas. Shall we find any lack of rivers and streams and currents? No, for here are the Rio Negro and Rio Colorado, and their tributaries intersected by the 37th parallel, and any of them might have carried the bottle on its waters. Then, perhaps, in the midst of a tribe in some Indian settlement on the shores of these almost unknown rivers, those whom I may call my friends await some providential intervention. Ought we to disappoint their hopes? Do you not all agree with me that it is our duty to go along the line my finger is pointing out at this moment on the map, and if after all we find I have been mistaken, still to keep straight on and follow the 37th parallel till we find those we seek, if even we go right round the world?"

His generous enthusiasm so touched his auditors that, involuntarily, they rose to their feet and grasped his hands, while Robert exclaimed as he devoured the map with his eyes:

"Yes, my father is there!"

"And where he is," replied Glenarvan, "we'll manage to go, my boy, and find him. Nothing can be more logical than Paganel's theory, and we must follow the course he points out without the least hesitation. Captain Grant may have fallen into the hands of a numerous tribe, or his captors may be but a handful. In the latter case we shall carry him off at once, but in the event of the former, after we have reconnoitered the situation, we must go back to the DUNCAN on the eastern coast and get to Buenos Ayres, where we can soon organize a detachment of men, with Major McNabbs at their head, strong enough to tackle all the Indians in the Argentine provinces."

"That's capital, my Lord," said John Mangles, "and I may add, that there is no danger whatever crossing the continent."

"Monsieur Paganel," asked Lady Helena, "you have no fear then that if the poor fellows have fallen into the hands of the Indians their lives at least have been spared."

"What a question? Why, madam, the Indians are not anthropophagi! Far from it. One of my own countrymen, M. Guinnard, associated with me in the Geographical Society, was three years a prisoner among the Indians in the Pampas. He had to endure sufferings and ill-treatment, but came off victorious at last. A European is a useful being in these countries. The Indians know his value, and take care of him as if he were some costly animal."

"There is not the least room then for hesitation," said Lord Glenarvan. "Go we must, and as soon as possible. What route must we take?"

"One that is both easy and agreeable," replied Paganel. "Rather mountainous at first, and then sloping gently down the eastern side of the Andes into a smooth plain, turfed and graveled quite like a garden."

"Let us see the map?" said the Major.

"Here it is, my dear McNabbs. We shall go through the capital of Araucania, and cut the Cordilleras by the pass of Antuco, leaving the volcano on the south, and gliding gently down the

mountain sides, past the Neuquem and the Rio Colorado on to the Pampas, till we reach the Sierra Tapalquen, from whence we shall see the frontier of the province of Buenos Ayres. These we shall pass by, and cross over the Sierra Tandil, pursuing our search to the very shores of the Atlantic, as far as Point Medano."

Paganel went through this programme of the expedition without so much as a glance at the map. He was so posted up in the travels of Frezier, Molina, Humboldt, Miers, and Orbigny, that he had the geographical nomenclature at his fingers' ends, and could trust implicitly to his never-failing memory.

"You see then, friend," he added, "that it is a straight course. In thirty days we shall have gone over it, and gained the eastern side before the DUNCAN, however little she may be delayed by the westerly winds."

"Then the DUNCAN is to cruise between Corrientes and Cape Saint Antonie," said John Mangles.

"Just so."

"And how is the expedition to be organized?" asked Glenarvan.

"As simply as possible. All there is to be done is to reconnoiter the situation of Captain Grant and not to come to gunshot with the Indians. I think that Lord Glenarvan, our natural leader; the Major, who would not yield his place to anybody; and your humble servant, Jacques Paganel."

"And me," interrupted Robert.

"Robert, Robert!" exclaimed Mary.

"And why not?" returned Paganel. "Travels form the youthful mind. Yes, Robert, we four and three of the sailors."

"And does your Lordship mean to pass me by?" said John Mangles, addressing his master.

"My dear John," replied Glenarvan, "we leave passengers on board, those dearer to us than life, and who is to watch over them but the devoted captain?"

"Then we can't accompany you?" said Lady Helena, while a shade of sadness beclouded her eyes.

"My dear Helena, the journey will so soon be accomplished that it will be but a brief separation, and--"

"Yes, dear, I understand, it is all right; and I do hope you may succeed."

"Besides, you can hardly call it a journey," added Paganel.

"What is it, then?"

"It is just making a flying passage across the continent, the way a good man goes through the world, doing all the good he can.

Transire beneficiendo--that is our motto."

This ended the discussion, if a conversation can be so called, where all who take part in it are of the same opinion. Preparations commenced the same day, but as secretly as possible to prevent the Indians getting scent of it.

The day of departure was fixed for the 14th of October. The sailors were all so eager to join the expedition that Glenarvan found the only way to prevent jealousy among them was to draw lots who should go. This was accordingly done, and fortune favored the chief officer, Tom Austin, Wilson, a strong, jovial young fellow, and Mulrady, so good a boxer that he might have entered the lists with Tom Sayers himself.

Glenarvan displayed the greatest activity about the preparations, for he was anxious to be ready by the appointed day. John Mangles was equally busy in coaling the vessel, that she might weigh anchor at the same time. There was quite a rivalry between Glenarvan and the young captain about getting first to the Argentine coast.

Both were ready on the 14th. The whole search party assembled in the saloon to bid farewell to those who remained behind. The DUNCAN was just about to get under way, and already the vibration of the screw began to agitate the limpid waters of Talcahuano, Glenarvan, Paganel, McNabbs, Robert Grant, Tom Austin, Wilson, and Mulrady, stood armed with carbines and Colt's revolvers. Guides and mules awaited them at the landing stairs of the harbor.

"It is time," said Lord Glenarvan at last.

"Go then, dear Edward," said Lady Helena, restraining her emotion.

Lord Glenarvan clasped her closely to his breast for an instant, and then turned away, while Robert flung his arms round Mary's neck.

"And now, friends," said Paganel, "let's have one good hearty shake of the hand all round, to last us till we get to the shores of the Atlantic."

This was not much to ask, but he certainly got strong enough grips to go some way towards satisfying his desire.

All went on deck now, and the seven explorers left the vessel. They were soon on the quay, and as the yacht turned round to pursue her course, she came so near where they stood, that Lady Helena could exchange farewells once more.

"God help you!" she called out.

"Heaven will help us, madam," shouted Paganel, in reply, "for you may be sure we'll help ourselves."

"Go on," sung out the captain to his engineer.

At the same moment Lord Glenarvan gave the signal to start, and away went the mules along the coast, while the DUNCAN steamed out at full speed toward the broad ocean.

CHAPTER XI TRAVELING IN CHILI

THE native troops organized by Lord Glenarvan consisted of three men and a boy. The captain of the muleteers was an Englishman, who had become naturalized through twenty years' residence in the country. He made a livelihood by letting out mules to travelers, and leading them over the difficult passes of the Cordilleras, after which he gave them in charge of a BAQUEANO, or Argentine guide, to whom the route through the Pampas was perfectly familiar. This Englishman had not so far forgotten his mother tongue among mules and Indians that he could not converse with his countrymen, and a lucky thing it was for them, as Lord Glenarvan found it far easier to give orders than to see them executed, Paganel was still unsuccessful in making himself understood.

The CATAPEZ, as he was called in Chilian, had two natives called PEONS, and a boy about twelve years of age under him. The PEONS took care of the baggage mules, and the boy led the MADRINA, a young mare adorned with rattle and bells, which walked in front, followed by ten mules. The travelers rode seven of these, and the CATAPEZ another. The remaining two carried provisions and a few bales of goods, intended to secure the goodwill of the Caciques of the plain. The PEONS walked, according to their usual habit.

Every arrangement had been made to insure safety and speed, for crossing the Andes is something more than an ordinary journey. It could not be accomplished without the help of the hardy mules of the far-famed Argentine breed. Those reared in the country are much superior to their progenitors. They are not particular about their food, and only drink once a day, and they can go with ease ten leagues in eight hours.

There are no inns along this road from one ocean to another. The only viands on which travelers can regale themselves are dried meat, rice seasoned with pimento, and such game as may be shot _en route_. The torrents provide them with water in the mountains, and the rivulets in the plains, which they improve by the addition of a few drops of rum, and each man carries a supply of this in a bullock's horn, called CHIFFLE. They have to be careful, however, not to indulge too freely in alcoholic drinks, as the climate itself has a peculiarly exhilarating effect on the nervous system. As for bedding, it is all contained in the saddle used by the natives, called RECADO. This saddle is made of sheepskins, tanned on one side and woolly on the other, fastened by gorgeous embroidered straps. Wrapped in these warm coverings a traveler may sleep soundly, and brave exposure to the damp nights.

Glenarvan, an experienced traveler, who knew how to adapt himself to the customs of other countries, adopted the Chilian costume for himself and his whole party. Paganel and Robert, both alike children, though of different growth, were wild with delight as they inserted their heads in the national PONCHO, an immense plaid with a hole in center, and their legs in high leather boots. The mules were richly caparisoned, with the Arab bit in their mouths, and long reins of plaited leather, which served as a whip; the headstall of the bridle was decorated with metal ornaments,

and the ALFORJAS, double sacks of gay colored linen,
containing the day's provisions. Paganel, DISTRAIT as usual,
was flung several times before he succeeded in bestriding his
good steed, but once in the saddle, his inseparable telescope on
his shoulder-belt, he held on well enough, keeping his feet fast
in the stirrups, and trusting entirely to the sagacity of his beast.
As for Robert, his first attempt at mounting was successful,
and proved that he had the making in him of an excellent horseman.

The weather was splendid when they started, the sky a deep
cloudless blue, and yet the atmosphere so tempered by the sea
breezes as to prevent any feeling of oppressive heat.
They marched rapidly along the winding shore of the bay of Talcahuano,
in order to gain the extremity of the parallel, thirty miles south.
No one spoke much the first day, for the smoke of the DUNCAN was still
visible on the horizon, and the pain of parting too keenly felt.
Paganel talked to himself in Spanish, asking and answering questions.

The CATAPEZ, moreover, was a taciturn man naturally,
and had not been rendered loquacious by his calling. He hardly
spoke to his PEONS. They understood their duties perfectly.
If one of the mules stopped, they urged it on with a guttural cry,
and if that proved unavailing, a good-sized pebble,
thrown with unerring aim, soon cured the animal's obstinacy.
If a strap got loose, or a rein fell, a PEON came forward instantly,
and throwing off his poncho, flung it over his beast's head
till the accident was repaired and the march resumed.

The custom of the muleteers is to start immediately after breakfast,
about eight o'clock, and not to stop till they camp for the night, about 4
P. M. Glenarvan fell in with the practice, and the first halt was just
as they arrived at Arauco, situated at the very extremity of the bay.
To find the extremity of the 37th degree of latitude, they would have
required to proceed as far as the Bay of Carnero, twenty miles further.
But the agents of Glenarvan had already scoured that part of
the coast, and to repeat the exploration would have been useless.
It was, therefore, decided that Arauco should be the point of departure,
and they should keep on from there toward the east in a straight line.

Since the weather was so favorable, and the whole party,
even Robert, were in perfect health, and altogether
the journey had commenced under such favorable auspices,
it was deemed advisable to push forward as quickly as possible.
Accordingly, the next day they marched 35 miles or more,
and encamped at nightfall on the banks of Rio Biobio. The country
still presented the same fertile aspect, and abounded in flowers,
but animals of any sort only came in sight occasionally,
and there were no birds visible, except a solitary heron
or owl, and a thrush or grebe, flying from the falcon.
Human beings there were none, not a native appeared;
not even one of the GUASSOS, the degenerate offspring of Indians
and Spaniards, dashed across the plain like a shadow, his flying
steed dripping with blood from the cruel thrusts inflicted by
the gigantic spurs of his master's naked feet. It was absolutely
impossible to make inquiries when there was no one to address,
and Lord Glenarvan came to the conclusion that Captain Grant
must have been dragged right over the Andes into the Pampas,
and that it would be useless to search for him elsewhere.
The only thing to be done was to wait patiently and press

forward with all the speed in their power.

On the 17th they set out in the usual line of march, a line which it was hard work for Robert to keep, his ardor constantly compelled him to get ahead of the MADRINA, to the great despair of his mule. Nothing but a sharp recall from Glenarvan kept the boy in proper order.

The country now became more diversified, and the rising ground indicated their approach to a mountainous district. Rivers were more numerous, and came rushing noisily down the slopes. Paganel consulted his maps, and when he found any of those streams not marked, which often happened, all the fire of a geographer burned in his veins, and he would exclaim, with a charming air of vexation:

"A river which hasn't a name is like having no civil standing. It has no existence in the eye of geographical law."

He christened them forthwith, without the least hesitation, and marked them down on the map, qualifying them with the most high-sounding adjectives he could find in the Spanish language.

"What a language!" he said. "How full and sonorous it is! It is like the metal church bells are made of--composed of seventy-eight parts of copper and twenty-two of tin."

"But, I say, do you make any progress in it?" asked Glenarvan.

"Most certainly, my dear Lord. Ah, if it wasn't the accent, that wretched accent!"

And for want of better work, Paganel whiled away the time along the road by practising the difficulties in pronunciation, repeating all the break-jaw words he could, though still making geographical observations. Any question about the country that Glenarvan might ask the CATAPEZ was sure to be answered by the learned Frenchman before he could reply, to the great astonishment of the guide, who gazed at him in bewilderment.

About two o'clock that same day they came to a cross road, and naturally enough Glenarvan inquired the name of it.

"It is the route from Yumbel to Los Angeles," said Paganel.

Glenarvan looked at the CATAPEZ, who replied:

"Quite right."

And then, turning toward the geographer, he added:

"You have traveled in these parts before, sir?"

"Oh, yes," said Paganel, quite gravely.

"On a mule?"

"No, in an easy chair."

The CATAPEZ could not make him out, but shrugged his shoulders and resumed his post at the head of the party.

At five in the evening they stopped in a gorge of no great depth, some miles above the little town of Loja, and encamped for the night at the foot of the Sierras, the first steppes of the great Cordilleras.

CHAPTER XII ELEVEN THOUSAND FEET ALOFT

NOTHING of importance had occurred hitherto in the passage through Chili; but all the obstacles and difficulties incident to a mountain journey were about to crowd on the travelers now.

One important question had first to be settled. Which pass would take them over the Andes, and yet not be out of their fixed route?

On questioning the CATAPEZ on the subject, he replied:

"There are only two practicable passes that I know of in this part of the Cordilleras."

"The pass of Arica is one undoubtedly discovered by Valdivia Mendoze," said Paganel.

"Just so."

"And that of Villarica is the other."

"Precisely."

"Well, my good fellow, both these passes have only one fault; they take us too far out of our route, either north or south."

"Have you no other to propose?" asked the Major.

"Certainly," replied Paganel. "There is the pass of Antuco, on the slope of the volcano, in latitude, 37 degrees 30' , or, in other words, only half a degree out of our way."

"That would do, but are you acquainted with this pass of Antuco, CATAPEZ?" said Glenarvan.

"Yes, your Lordship, I have been through it, but I did not mention it, as no one goes that way but the Indian shepherds with the herds of cattle."

"Oh, very well; if mares and sheep and oxen can go that way, we can, so let's start at once."

The signal for departure was given immediately, and they struck into the heart of the valley of Las Lejas, between great masses of chalk crystal. From this point the pass began to be difficult, and even dangerous. The angles of the declivities widened and the ledges narrowed, and frightful precipices met their gaze. The mules went cautiously along, keeping their heads near the ground, as if scenting the track. They marched in file. Sometimes at a sudden bend of the road, the MADRINA would disappear, and the little caravan had to guide themselves by the distant tinkle of her bell. Often some capricious winding would bring the column in two parallel lines, and the CATAPEZ

could speak to his PEONS across a crevasse not two fathoms wide, though two hundred deep, which made between them an inseparable gulf.

Glenarvan followed his guide step by step. He saw that his perplexity was increasing as the way became more difficult, but did not dare to interrogate him, rightly enough, perhaps, thinking that both mules and muleteers were very much governed by instinct, and it was best to trust to them.

For about an hour longer the CATAPEZ kept wandering about almost at haphazard, though always getting higher up the mountains. At last he was obliged to stop short. They were in a narrow valley, one of those gorges called by the Indians "quebrads," and on reaching the end, a wall of porphyry rose perpendicularly before them, and barred further passage. The CATAPEZ, after vain attempts at finding an opening, dismounted, crossed his arms, and waited. Glenarvan went up to him and asked if he had lost his way.

"No, your Lordship," was the reply.

"But you are not in the pass of Antuco."

"We are."

"You are sure you are not mistaken?"

"I am not mistaken. See! there are the remains of a fire left by the Indians, and there are the marks of the mares and the sheep."

"They must have gone on then."

"Yes, but no more will go; the last earthquake has made the route impassable."

"To mules," said the Major, "but not to men."

"Ah, that's your concern; I have done all I could. My mules and myself are at your service to try the other passes of the Cordilleras."

"And that would delay us?"

"Three days at least."

Glenarvan listened silently. He saw the CATAPEZ was right. His mules could not go farther. When he talked of returning, however, Glenarvan appealed to his companions and said:

"Will you go on in spite of all the difficulty?"

"We will follow your Lordship," replied Tom Austin.

"And even precede you," added Paganel. "What is it after all? We have only to cross the top of the mountain chain, and once over, nothing can be easier of descent than the slopes we shall find there. When we get below, we shall find BAQUEANOS, Argentine shepherds, who will guide us through the Pampas, and swift horses accustomed to gallop over the plains. Let's go forward then, I say, and without a moment's hesitation."

"Forward!" they all exclaimed. "You will not go with us, then?"
said Glenarvan to the CATAPEZ.

"I am the muleteer," was the reply.

"As you please," said Glenarvan.

"We can do without him," said Paganel. "On the other side we
shall get back into the road to Antuco, and I'm quite sure I'll
lead you to the foot of the mountain as straight as the best
guide in the Cordilleras."

Accordingly, Glenarvan settled accounts with the CATAPEZ,
and bade farewell to him and his PEONS and mules.
The arms and instruments, and a small stock of provisions were
divided among the seven travelers, and it was unanimously agreed
that the ascent should recommence at once, and, if necessary,
should continue part of the night. There was a very steep winding
path on the left, which the mules never would have attempted.
It was toilsome work, but after two hours' exertion, and a great
deal of roundabout climbing, the little party found themselves
once more in the pass of Antuco.

They were not far now from the highest peak of the Cordilleras,
but there was not the slightest trace of any beaten path.
The entire region had been overturned by recent shocks of earthquake,
and all they could do was to keep on climbing higher and higher.
Paganel was rather disconcerted at finding no way out to the other
side of the chain, and laid his account with having to undergo
great fatigue before the topmost peaks of the Andes could be reached,
for their mean height is between eleven and twelve thousand six
hundred feet. Fortunately the weather was calm and the sky clear,
in addition to the season being favorable, but in Winter,
from May to October, such an ascent would have been impracticable.
The intense cold quickly kills travelers, and those who even manage
to hold out against it fall victims to the violence of the TEMPORALES,
a sort of hurricane peculiar to those regions, which yearly fills
the abysses of the Cordilleras with dead bodies.

They went on toiling steadily upward all night, hoisting themselves
up to almost inaccessible plateaux, and leaping over broad,
deep crevasses. They had no ropes, but arms linked in arms
supplied the lack, and shoulders served for ladders. The strength
of Mulrady and the dexterity of Wilson were taxed heavily now.
These two brave Scots multiplied themselves, so to speak.
Many a time, but for their devotion and courage the small band could
not have gone on. Glenarvan never lost sight of young Robert,
for his age and vivacity made him imprudent. Paganel was a true
Frenchman in his impetuous ardor, and hurried furiously along.
The Major, on the contrary, only went as quick as was necessary,
neither more nor less, climbing without the least apparent exertion.
Perhaps he hardly knew, indeed, that he was climbing at all,
or perhaps he fancied he was descending.

The whole aspect of the region had now completely changed. Huge blocks
of glittering ice, of a bluish tint on some of the declivities,
stood up on all sides, reflecting the early light of morn.
The ascent became very perilous. They were obliged to reconnoiter

carefully before making a single step, on account of the crevasses.
Wilson took the lead, and tried the ground with his feet.
His companions followed exactly in his footprints, lowering their voices
to a whisper, as the least sound would disturb the currents of air,
and might cause the fall of the masses of snow suspended in the air
seven or eight hundred feet above their heads.

They had come now to the region of shrubs and bushes,
which, higher still, gave place to grasses and cacti.
At 11,000 feet all trace of vegetation had disappeared.
They had only stopped once, to rest and snatch a hurried meal to

V. IV Verne recruit their strength. With superhuman courage,
the ascent was then resumed amid increasing dangers and difficulties.
They were forced to bestride sharp peaks and leap over chasms
so deep that they did not dare to look down them. In many places
wooden crosses marked the scene of some great catastrophes.

About two o'clock they came to an immense barren plain, without a
sign of vegetation. The air was dry and the sky unclouded blue.
At this elevation rain is unknown, and vapors only condense into
snow or hail. Here and there peaks of porphyry or basalt pierced
through the white winding-sheet like the bones of a skeleton;
and at intervals fragments of quartz or gneiss, loosened by the action
of the air, fell down with a faint, dull sound, which in a denser
atmosphere would have been almost imperceptible.

However, in spite of their courage, the strength of the little band was
giving way. Glenarvan regretted they had gone so far into the interior
of the mountain when he saw how exhausted his men had become.
Young Robert held out manfully, but he could not go much farther.

At three o'clock Glenarvan stopped and said:

"We must rest."

He knew if he did not himself propose it, no one else would.

"Rest?" rejoined Paganel; "we have no place of shelter."

"It is absolutely necessary, however, if it were only for Robert."

"No, no," said the courageous lad; "I can still walk; don't stop."

"You shall be carried, my boy; but we must get to the other side
of the Cordilleras, cost what it may. There we may perhaps find
some hut to cover us. All I ask is a two hours' longer march."

"Are you all of the same opinion?" said Glenarvan.

"Yes," was the unanimous reply: and Mulrady added, "I'll carry the boy."

The march eastward was forthwith resumed. They had a
frightful height to climb yet to gain the topmost peaks.
The rarefaction of the atmosphere produced that painful oppression
known by the name of PUNA. Drops of blood stood on the gums
and lips, and respiration became hurried and difficult.
However strong the will of these brave men might be,
the time came at last when their physical powers failed,

and vertigo, that terrible malady in the mountains,
destroyed not only their bodily strength but their moral energy.
Falls became frequent, and those who fell could not rise again,
but dragged themselves along on their knees.

But just as exhaustion was about to make short work of any further ascent,
and Glenarvan's heart began to sink as he thought of the snow lying far
as the eye could reach, and of the intense cold, and saw the shadow
of night fast overspreading the desolate peaks, and knew they had
not a roof to shelter them, suddenly the Major stopped and said,
in a calm voice, "A hut!"

CHAPTER XIII A SUDDEN DESCENT

ANYONE else but McNabbs might have passed the hut a hundred times,
and gone all round it, and even over it without suspecting its existence.
It was covered with snow, and scarcely distinguishable from
the surrounding rocks; but Wilson and Mulrady succeeded in digging
it out and clearing the opening after half an hour's hard work,
to the great joy of the whole party, who eagerly took possession of it.

They found it was a CASUCHA, constructed by the Indians,
made of ADOBES, a species of bricks baked in the sun.
Its form was that of a cube, 12 feet on each side, and it
stood on a block of basalt. A stone stair led up to the door,
the only opening; and narrow as this door was, the hurricane,
and snow, and hail found their way in when the TEMPORALES
were unchained in the mountains.

Ten people could easily find room in it, and though the walls might be
none too water-tight in the rainy season, at this time of the year,
at any rate, it was sufficient protection against the intense cold,
which, according to the thermometer, was ten degrees below zero.
Besides, there was a sort of fireplace in it, with a chimney of bricks,
badly enough put together, certainly, but still it allowed of a
fire being lighted.

"This will shelter us, at any rate," said Glenarvan, "even if
it is not very comfortable. Providence has led us to it,
and we can only be thankful."

"Why, it is a perfect palace, I call it," said Paganel;
"we only want flunkeys and courtiers. We shall do capital here."

"Especially when there is a good fire blazing on the hearth,
for we are quite as cold as we are hungry. For my part, I would
rather see a good faggot just now than a slice of venison."

"Well, Tom, we'll try and get some combustible or other," said Paganel.

"Combustibles on the top of the Cordilleras!" exclaimed Mulrady,
in a dubious tone.

"Since there is a chimney in the CASUCHA," said the Major,
"the probability is that we shall find something to burn in it."

"Our friend McNabbs is right," said Glenarvan. "Get everything

in readiness for supper, and I'll go out and turn woodcutter."

"Wilson and I will go with you," said Paganel.

"Do you want me?" asked Robert, getting up.

"No, my brave boy, rest yourself. You'll be a man, when others are only children at your age," replied Glenarvan.

On reaching the little mound of porphyry, Glenarvan and his two companions left the CASUCHA. In spite of the perfect calmness of the atmosphere, the cold was stinging. Paganel consulted his barometer, and found that the depression of the mercury corresponded to an elevation of 11,000 feet, only 910 meters lower than Mont Blanc. But if these mountains had presented the difficulties of the giant of the Swiss Alps, not one of the travelers could have crossed the great chain of the New World.

On reaching a little mound of porphyry, Glenarvan and Paganel stopped to gaze about them and scan the horizon on all sides. They were now on the summit of the Nevadas of the Cordilleras, and could see over an area of forty miles. The valley of the Colorado was already sunk in shadow, and night was fast drawing her mantle over the eastern slopes of the Andes. The western side was illumined by the rays of the setting sun, and peaks and glaciers flashed back his golden beams with dazzling radiance. On the south the view was magnificent. Across the wild valley of the Torbido, about two miles distant, rose the volcano of Antuco. The mountain roared like some enormous monster, and vomited red smoke, mingled with torrents of sooty flame. The surrounding peaks appeared on fire. Showers of red-hot stones, clouds of reddish vapor and rockets of lava, all combined, presented the appearance of glowing sparkling streams. The splendor of the spectacle increased every instant as night deepened, and the whole sky became lighted up with a dazzling reflection of the blazing crater, while the sun, gradually becoming shorn of his sunset glories, disappeared like a star lost in the distant darkness of the horizon.

Paganel and Glenarvan would have remained long enough gazing at the sublime struggle between the fires of earth and heaven, if the more practical Wilson had not reminded them of the business on hand. There was no wood to be found, however, but fortunately the rocks were covered with a poor, dry species of lichen. Of this they made an ample provision, as well as of a plant called LLARETTA, the root of which burns tolerably well. This precious combustible was carried back to the CASUCHA and heaped up on the hearth. It was a difficult matter to kindle it, though, and still more to keep it alight. The air was so rarefied that there was scarcely oxygen enough in it to support combustion. At least, this was the reason assigned by the Major.

"By way of compensation, however," he added, "water will boil at less than 100 degrees heat. It will come to the point of ebullition before 99 degrees."

McNabbs was right, as the thermometer proved, for it was plunged into the

kettle when the water boiled, and the mercury only rose to 99 degrees.
Coffee was soon ready, and eagerly gulped down by everybody.
The dry meat certainly seemed poor fare, and Paganel couldn't help saying:

"I tell you what, some grilled llama wouldn't be bad with this, would it?
They say that the llama is substitute for the ox and the sheep,
and I should like to know if it is, in an alimentary respect."

"What!" replied the Major. "You're not content with your supper,
most learned Paganel."

"Enchanted with it, my brave Major; still I must confess I
should not say no to a dish of llama."

"You are a Sybarite."

"I plead guilty to the charge. But come, now, though you call me that,
you wouldn't sulk at a beefsteak yourself, would you?"

"Probably not."

"And if you were asked to lie in wait for a llama, notwithstanding the
cold and the darkness, you would do it without the least hesitation?"

"Of course; and if it will give you the slightest pleasure--"

His companions had hardly time to thank him for his obliging good nature,
when distant and prolonged howls broke on their ear, plainly not
proceeding from one or two solitary animals, but from a whole troop,
and one, moreover, that was rapidly approaching.

Providence had sent them a supper, as well as led them to a hut.
This was the geographer's conclusion; but Glenarvan damped his joy
somewhat by remarking that the quadrupeds of the Cordilleras are
never met with in such a high latitude.

"Then where can these animals come from?" asked Tom Austin. "Don't you
hear them getting nearer!"

"An avalanche," suggested Mulrady.

"Impossible," returned Paganel. "That is regular howling."

"Let us go out and see," said Glenarvan.

"Yes, and be ready for hunting," replied McNabbs, arming himself
with his carbine.

They all rushed forthwith out of the CASUCHA. Night had
completely set in, dark and starry. The moon, now in her
last quarter, had not yet risen. The peaks on the north and
east had disappeared from view, and nothing was visible save
the fantastic SILHOUETTE of some towering rocks here and there.
The howls, and clearly the howls of terrified animals,
were redoubled. They proceeded from that part of the Cordilleras
which lay in darkness. What could be going on there?
Suddenly a furious avalanche came down, an avalanche of living
animals mad with fear. The whole plateau seemed to tremble.
There were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these animals,

and in spite of the rarefied atmosphere, their noise was deafening.
Were they wild beasts from the Pampas, or herds of llamas and vicunas?
Glenarvan, McNabbs, Robert, Austin, and the two sailors,
had just time to throw themselves flat on the ground before
they swept past like a whirlwind, only a few paces distant.
Paganel, who had remained standing, to take advantage of his
peculiar powers of sight, was knocked down in a twinkling.
At the same moment the report of firearms was heard.
The Major had fired, and it seemed to him that an animal had fallen
close by, and that the whole herd, yelling louder than ever,
had rushed down and disappeared among the declivities lighted
up by the reflection of the volcano.

"Ah, I've got them," said a voice, the voice of Paganel.

"Got what?" asked Glenarvan.

"My spectacles," was the reply. "One might expect to lose that much
in such a tumult as this."

"You are not wounded, I hope?"

"No, only knocked down; but by what?"

"By this," replied the Major, holding up the animal he had killed.

They all hastened eagerly into the hut, to examine McNabbs'
prize by the light of the fire.

It was a pretty creature, like a small camel without a hump.
The head was small and the body flattened, the legs were long and slender,
the skin fine, and the hair the color of _cafe au lait_.

Paganel had scarcely looked at it before he exclaimed, "A guanaco!"

"What sort of an animal is that?" asked Glenarvan.

"One you can eat."

"And it is good savory meat, I assure you; a dish of Olympus! I knew
we should have fresh meat for supper, and such meat!
But who is going to cut up the beast?"

"I will," said Wilson.

"Well, I'll undertake to cook it," said Paganel.

"Can you cook, then, Monsieur Paganel?" asked Robert.

"I should think so, my boy. I'm a Frenchman, and in every Frenchman
there is a cook."

Five minutes afterward Paganel began to grill large slices
of venison on the embers made by the use of the LLARETTAS,
and in about ten minutes a dish was ready, which he served up
to his companions by the tempting name of guanaco cutlets.
No one stood on ceremony, but fell to with a hearty good will.

To the absolute stupefaction of the geographer, however,

the first mouthful was greeted with a general grimace,
and such exclamations as--"Tough!" "It is horrible."
"It is not eatable."

The poor SAVANT was obliged to own that his cutlets could not be relished,
even by hungry men. They began to banter him about his "Olympian dish,"
and indulge in jokes at his expense; but all he cared about was to find
out how it happened that the flesh of the guanaco, which was certainly
good and eatable food, had turned out so badly in his hands.
At last light broke in on him, and he called out:

"I see through it now! Yes, I see through it. I have found
out the secret now."

"The meat was too long kept, was it?" asked McNabbs, quietly.

"No, but the meat had walked too much. How could I have forgotten that?"

"What do you mean?" asked Tom Austin.

"I mean this: the guanaco is only good for eating when it is
killed in a state of rest. If it has been long hunted, and gone
over much ground before it is captured, it is no longer eatable.
I can affirm the fact by the mere taste, that this animal has
come a great distance, and consequently the whole herd has."

"You are certain of this?" asked Glenarvan.

"Absolutely certain."

"But what could have frightened the creatures so, and driven them
from their haunts, when they ought to have been quietly sleeping?"

"That's a question, my dear Glenarvan, I could not possibly answer.
Take my advice, and let us go to sleep without troubling our heads
about it. I say, Major, shall we go to sleep?"

"Yes, we'll go to sleep, Paganel."

Each one, thereupon, wrapped himself up in his poncho, and the fire
was made up for the night.

Loud snores in every tune and key soon resounded from all sides of
the hut, the deep bass contribution of Paganel completing the harmony.

But Glenarvan could not sleep. Secret uneasiness kept
him in a continual state of wakefulness. His thoughts
reverted involuntarily to those frightened animals flying
in one common direction, impelled by one common terror.
They could not be pursued by wild beasts, for at such an elevation
there were almost none to be met with, and of hunters still fewer.
What terror then could have driven them among the precipices
of the Andes? Glenarvan felt a presentiment of approaching danger.

But gradually he fell into a half-drowsy state, and his apprehensions
were lulled. Hope took the place of fear. He saw himself on the morrow
on the plains of the Andes, where the search would actually commence,
and perhaps success was close at hand. He thought of Captain Grant
and his two sailors, and their deliverance from cruel bondage.

As these visions passed rapidly through his mind, every now and then
he was roused by the crackling of the fire, or sparks flying out,
or some little jet of flame would suddenly flare up and illumine
the faces of his slumbering companions.

Then his presentiments returned in greater strength than before,
and he listened anxiously to the sounds outside the hut.

At certain intervals he fancied he could hear rumbling noises
in the distance, dull and threatening like the mutter-ings
of thunder before a storm. There surely must be a storm raging
down below at the foot of the mountains. He got up and went
out to see.

The moon was rising. The atmosphere was pure and calm.
Not a cloud visible either above or below. Here and there was
a passing reflection from the flames of Antuco, but neither storm
nor lightning, and myriads of bright stars studded the zenith.
Still the rumbling noises continued. They seemed to meet together
and cross the chain of the Andes. Glenarvan returned to the CASUCHA
more uneasy than ever, questioning within himself as to the
connection between these sounds and the flight of the guanacos.
He looked at his watch and found the time was about two in the morning.
As he had no certainty, however, of any immediate danger,
he did not wake his companions, who were sleeping soundly
after their fatigue, and after a little dozed off himself,
and slumbered heavily for some hours.

All of a sudden a violent crash made him start to his feet.
A deafening noise fell on his ear like the roar of artillery.
He felt the ground giving way beneath him, and the CASUCHA
rocked to and fro, and opened.

He shouted to his companions, but they were already awake,
and tumbling pell-mell over each other. They were being rapidly dragged
down a steep declivity. Day dawned and revealed a terrible scene.
The form of the mountains changed in an instant. Cones were cut off.
Tottering peaks disappeared as if some trap had opened at their base.
Owing to a peculiar phenomenon of the Cordilleras, an enormous mass,
many miles in extent, had been displaced entirely, and was speeding
down toward the plain.

"An earthquake!" exclaimed Paganel. He was not mistaken.
It was one of those cataclysms frequent in Chili, and in
this very region where Copiapo had been twice destroyed,
and Santiago four times laid in ruins in fourteen years.
This region of the globe is so underlaid with volcanic fires
and the volcanoes of recent origin are such insufficient
safety valves for the subterranean vapors, that shocks are of
frequent occurrence, and are called by the people TREMBLORES.

The plateau to which the seven men were clinging, holding on by tufts
of lichen, and giddy and terrified in the extreme, was rushing down
the declivity with the swiftness of an express, at the rate of fifty miles
an hour. Not a cry was possible, nor an attempt to get off or stop.
They could not even have heard themselves speak. The internal rumblings,
the crash of the avalanches, the fall of masses of granite and basalt,
and the whirlwind of pulverized snow, made all communication impossible.
Sometimes they went perfectly smoothly along without jolts or jerks,

and sometimes on the contrary, the plateau would reel and roll like a ship in a storm, coasting past abysses in which fragments of the mountain were falling, tearing up trees by the roots, and leveling, as if with the keen edge of an immense scythe, every projection of the declivity.

How long this indescribable descent would last, no one could calculate, nor what it would end in ultimately. None of the party knew whether the rest were still alive, whether one or another were not already lying in the depths of some abyss. Almost breathless with the swift motion, frozen with the cold air, which pierced them through, and blinded with the whirling snow, they gasped for breath, and became exhausted and nearly inanimate, only retaining their hold of the rocks by a powerful instinct of self-preservation. Suddenly a tremendous shock pitched them right off, and sent them rolling to the very foot of the mountain. The plateau had stopped.

For some minutes no one stirred. At last one of the party picked himself up, and stood on his feet, stunned by the shock, but still firm on his legs. This was the Major. He shook off the blinding snow and looked around him. His companions lay in a close circle like the shots from a gun that has just been discharged, piled one on top of another.

The Major counted them. All were there except one--that one was Robert Grant.

CHAPTER XIV PROVIDENTIALLY RESCUED

THE eastern side of the Cordilleras of the Andes consists of a succession of lengthened declivities, which slope down almost insensibly to the plain. The soil is carpeted with rich herbage, and adorned with magnificent trees, among which, in great numbers, were apple-trees, planted at the time of the conquest, and golden with fruit. There were literally, perfect forests of these. This district was, in fact, just a corner of fertile Normandy.

The sudden transition from a desert to an oasis, from snowy peaks to verdant plains, from Winter to Summer, can not fail to strike the traveler's eye.

The ground, moreover, had recovered its immobility. The trembling had ceased, though there was little doubt the forces below the surface were carrying on their devastating work further on, for shocks of earthquake are always occurring in some part or other of the Andes. This time the shock had been one of extreme violence. The outline of the mountains was wholly altered, and the Pampas guides would have sought vainly for the accustomed landmarks.

A magnificent day had dawned. The sun was just rising from his ocean bed, and his bright rays streamed already over the Argentine plains, and ran across to the Atlantic. It was about eight o'clock.

Lord Glenarvan and his companions were gradually restored to animation by the Major's efforts. They had been completely stunned, but had sustained no injury whatever. The descent of the Cordilleras was accomplished; and as Dame Nature had conveyed them at her own expense, they could

only have praised her method of locomotion if one of their number,
and that one the feeblest and youngest, the child of the party,
had not been missing at the roll call.

The brave boy was beloved by everybody. Paganel was particularly
attached to him, and so was the Major, with all his apparent coldness.
As for Glenarvan, he was in absolute despair when he heard
of his disappearance, and pictured to himself the child lying
in some deep abyss, wildly crying for succor.

"We must go and look for him, and look till we find him,"
he exclaimed, almost unable to keep back his tears.
"We cannot leave him to his fate. Every valley and
precipice and abyss must be searched through and through.
I will have a rope fastened round my waist, and go down myself.
I insist upon it; you understand; I insist upon it.
Heaven grant Robert may be still alive! If we lose the boy,
how could we ever dare to meet the father? What right have we
to save the captain at the cost of his son's life?"

Glenarvan's companions heard him in silence. He sought to read
hope in their eyes, but they did not venture to meet his gaze.

At last he said,

"Well, you hear what I say, but you make no response.
Do you mean to tell me that you have no hope--not the slightest?"

Again there was silence, till McNabbs asked:

"Which of you can recollect when Robert disappeared?"

No one could say.

"Well, then," resumed the Major, "you know this at any rate.
Who was the child beside during our descent of the Cordilleras?"

"Beside me," replied Wilson.

"Very well. Up to what moment did you see him beside you?
Try if you can remember."

"All that I can recollect is that Robert Grant was still by my side,
holding fast by a tuft of lichen, less than two minutes before the shock
which finished our descent."

"Less than two minutes? Mind what you are saying;
I dare say a minute seemed a very long time to you.
Are you sure you are not making a mistake?"

"I don't think I am. No; it was just about two minutes,
as I tell you."

"Very well, then; and was Robert on your right or left?"

"On my left. I remember that his poncho brushed past my face."

"And with regard to us, how were you placed?"

"On the left also."

"Then Robert must have disappeared on this side," said the Major,
turning toward the mountain and pointing toward the right:
"and I should judge," he added, "considering the time that
has elapsed, that the spot where he fell is about two miles up.
Between that height and the ground is where we must search,
dividing the different zones among us, and it is there we
shall find him."

Not another word was spoken. The six men commenced their explorations,
keeping constantly to the line they had made in their descent,
examining closely every fissure, and going into the very depths
of the abysses, choked up though they partly were with fragments
of the plateau; and more than one came out again with garments torn
to rags, and feet and hands bleeding. For many long hours these brave
fellows continued their search without dreaming of taking rest.
But all in vain. The child had not only met his death on the mountain,
but found a grave which some enormous rock had sealed forever.

About one o'clock, Glenarvan and his companions met again in the valley.
Glenarvan was completely crushed with grief. He scarcely spoke.
The only words that escaped his lips amid his sighs were,

"I shall not go away! I shall not go away!"

No one of the party but could enter into his feeling, and respect it.

"Let us wait," said Paganel to the Major and Tom Austin. "We will
take a little rest, and recruit our strength. We need it anyway,
either to prolong our search or continue our route."

"Yes; and, as Edward wishes it, we will rest. He has still hope,
but what is it he hopes?"

"Who knows!" said Tom Austin.

"Poor Robert!" replied Paganel, brushing away a tear.

The valley was thickly wooded, and the Major had no difficulty in finding
a suitable place of encampment. He chose a clump of tall carob trees,
under which they arranged their few belongings--few indeed, for all they
had were sundry wraps and fire-arms, and a little dried meat and rice.
Not far off there was a RIO, which supplied them with water, though it
was still somewhat muddy after the disturbance of the avalanche.
Mulrady soon had a fire lighted on the grass, and a warm refreshing
beverage to offer his master. But Glenarvan refused to touch it,
and lay stretched on his poncho in a state of absolute prostration.

So the day passed, and night came on, calm and peaceful as the preceding
had been. While his companions were lying motionless, though wide awake,
Glenarvan betook himself once more to the slopes of the Cordilleras,
listening intently in hope that some cry for help would fall
upon his ear. He ventured far up in spite of his being alone,
straining his ear with painful eagerness to catch the faintest sound,
and calling aloud in an agony of despair.

But he heard nothing save the beatings of his own heart,
though he wandered all night on the mountain. Sometimes the Major

followed him, and sometimes Paganel, ready to lend a helping hand among the slippery peaks and dangerous precipices among which he was dragged by his rash and useless imprudence. All his efforts were in vain, however, and to his repeated cries of "Robert, Robert!" echo was the only response.

Day dawned, and it now became a matter of necessity to go and bring back the poor Lord from the distant plateau, even against his will. His despair was terrible. Who could dare to speak of quitting this fatal valley? Yet provisions were done, and Argentine guides and horses were not far off to lead them to the Pampas. To go back would be more difficult than to go forward. Besides, the Atlantic Ocean was the appointed meeting place with the DUNCAN. These were strong reasons against any long delay; indeed it was best for all parties to continue the route as soon as possible.

McNabbs undertook the task of rousing Lord Glenarvan from his grief. For a long time his cousin seemed not to hear him. At last he shook his head, and said, almost in-audibly:

"Did you say we must start?"

"Yes, we must start."

"Wait one hour longer."

"Yes, we'll wait another," replied the Major.

The hour slipped away, and again Glenarvan begged for longer grace. To hear his imploring tones, one might have thought him a criminal begging a respite. So the day passed on till it was almost noon. McNabbs hesitated now no longer, but, acting on the advice of the rest, told his cousin that start they must, for all their lives depended on prompt action.

"Yes, yes!" replied Glenarvan. "Let us start, let us start!"

But he spoke without looking at McNabbs. His gaze was fixed intently on a certain dark speck in the heavens. Suddenly he exclaimed, extending his arm, and keeping it motionless, as if petrified:

"There! there! Look! look!"

All eyes turned immediately in the direction indicated so imperiously. The dark speck was increasing visibly. It was evidently some bird hovering above them.

"A condor," said Paganel.

"Yes, a condor," replied Glenarvan. "Who knows? He is coming down-- he is gradually getting lower! Let us wait."

Paganel was not mistaken, it was assuredly a condor. This magnificent bird is the king of the Southern Andes, and was formerly worshiped by the Incas. It attains an extraordinary development in those regions. Its strength is prodigious. It has frequently driven oxen over the edge of precipices down into

the depths of abysses. It seizes sheep, and kids, and young calves, browsing on the plains, and carries them off to inaccessible heights. It hovers in the air far beyond the utmost limits of human sight, and its powers of vision are so great that it can discern the smallest objects on the earth beneath.

What had this condor discovered then? Could it be the corpse of Robert Grant? "Who knows?" repeated Glenarvan, keeping his eye immovably fixed on the bird. The enormous creature was fast approaching, sometimes hovering for awhile with outspread wings, and sometimes falling with the swiftness of inert bodies in space. Presently he began to wheel round in wide circles. They could see him distinctly. He measured more than fifteen feet, and his powerful wings bore him along with scarcely the slightest effort, for it is the prerogative of large birds to fly with calm majesty, while insects have to beat their wings a thousand times a second.

The Major and Wilson had seized their carbines, but Glenarvan stopped them by a gesture. The condor was encircling in his flight a sort of inaccessible plateau about a quarter of a mile up the side of the mountain. He wheeled round and round with dazzling rapidity, opening and shutting his formidable claws, and shaking his cartilaginous carbuncle, or comb.

"It is there, there!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

A sudden thought flashed across his mind, and with a terrible cry, he called out, "Fire! fire! Oh, suppose Robert were still alive! That bird."

But it was too late. The condor had dropped out of sight behind the crags. Only a second passed, a second that seemed an age, and the enormous bird reappeared, carrying a heavy load and flying at a slow rate.

A cry of horror rose on all sides. It was a human body the condor had in his claws, dangling in the air, and apparently lifeless-- it was Robert Grant. The bird had seized him by his clothes, and had him hanging already at least one hundred and fifty feet in the air. He had caught sight of the travelers, and was flapping his wings violently, endeavoring to escape with his heavy prey.

"Oh! would that Robert were dashed to pieces against the rocks, rather than be a--"

He did not finish his sentence, but seizing Wilson's carbine, took aim at the condor. His arm was too trembling, however, to keep the weapon steady.

"Let me do it," said the Major. And with a calm eye, and sure hands and motionless body, he aimed at the bird, now three hundred feet above him in the air.

But before he had pulled the trigger the report of a gun resounded from the bottom of the valley. A white smoke rose from between two masses of basalt, and the condor, shot in the head, gradually turned over and began to fall, supported by his great wings spread out like a parachute. He had not let go his prey, but gently sank down with it on the ground, about ten paces from the stream.

"We've got him, we've got him," shouted Glenarvan; and without waiting to see where the shot so providentially came from, he rushed toward the condor, followed by his companions.

When they reached the spot the bird was dead, and the body of Robert was quite concealed beneath his mighty wings. Glenarvan flung himself on the corpse, and dragging it from the condor's grasp, placed it flat on the grass, and knelt down and put his ear to the heart.

But a wilder cry of joy never broke from human lips, than Glenarvan uttered the next moment, as he started to his feet and exclaimed:

"He is alive! He is still alive!"

The boy's clothes were stripped off in an instant, and his face bathed with cold water. He moved slightly, opened his eyes, looked round and murmured, "Oh, my Lord! Is it you!" he said; "my father!"

Glenarvan could not reply. He was speechless with emotion, and kneeling down by the side of the child so miraculously saved, burst into tears.

CHAPTER XV THALCAVE

ROBERT had no sooner escaped one terrible danger than he ran the risk of another scarcely less formidable. He was almost torn to pieces by his friends, for the brave fellows were so overjoyed at the sight of him, that in spite of his weak state, none of them would be satisfied without

V. IV Verne giving him a hug. However, it seemed as if good rough hugging did not hurt sick people; at any rate it did not hurt Robert, but quite the contrary.

But the first joy of deliverance over, the next thought was who was the deliverer? Of course it was the Major who suggested looking for him, and he was not far off, for about fifty paces from the RIO a man of very tall stature was seen standing motionless on the lowest crags at the foot of the mountain. A long gun was lying at his feet.

He had broad shoulders, and long hair bound together with leather thongs. He was over six feet in height. His bronzed face was red between the eyes and mouth, black by the lower eyelids, and white on the forehead. He wore the costume of the Patagonians on the frontiers, consisting of a splendid cloak, ornamented with scarlet arabesques, made of the skins of the guanaco, sewed together with ostrich tendons, and with the silky wool turned up on the edge. Under this mantle was a garment of fox-skin, fastened round the waist, and coming down to a point in front. A little bag hung from his belt, containing colors for painting his face. His boots were pieces of ox hide, fastened round the ankles by straps, across.

This Patagonian had a splendid face, indicating real intelligence,

notwithstanding the medley of colors by which it was disfigured. His waiting attitude was full of dignity; indeed, to see him standing grave and motionless on his pedestal of rocks, one might have taken him for a statue of _sang-froid_.

As soon as the Major perceived him, he pointed him out to Glenarvan, who ran toward him immediately. The Patagonian came two steps forward to meet him, and Glenarvan caught hold of his hand and pressed it in his own. It was impossible to mistake the meaning of the action, for the noble face of the Scotch lord so beamed with gratitude that no words were needed. The stranger bowed slightly in return, and said a few words that neither Glenarvan nor the Major could understand.

The Patagonian surveyed them attentively for a few minutes, and spoke again in another language. But this second idiom was no more intelligible than the first. Certain words, however, caught Glenarvan's ear as sounding like Spanish, a few sentences of which he could speak.

ESPANOL?" he asked.

The Patagonian nodded in reply, a movement of the head which has an affirmative significance among all nations.

"That's good!" said the Major. "Our friend Paganel will be the very man for him. It is lucky for us that he took it into his head to learn Spanish."

Paganel was called forthwith. He came at once, and saluted the stranger with all the grace of a Frenchman. But his compliments were lost on the Patagonian, for he did not understand a single syllable.

However, on being told how things stood, he began in Spanish, and opening his mouth as wide as he could, the better to articulate, said:

"_Vos sois um homen de bem_." (You are a brave man.)

The native listened, but made no reply.

"He doesn't understand," said the geographer.

"Perhaps you haven't the right accent," suggested the Major.

"That's just it! Confound the accent!"

Once more Paganel repeated his compliment, but with no better success.

"I'll change the phrase," he said; and in slow, deliberate tones he went on, "_Sam duvida um Patagao_" (A Patagonian, undoubtedly).

No response still.

"DIZEIME!" said Paganel (Answer me).

But no answer came.

"_Vos compriendeis?_" (Do you understand?) shouted Paganel, at the very top of his voice, as if he would burst his throat.

Evidently the Indian did not understand, for he replied in Spanish,

"_No comprendo_" (I do not understand).

It was Paganel's turn now to be amazed. He pushed his spectacles right down over his nose, as if greatly irritated, and said,

"I'll be hanged if I can make out one word of his infernal patois. It is Araucanian, that's certain!"

"Not a bit of it!" said Glenarvan. "It was Spanish he spoke."

And addressing the Patagonian, he repeated the word, "ESPANOL?" (Spanish?).

"_Si, si_" (yes, yes) replied the Indian.

Paganel's surprise became absolute stupefaction. The Major and his cousin exchanged sly glances, and McNabbs said, mischievously, with a look of fun on his face, "Ah, ah, my worthy friend; is this another of your misadventures? You seem to have quite a monopoly of them."

"What!" said Paganel, pricking up his ear.

"Yes, it's clear enough the man speaks Spanish."

"He!"

"Yes, he certainly speaks Spanish. Perhaps it is some other language you have been studying all this time instead of--"

But Paganel would not allow him to proceed. He shrugged his shoulders, and said stiffly,

"You go a little too far, Major."

"Well, how is it that you don't understand him then?"

"Why, of course, because the man speaks badly," replied the learned geographer, getting impatient.

"He speaks badly; that is to say, because you can't understand him," returned the Major coolly.

"Come, come, McNabbs," put in Glenarvan, "your supposition is quite inadmissable. However DISTRAIT our friend Paganel is, it is hardly likely he would study one language for another."

"Well, Edward--or rather you, my good Paganel--explain it then."

"I explain nothing. I give proof. Here is the book I use daily, to practice myself in the difficulties of the Spanish language. Examine it for yourself, Major," he said, handing him a volume in a very ragged condition, which he had brought up, after a long rummage, from the depths of one of his numerous pockets. "Now you can see whether I am imposing on you," he continued, indignantly.

"And what's the name of this book?" asked the Major, as he took it from his hand.

"The LUSIADES, an admirable epic, which--"

"The LUSIADES!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, my friend, the LUSIADES of the great Camoens, neither more nor less."

"Camoens!" repeated Glenarvan; "but Paganel, my unfortunate fellow, Camoens was a Portuguese! It is Portuguese you have been learning for the last six weeks!"

"Camoens! LUISADES! Portuguese!" Paganel could not say more. He looked vexed, while his companions, who had all gathered round, broke out in a furious burst of laughter.

The Indian never moved a muscle of his face. He quietly awaited the explanation of this incomprehensible mirth.

"Fool, idiot, that I am!" at last uttered Paganel. "Is it really a fact? You are not joking with me? It is what I have actually been doing? Why, it is a second confusion of tongues, like Babel. Ah me! alack-a-day! my friends, what is to become of me? To start for India and arrive at Chili! To learn Spanish and talk Portuguese! Why, if I go on like this, some day I shall be throwing myself out of the window instead of my cigar!"

To hear Paganel bemoan his misadventures and see his comical discomfiture, would have upset anyone's gravity. Besides, he set the example himself, and said:

"Laugh away, my friends, laugh as loud as you like; you can't laugh at me half as much as I laugh at myself!"

"But, I say," said the Major, after a minute, "this doesn't alter the fact that we have no interpreter."

"Oh, don't distress yourself about that," replied Paganel, "Portuguese and Spanish are so much alike that I made a mistake; but this very resemblance will be a great help toward rectifying it. In a very short time I shall be able to thank the Patagonian in the language he speaks so well."

Paganel was right. He soon managed to exchange a few words with the stranger, and found out even that his name was Thalcave, a word that signified in Araucanian, "The Thunderer." This surname had, no doubt, come from his skill in handling fire-arms.

But what rejoiced Glenarvan most was to learn that he was a guide by occupation, and, moreover, a guide across the Pampas. To his mind, the meeting with him was so providential, that he could not doubt now of the success of their enterprise. The deliverance of Captain Grant seemed an accomplished fact.

When the party went back to Robert, the boy held out his arms to the Patagonian, who silently laid his hand on his head, and proceeded to examine him with the greatest care, gently feeling

each of his aching limbs. Then he went down to the RIO,
and gathered a few handfuls of wild celery, which grew on the banks,
with which he rubbed the child's body all over. He handled him
with the most exquisite delicacy, and his treatment so revived
the lad's strength, that it was soon evident that a few hours'
rest would set him all right.

It was accordingly decided that they should encamp for the rest of the day
and the ensuing night. Two grave questions, moreover, had to be settled:
where to get food, and means of transport. Provisions and mules were
both lacking. Happily, they had Thalcave, however, a practised guide,
and one of the most intelligent of his class. He undertook to find
all that was needed, and offered to take him to a TOLDERIA of Indians,
not further than four miles off at most, where he could get supplies
of all he wanted. This proposition was partly made by gestures,
and partly by a few Spanish words which Paganel managed to make out.
His offer was accepted, and Glenarvan and his learned friend started
off with him at once.

They walked at a good pace for an hour and a half, and had to make
great strides to keep up with the giant Thalcave. The road lay
through a beautiful fertile region, abounding in rich pasturages;
where a hundred thousand cattle might have fed comfortably.
Large ponds, connected by an inextricable labyrinth of RIOS,
amply watered these plains and produced their greenness.
Swans with black heads were disporting in the water,
disputing possession with the numerous intruders which
gamboled over the LLANOS. The feathered tribes were of most
brilliant plumage, and of marvelous variety and deafening noise.
The isacus, a graceful sort of dove with gray feathers streaked
with white, and the yellow cardinals, were flitting about
in the trees like moving flowers; while overhead pigeons,
sparrows, chingolos, bulgueros, and mongitas, were flying
swiftly along, rending the air with their piercing cries.

Paganel's admiration increased with every step, and he had nearly
exhausted his vocabulary of adjectives by his loud exclamations,
to the astonishment of the Patagonian, to whom the birds,
and the swans, and the prairies were every day things.
The learned geographer was so lost in delight, that he seemed hardly
to have started before they came in sight of the Indian camp,
or TOLDERIA, situated in the heart of a valley.

About thirty nomadic Indians were living there in rude cabins made of
branches, pasturing immense herds of milch cows, sheep, oxen, and horses.
They went from one prairie to another, always finding a well-spread
table for their four-footed guests.

These nomads were a hybrid type of Araucans, Pehu-enches,
and Aucas. They were Ando-Peruvians, of an olive tint, of medium
stature and massive form, with a low forehead, almost circular face,
thin lips, high cheekbones, effeminate features, and cold expression.
As a whole, they are about the least interesting of the Indians.
However, it was their herds Glenarvan wanted, not themselves.
As long as he could get beef and horses, he cared for nothing else.

Thalcave did the bargaining. It did not take long. In exchange
for seven ready saddled horses of the Argentine breed, 100 pounds
of CHARQUI, or dried meat, several measures of rice, and leather

bottles for water, the Indians agreed to take twenty ounces of gold as they could not get wine or rum, which they would have preferred, though they were perfectly acquainted with the value of gold. Glenarvan wished to purchase an eighth horse for the Patagonian, but he gave him to understand that it would be useless.

They got back to the camp in less than half an hour, and were hailed with acclamations by the whole party or rather the provisions and horses were. They were all hungry, and ate heartily of the welcome viands. Robert took a little food with the rest. He was fast recovering strength. The close of the day was spent in complete repose and pleasant talk about the dear absent ones.

Paganel never quitted the Indian's side. It was not that he was so glad to see a real Patagonian, by whom he looked a perfect pigmy-- a Patagonian who might have almost rivaled the Emperor Maximii, and that Congo negro seen by the learned Van der Brock, both eight feet high; but he caught up Spanish phrases from the Indian and studied the language without a book this time, gesticulating at a great rate all the grand sonorous words that fell on his ear.

"If I don't catch the accent," he said to the Major, "it won't be my fault; but who would have said to me that it was a Patagonian who would teach me Spanish one day?"

CHAPTER XVI THE NEWS OF THE LOST CAPTAIN

NEXT day, the 22d of October, at eight o'clock in the morning, Thalcave gave the signal for departure. Between the 22d and 42d degrees the Argentine soil slopes eastward, and all the travelers had to do was to follow the slope right down to the sea.

Glenarvan had supposed Thalcave's refusal of a horse was that he preferred walking, as some guides do, but he was mistaken, for just as they were ready, the Patagonian gave a peculiar whistle, and immediately a magnificent steed of the pure Argentine breed came bounding out of a grove close by, at his master's call. Both in form and color the animal was of perfect beauty. The Major, who was a thorough judge of all the good points of a horse, was loud in admiration of this sample of the Pampas breed, and considered that, in many respects, he greatly resembled an English hunter. This splendid creature was called "Thaouka," a word in Patagonia which means bird, and he well deserved the name.

Thalcave was a consummate horseman, and to see him on his prancing steed was a sight worth looking at. The saddle was adapted to the two hunting weapons in common use on the Argentine plains--the BOLAS and the LAZO. The BOLAS consists of three balls fastened together by a strap of leather, attached to the front of the RECADO. The Indians fling them often at the distance of a hundred feet from the animal or enemy of which they are in pursuit, and with such precision that they catch round their legs and throw them down in an instant. It is a formidable weapon in their hands, and one they handle with surprising skill. The LAZO is always retained in the hand. It is simply a rope, thirty feet long, made of tightly twisted leather, with a slip knot at the end, which passes through an iron ring.

This noose was thrown by the right hand, while the left keeps fast hold of the rope, the other end of which is fastened to the saddle. A long carbine, in the shoulder belt completed the accouterments of the Patagonian.

He took his place at the head of the party, quite unconscious of the admiration he was exciting, and they set off, going alternately at a gallop and walking pace, for the "trot" seemed altogether unknown to them. Robert proved to be a bold rider, and completely reassured Glenarvan as to his ability to keep his seat.

The Pampas commenced at the very foot of the Cordilleras. They may be divided into three parts. The first extends from the chain of the Andes, and stretches over an extent of 250 miles covered with stunted trees and bushes; the second 450 miles is clothed with magnificent herbage, and stops about 180 miles from Buenos Ayres; from this point to the sea, the foot of the traveler treads over immense prairies of lucerne and thistles, which constitute the third division of the Pampas.

On issuing from the gorges of the Cordilleras, Glenarvan and his band came first to plains of sand, called MEDANOS, lying in ridges like waves of the sea, and so extremely fine that the least breath of wind agitated the light particles, and sent them flying in clouds, which rose and fell like water-spouts. It was a spectacle which caused both pleasure and pain, for nothing could be more curious than to see the said water-spouts wandering over the plain, coming in contact and mingling with each other, and falling and rising in wild confusion; but, on the other hand, nothing could be more disagreeable than the dust which was thrown off by these innumerable MEDANOS, which was so impalpable that close one's eyes as they might, it found its way through the lids.

This phenomenon lasted the greater part of the day.
The travelers made good progress, however, and about four o'clock the Cordilleras lay full forty miles behind them, the dark outlines being already almost lost in the evening mists. They were all somewhat fatigued with the journey, and glad enough to halt for the night on the banks of the Neuquem, called Ramid, or Comoe by certain geographers, a troubled, turbulent rapid flowing between high red banks.

No incident of any importance occurred that night or the following day. They rode well and fast, finding the ground firm, and the temperature bearable. Toward noon, however, the sun's rays were extremely scorching, and when evening came, a bar of clouds streaked the southwest horizon--a sure sign of a change in the weather. The Patagonian pointed it out to the geographer, who replied:

"Yes, I know;" and turning to his companions, added, "see, a change of weather is coming! We are going to have a taste of PAMPERO."

And he went on to explain that this PAMPERO is very common in the Argentine plains. It is an extremely dry wind which blows from the southwest. Thalcave was not mistaken, for the PAMPERO blew violently all night, and was sufficiently trying to poor fellows only sheltered by their ponchos. The horses lay down on the ground, and the men stretched themselves beside them in a close group. Glenarvan was afraid they would be delayed by the continuance of the hurricane, but Paganel was able to reassure him on that score, after consulting his barometer.

"The PAMPERO generally brings a tempest which lasts three days,
and may be always foretold by the depression of the mercury,"
he said. "But when the barometer rises, on the contrary,
which is the case now, all we need expect is a few violent blasts.
So you can make your mind easy, my good friend; by sunrise
the sky will be quite clear again."

"You talk like a book, Paganel," replied Glenarvan.

"And I am one; and what's more, you are welcome to turn over my leaves
whenever you like."

The book was right. At one o'clock the wind suddenly lulled,
and the weary men fell asleep and woke at daybreak,
refreshed and invigorated.

It was the 20th of October, and the tenth day since they had
left Talcahuano. They were still ninety miles from the point
where the Rio Colorado crosses the thirty-seventh parallel,
that is to say, about two days' journey. Glenarvan kept
a sharp lookout for the appearance of any Indians, intending to
question them, through Thalcave, about Captain Grant, as Paganel
could not speak to him well enough for this. But the track
they were following was one little frequented by the natives,
for the ordinary routes across the Pampas lie further north.
If by chance some nomadic horseman came in sight far away,
he was off again like a dart, not caring to enter into conversation
with strangers. To a solitary individual, a little troop of
eight men, all mounted and well armed, wore a suspicious aspect,
so that any intercourse either with honest men or even banditti,
was almost impossible.

Glenarvan was regretting this exceedingly, when he unexpectedly met
with a singular justification of his rendering of the eventful document.

In pursuing the course the travelers had laid down for themselves,
they had several times crossed the routes over the plains in common use,
but had struck into none of them. Hitherto Thalcave had made no
remark about this. He understood quite well, however, that they
were not bound for any particular town, or village, or settlement.
Every morning they set out in a straight line toward the rising sun,
and went on without the least deviation. Moreover, it must have
struck Thalcave that instead of being the guide he was guided;
yet, with true Indian reserve, he maintained absolute silence.
But on reaching a particular point, he checked his horse suddenly,
and said to Paganel:

"The Carmen route."

"Yes, my good Patagonian," replied Paganel in his best Spanish;
"the route from Carmen to Mendoza."

"We are not going to take it?"

"No," replied Paganel.

"Where are we going then?"

"Always to the east."

"That's going nowhere."

"Who knows?"

Thalcave was silent, and gazed at the geographer with an air of profound surprise. He had no suspicion that Paganel was joking, for an Indian is always grave.

"You are not going to Carmen, then?" he added, after a moment's pause.

"No."

"Nor to Mendoza?"

"No, nor to Mendoza."

Just then Glenarvan came up to ask the reason of the stoppage, and what he and Thalcave were discussing.

"He wanted to know whether we were going to Carmen or Mendoza, and was very much surprised at my negative reply to both questions."

"Well, certainly, it must seem strange to him."

"I think so. He says we are going nowhere."

"Well, Paganel, I wonder if it is possible to make him understand the object of our expedition, and what our motive is for always going east."

"That would be a difficult matter, for an Indian knows nothing about degrees, and the finding of the document would appear to him a mere fantastic story."

"Is it the story he would not understand, or the storyteller?" said McNabbs, quietly

"Ah, McNabbs, I see you have small faith in my Spanish yet."

"Well, try it, my good friend."

"So I will."

And turning round to the Patagonian he began his narrative, breaking down frequently for the want of a word, and the difficulty of making certain details intelligible to a half-civilized Indian. It was quite a sight to see the learned geographer. He gesticulated and articulated, and so worked himself up over it, that the big drops of sweat fell in a cascade down his forehead on to his chest. When his tongue failed, his arms were called to aid. Paganel got down on the ground and traced a geographical map on the sand, showing where the lines of latitude and longitude cross and where the two oceans were, along which the Carmen route led. Thalcave looked on composedly, without giving any indication of comprehending or not comprehending.

The lesson had lasted half an hour, when the geographer left off, wiped his streaming face, and waited for the Patagonian to speak.

"Does he understand?" said Glenarvan.

"That remains to be seen; but if he doesn't, I give it up," replied Paganel.

Thalcave neither stirred nor spoke. His eyes remained fixed on the lines drawn on the sand, now becoming fast effaced by the wind.

"Well?" said Paganel to him at length.

The Patagonian seemed not to hear. Paganel fancied he could detect an ironical smile already on the lips of the Major, and determined to carry the day, was about to recommence his geographical illustrations, when the Indian stopped him by a gesture, and said:

"You are in search of a prisoner?"

"Yes," replied Paganel.

"And just on this line between the setting and rising sun?" added Thalcave, speaking in Indian fashion of the route from west to east.

"Yes, yes, that's it."

"And it's your God," continued the guide, "that has sent you the secret of this prisoner on the waves."

"God himself."

"His will be accomplished then," replied the native almost solemnly. "We will march east, and if it needs be, to the sun."

Paganel, triumphing in his pupil, immediately translated his replies to his companions, and exclaimed:

"What an intelligent race! All my explanations would have been lost on nineteen in every twenty of the peasants in my own country."

Glenarvan requested him to ask the Patagonian if he had heard of any foreigners who had fallen into the hands of the Indians of the Pampas.

Paganel did so, and waited an answer.

"Perhaps I have."

The reply was no sooner translated than the Patagonian found himself surrounded by the seven men questioning him with eager glances. Paganel was so excited, he could hardly find words, and he gazed at the grave Indian as if he could read the reply on his lips.

Each word spoken by Thalcave was instantly translated, so that the whole party seemed to hear him speak in their mother tongue.

"And what about the prisoner?" asked Paganel.

"He was a foreigner."

"You have seen him?"

"No; but I have heard the Indian speak of him. He is brave; he has the heart of a bull."

"The heart of a bull!" said Paganel. "Ah, this magnificent Patagonian language. You understand him, my friends, he means a courageous man."

"My father!" exclaimed Robert Grant, and, turning to Paganel, he asked what the Spanish was for, "Is it my father."

"_Es mio padre_," replied the geographer.

Immediately taking Thalcave's hands in his own, the boy said, in a soft tone:

"_Es mio padre_."

"_Suo padre_," replied the Patagonian, his face lighting up.

He took the child in his arms, lifted him up on his horse, and gazed at him with peculiar sympathy. His intelligent face was full of quiet feeling.

But Paganel had not completed his interrogations. "This prisoner, who was he? What was he doing? When had Thalcave heard of him?" All these questions poured upon him at once.

He had not long to wait for an answer, and learned that the European was a slave in one of the tribes that roamed the country between the Colorado and the Rio Negro.

"But where was the last place he was in?"

"With the Cacique Calfoucoura."

"In the line we have been following?"

"Yes."

"And who is this Cacique?"

"The chief of the Poyuches Indians, a man with two tongues and two hearts."

"That's to say false in speech and false in action," said Paganel, after he had translated this beautiful figure of the Patagonian language.

"And can we deliver our friend?" he added.

"You may if he is still in the hands of the Indians."

"And when did you last hear of him?"

"A long while ago; the sun has brought two summers since then

to the Pampas."

The joy of Glenarvan can not be described. This reply agreed perfectly with the date of the document. But one question still remained for him to put to Thalcave.

"You spoke of a prisoner," he said; "but were there not three?"

"I don't know," said Thalcave.

"And you know nothing of his present situation?"

"Nothing."

This ended the conversation. It was quite possible that the three men had become separated long ago; but still this much was certain, that the Indians had spoken of a European that was in their power; and the date of the captivity, and even the descriptive phrase about the captive, evidently pointed to Harry Grant.

CHAPTER XVII A SERIOUS NECESSITY

THE Argentine Pampas extend from the thirty-fourth to the fortieth degree of southern latitude. The word PAMPA, of Araucanian origin, signifies _grass plain_, and justly applies to the whole region. The mimosas growing on the western part, and the substantial herbage on the eastern, give those plains a peculiar appearance. The soil is composed of sand and red or yellow clay, and this is covered by a layer of earth, in which the vegetation takes root. The geologist would find rich treasures in the tertiary strata here, for it is full of antediluvian remains--enormous bones, which the Indians attribute to some gigantic race that lived in a past age.

The horses went on at a good pace through the thick PAJA-BRAVA, the grass of the Pampas, _par excellence_, so high and thick that the Indians find shelter in it from storms. At certain distances, but increasingly seldom, there were wet, marshy spots, almost entirely under water, where the willows grew, and a plant called the _Gygnerium argenteum_. Here the horses drank their fill greedily, as if bent on quenching their thirst for past, present and future. Thalcave went first to beat the bushes and frighten away the cholinas, a most dangerous species of viper, the bite of which kills an ox in less than an hour.

For two days they plodded steadily across this arid and deserted plain. The dry heat became severe. There were not only no RIOS, but even the ponds dug out by the Indians were dried up. As the drought seemed to increase with every mile, Paganel asked Thalcave when he expected to come to water.

"At Lake Salinas," replied the Indian.

"And when shall we get there?"

"To-morrow evening."

When the Argentines travel in the Pampas they generally dig wells,
and find water a few feet below the surface. But the travelers could
not fall back on this resource, not having the necessary implements.
They were therefore obliged to husband the small provision of water
they had still left, and deal it out in rations, so that if no one
had enough to satisfy his thirst no one felt it too painful.

They halted at evening after a course of thirty miles and eagerly looked
forward to a good night's rest to compensate for the fatigue of day.
But their slumbers were invaded by a swarm of mosquitoes, which allowed
them no peace. Their presence indicated a change of wind which shifted
to the north. A south or southwest wind generally puts to flight
these little pests.

Even these petty ills of life could not ruffle the Major's equanimity;
but Paganel, on the contrary, was perfectly exasperated by such
trifling annoyances. He abused the poor mosquitoes desperately,
and deplored the lack of some acid lotion which would have eased
the pain of their stings. The Major did his best to console
him by reminding him of the fact that they had only to do with
one species of insect, among the 300,000 naturalists reckon.
He would listen to nothing, and got up in a very bad temper.

He was quite willing to start at daybreak, however, for they had
to get to Lake Salinas before sundown. The horses were tired out
and dying for water, and though their riders had stinted themselves
for their sakes, still their ration was very insufficient.
The drought was constantly increasing, and the heat none the less
for the wind being north, this wind being the simoom of the Pampas.

There was a brief interruption this day to the monotony
of the journey. Mulrady, who was in front of the others,
rode hastily back to report the approach of a troop
of Indians. The news was received with very different feelings
by Glenarvan and Thalcave. The Scotchman was glad of the chance
of gleaning some information about his shipwrecked countryman,
while the Patagonian hardly cared to encounter the nomadic
Indians of the prairie, knowing their bandit propensities.
He rather sought to avoid them, and gave orders to his party
to have their arms in readiness for any trouble.

Presently the nomads came in sight, and the Patagonian
was reassured at finding they were only ten in number.
They came within a hundred yards of them, and stopped.
This was near enough to observe them distinctly.
They were fine specimens of the native races, which had
been almost entirely swept away in 1833 by General Rosas,
tall in stature, with arched forehead and olive complexion.
They were dressed in guanaco skins, and carried lances twenty
feet long, knives, slings, bolas, and lassos, and, by their
dexterity in the management of their horses, showed themselves
to be accomplished riders.

They appeared to have stopped for the purpose of holding a council
with each other, for they shouted and gesticulated at a great rate.
Glenarvan determined to go up to them; but he had no sooner moved forward
than the whole band wheeled round, and disappeared with incredible speed.
It would have been useless for the travelers to attempt to overtake

them with such wornout horses.

"The cowards!" exclaimed Paganel.

"They scampered off too quick for honest folks," said McNabbs.

"Who are these Indians, Thalcave?" asked Paganel.

"Gauchos."

"The Gauchos!" cried Paganel; and, turning to his companions, he added, "we need not have been so much on our guard; there was nothing to fear."

"How is that?" asked McNabbs.

"Because the Gauchos are inoffensive peasants."

"You believe that, Paganel?"

"Certainly I do. They took us for robbers, and fled in terror."

"I rather think they did not dare to attack us," replied Glenarvan, much vexed at not being able to enter into some sort of communication with those Indians, whatever they were.

"That's my opinion too," said the Major, "for if I am not mistaken, instead of being harmless, the Gauchos are formidable out-and-out bandits."

"The idea!" exclaimed Paganel.

And forthwith commenced a lively discussion of this ethnological thesis--so lively that the Major became excited, and, quite contrary to his usual suavity, said bluntly:

"I believe you are wrong, Paganel."

"Wrong?" replied Paganel.

"Yes. Thalcave took them for robbers, and he knows what he is talking about."

"Well, Thalcave was mistaken this time," retorted Paganel, somewhat sharply. "The Gauchos are agricul-turists and shepherds, and nothing else, as I have stated in a pamphlet on the natives of the Pampas, written by me, which has attracted some notice."

[illustration omitted] [page intentionally blank]

"Well, well, you have committed an error, that's all, Monsieur Paganel."

"What, Monsieur McNabbs! you tell me I have committed an error?"

"An inadvertence, if you like, which you can put among the ERRATA in the next edition."

Paganel, highly incensed at his geographical knowledge being brought in question, and even jested about, allowed his ill-humor to get the better of him, and said:

"Know, sir, that my books have no need of such ERRATA."

"Indeed! Well, on this occasion they have, at any rate," retorted McNabbs, quite as obstinate as his opponent.

"Sir, I think you are very annoying to-day."

"And I think you are very crabbed."

Glenarvan thought it was high time to interfere, for the discussion was getting too hot, so he said:

"Come, now, there is no doubt one of you is very teasing and the other is very crabbed, and I must say I am surprised at both of you."

The Patagonian, without understanding the cause, could see that the two friends were quarreling. He began to smile, and said quietly:

"It's the north wind."

"The north wind," exclaimed Paganel; "what's the north wind to do with it?"

"Ah, it is just that," said Glenarvan. "It's the north wind that has put you in a bad temper. I have heard that, in South America, the wind greatly irritates the nervous system."

"By St. Patrick, Edward you are right," said the Major, laughing heartily.

But Paganel, in a towering rage, would not give up the contest, and turned upon Glenarvan, whose intervention in this jesting manner he resented.

"And so, my Lord, my nervous system is irritated?" he said.

"Yes, Paganel, it is the north wind--a wind which causes many a crime in the Pampas, as the TRAMONTANE does in the Campagna of Rome."

"Crimes!" returned the geographer. "Do I look like a man that would commit crimes?"

"That's not exactly what I said."

"Tell me at once that I want to assassinate you?"

"Well, I am really afraid," replied Glenarvan, bursting into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, in which all others joined.

Paganel said no more, but went off in front alone, and came back in a few minutes quite himself, as if he had completely forgotten his grievance.

At eight o'clock in the evening, Thalcave, who was considerably in

advance of the rest, descried in the distance the much-desired lake,
and in less than a quarter of an hour they reached its banks;
but a grievous disappointment awaited them--the lake was dried up.

CHAPTER XVIII IN SEARCH OF WATER

LAKE SALINAS ends the string of lagoons connected with the Sierras Ventana and Guamini. Numerous expeditions were formerly made there from Buenos Ayres, to collect the salt deposited on its banks, as the waters contain great quantities of chloride of sodium.

But when Thalcave spoke of the lake as supplying drinkable water he was thinking of the RIOS of fresh water which run into it. Those streams, however, were all dried up also; the burning sun had drunk up every thing liquid, and the consternation of the travelers may be imagined at the discovery.

Some action must be taken immediately, however; for what little water still remained was almost bad, and could not quench thirst. Hunger and fatigue were forgotten in the face of this imperious necessity. A sort of leather tent, called a ROUKAH, which had been left by the natives, afforded the party a temporary resting-place, and the weary horses stretched themselves along the muddy banks, and tried to browse on the marine plants and dry reeds they found there--nauseous to the taste as they must have been.

As soon as the whole party were ensconced in the ROUKAH, Paganel asked Thalcave what he thought was best to be done. A rapid conversation followed, a few words of which were intelligible to Glenarvan. Thalcave spoke calmly, but the lively Frenchman gesticulated enough for both. After a little, Thalcave sat silent and folded his arms.

"What does he say?" asked Glenarvan. "I fancied he was advising us to separate."

"Yes, into two parties. Those of us whose horses are so done out with fatigue and thirst that they can scarcely drag one leg after the other, are to continue the route as they best can, while the others, whose steeds are fresher, are to push on in advance toward the river Guamini, which throws itself into Lake San Lucas about thirty-one miles off. If there should be water enough in the river, they are to wait on the banks till their companions reach them; but should it be dried up, they will hasten back and spare them a useless journey."

"And what will we do then?" asked Austin.

"Then we shall have to make up our minds to go seventy-two miles south, as far as the commencement of the Sierra Ventana, where rivers abound."

"It is wise counsel, and we will act upon it without loss of time. My horse is in tolerable good trim, and I volunteer to accompany Thalcave."

"Oh, my Lord, take me," said Robert, as if it were a question of some pleasure party.

"But would you be able for it, my boy?"

"Oh, I have a fine beast, which just wants to have a gallop.
Please, my Lord, to take me."

"Come, then, my boy," said Glenarvan, delighted not to leave
Robert behind. "If we three don't manage to find out fresh
water somewhere," he added, "we must be very stupid."

"Well, well, and what about me?" said Paganel.

"Oh, my dear Paganel, you must stay with the reserve corps,"
replied the Major. "You are too well acquainted with the 37th parallel
and the river Guamini and the whole Pampas for us to let you go.
Neither Mulrady, nor Wilson, nor myself would be able to rejoin
Thalcave at the given rendezvous, but we will put ourselves under
the banner of the brave Jacques Paganel with perfect confidence."

"I resign myself," said the geographer, much flattered at
having supreme command.

"But mind, Paganel, no distractions," added the Major. "Don't you take
us to the wrong place--to the borders of the Pacific, for instance."

"Oh, you insufferable Major; it would serve you right,"
replied Paganel, laughing. "But how will you manage to understand
what Thalcave says, Glenarvan?" he continued.

"I suppose," replied Glenarvan, "the Patagonian and I won't have
much to talk about; besides, I know a few Spanish words, and,
at a pinch, I should not fear either making him understand me,
or my understanding him."

"Go, then, my worthy friend," said Paganel.

"We'll have supper first," rejoined Glenarvan, "and then sleep,
if we can, till it is starting time."

The supper was not very reviving without drink of any kind,
and they tried to make up for the lack of it by a good sleep.
But Paganel dreamed of water all night, of torrents and cascades,
and rivers and ponds, and streams and brooks--in fact,
he had a complete nightmare.

Next morning, at six o'clock, the horses of Thalcave, Glenarvan and Robert
were got ready. Their last ration of water was given them, and drunk
with more avidity than satisfaction, for it was filthy, disgusting stuff.
The three travelers then jumped into their saddles, and set off,
shouting "_Au revoir!_" to their companions.

"Don't come back whatever you do," called Paganel after them.

The _Desertio de las Salinas_, which they had to traverse,
is a dry plain, covered with stunted trees not above ten
feet high, and small mimosas, which the Indians call
curra-mammel; and JUMES, a bushy shrub, rich in soda.
Here and there large spaces were covered with salt,
which sparkled in the sunlight with astonishing brilliancy.

These might easily have been taken for sheets of ice, had not the intense heat forbidden the illusion; and the contrast these dazzling white sheets presented to the dry, burned-up ground gave the desert a most peculiar character. Eighty miles south, on the contrary, the Sierra Ventana, toward which the travelers might possibly have to betake themselves should the Guamini disappoint their hopes, the landscape was totally different. There the fertility is splendid; the pasturage is incomparable. Unfortunately, to reach them would necessitate a march of one hundred and thirty miles south; and this was why Thalcave thought it best to go first to Guamini, as it was not only much nearer, but also on the direct line of route.

The three horses went forward might and main, as if instinctively knowing whither they were bound. Thaouka especially displayed a courage that neither fatigue nor hunger could damp. He bounded like a bird over the dried-up CANADAS and the bushes of CURRA-MAMMEL, his loud, joyous neighing seeming to bode success to the search. The horses of Glenarvan and Robert, though not so light-footed, felt the spur of his example, and followed him bravely. Thalcave inspirited his companions as much as Thaouka did his four-footed brethren. He sat motionless in the saddle, but often turned his head to look at Robert, and ever and anon gave him a shout of encouragement and approval, as he saw how well he rode. Certainly the boy deserved praise, for he was fast becoming an excellent cavalier.

"Bravo! Robert," said Glenarvan. "Thalcave is evidently congratulating you, my boy, and paying you compliments."

"What for, my Lord?"

"For your good horsemanship."

"I can hold firm on, that's all," replied Robert blushing with pleasure at such an encomium.

"That is the principal thing, Robert; but you are too modest. I tell you that some day you will turn out an accomplished horseman."

"What would papa say to that?" said Robert, laughing. "He wants me to be a sailor."

"The one won't hinder the other. If all cavaliers wouldn't make good sailors, there is no reason why all sailors should not make good horsemen. To keep one's footing on the yards must teach a man to hold on firm; and as to managing the reins, and making a horse go through all sorts of movements, that's easily acquired. Indeed, it comes naturally."

"Poor father," said Robert; "how he will thank you for saving his life."

"You love him very much, Robert?"

"Yes, my Lord, dearly. He was so good to me and my sister. We were his only thought: and whenever he came home from his voyages, we were sure of some SOUVENIR from all the places he had been to; and, better still, of loving words and caresses. Ah! if you knew him you would love him, too. Mary is most like him.

He has a soft voice, like hers. That's strange for a sailor, isn't it?"

"Yes, Robert, very strange."

"I see him still," the boy went on, as if speaking to himself.
"Good, brave papa. He put me to sleep on his knee,
crooning an old Scotch ballad about the lochs of our country.
The time sometimes comes back to me, but very confused like.
So it does to Mary, too. Ah, my Lord, how we loved him.
Well, I do think one needs to be little to love one's
father like that."

"Yes, and to be grown up, my child, to venerate him," replied Glenarvan,
deeply touched by the boy's genuine affection.

During this conversation the horses had been slackening speed,
and were only walking now.

"You will find him?" said Robert again, after a few minutes' silence.

"Yes, we'll find him," was Glenarvan's reply, "Thalcave has set
us on the track, and I have great confidence in him."

"Thalcave is a brave Indian, isn't he?" said the boy.

"That indeed he is."

"Do you know something, my Lord?"

"What is it, and then I will tell you?"

"That all the people you have with you are brave.
Lady Helena, whom I love so, and the Major, with his calm manner,
and Captain Mangles, and Monsieur Paganel, and all the sailors
on the DUNCAN. How courageous and devoted they are."

"Yes, my boy, I know that," replied Glenarvan.

"And do you know that you are the best of all."

"No, most certainly I don't know that."

"Well, it is time you did, my Lord," said the boy, seizing his
lordship's hand, and covering it with kisses.

Glenarvan shook his head, but said no more, as a gesture from Thalcave
made them spur on their horses and hurry forward.

But it was soon evident that, with the exception of Thaouka,
the wearied animals could not go quicker than a walking pace.
At noon they were obliged to let them rest for an hour.
They could not go on at all, and refused to eat the ALFAFARES,
a poor, burnt-up sort of lucerne that grew there.

Glenarvan began to be uneasy. Tokens of sterility were not the least
on the decrease, and the want of water might involve serious calamities.
Thalcave said nothing, thinking probably, that it would be time enough
to despair if the Guamini should be dried up--if, indeed, the heart
of an Indian can ever despair.

Spur and whip had both to be employed to induce the poor animals to resume the route, and then they only crept along, for their strength was gone.

Thaouka, indeed, could have galloped swiftly enough, and reached the RIO in a few hours, but Thalcave would not leave his companions behind, alone in the midst of a desert.

It was hard work, however, to get the animal to consent to walk quietly. He kicked, and reared, and neighed violently, and was subdued at last more by his master's voice than hand. Thalcave positively talked to the beast, and Thaouka understood perfectly, though unable to reply, for, after a great deal of arguing, the noble creature yielded, though he still champed the bit.

Thalcave did not understand Thaouka, it turned out, though Thaouka understood him. The intelligent animal felt humidity in the atmosphere and drank it in with frenzy, moving and making a noise with his tongue, as if taking deep draughts of some cool refreshing liquid.
The Patagonian could not mistake him now--water was not far off.

The two other horses seemed to catch their comrade's meaning, and, inspired by his example, made a last effort, and galloped forward after the Indian.

About three o'clock a white line appeared in a dip of the road, and seemed to tremble in the sunlight.

"Water!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, yes! it is water!" shouted Robert.

They were right; and the horses knew it too, for there was no need now to urge them on; they tore over the ground as if mad, and in a few minutes had reached the river, and plunged in up to their chests.

Their masters had to go on too, whether they would or not but they were so rejoiced at being able to quench their thirst, that this compulsory bath was no grievance.

"Oh, how delicious this is!" exclaimed Robert, taking a deep draught.

"Drink moderately, my boy," said Glenarvan; but he did not set the example.

Thalcave drank very quietly, without hurrying himself, taking small gulps, but "as long as a lazo," as the Patagonians say. He seemed as if he were never going to leave off, and really there was some danger of his swallowing up the whole river.

At last Glenarvan said:

"Well, our friends won't be disappointed this time; they will be sure of finding clear, cool water when they get here-- that is to say, if Thalcave leaves any for them."

"But couldn't we go to meet them? It would spare them several hours'

suffering and anxiety."

"You're right my boy; but how could we carry them this water?
The leather bottles were left with Wilson. No; it is better
for us to wait for them as we agreed. They can't be here till
about the middle of the night, so the best thing we can do is
to get a good bed and a good supper ready for them."

Thalcave had not waited for Glenarvan's proposition to prepare
an encampment. He had been fortunate enough to discover on the banks
of the _rio a ramada_, a sort of enclosure, which had served as a fold
for flocks, and was shut in on three sides. A more suitable place
could not be found for their night's lodging, provided they had
no fear of sleeping in the open air beneath the star-lit heavens;
and none of Thalcave's companions had much solicitude on that score.
Accordingly they took possession at once, and stretched themselves
at full length on the ground in the bright sunshine, to dry
their dripping garments.

"Well, now we've secured a lodging, we must think of supper,"
said Glenarvan. "Our friends must not have reason
to complain of the couriers they sent to precede them;
and if I am not much mistaken, they will be very satisfied.
It strikes me that an hour's shooting won't be lost time.
Are you ready, Robert?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied the boy, standing up, gun in hand.

Why Glenarvan proposed this was, that the banks of the Guamini seemed
to be the general rendezvous of all the game in the surrounding plains.
A sort of partridge peculiar to the Pampas, called TINAMOUS;
black wood-hens; a species of plover, called TERU-TERU; yellow rays,
and waterfowl with magnificent green plumage, rose in coveys.
No quadrupeds, however, were visible, but Thalcave pointed to the long
grass and thick brushwood, and gave his friends to understand they
were lying there in concealment.

Disdaining the feathered tribes when more substantial game was at hand,
the hunters' first shots were fired into the underwood. Instantly there
rose by the hundred roebucks and guanacos, like those that had swept
over them that terrible night on the Cordilleras, but the timid creatures
were so frightened that they were all out of gunshot in a twinkling.
The hunters were obliged to content themselves with humbler game,
though in an alimentary point of view nothing better could be wished.
A dozen of red partridges and rays were speedily brought down,
and Glenarvan also managed very cleverly to kill a TAY-TETRE, or peccary,
a pachydermatous animal, the flesh of which is excellent eating.

In less than half an hour the hunters had all the game they required.
Robert had killed a curious animal belonging to the order EDENTATA,
an armadillo, a sort of tatou, covered with a hard bony shell,
in movable pieces, and measuring a foot and a half long.
It was very fat and would make an excellent dish, the Patagonian said.
Robert was very proud of his success.

Thalcave did his part by capturing a NANDOU, a species of ostrich,
remarkable for its extreme swiftness.

There could be no entrapping such an animal, and the Indian did not

attempt it. He urged Thaouka to a gallop, and made a direct attack,
knowing that if the first aim missed the NANDOU would soon tire out horse
and rider by involving them in an inextricable labyrinth of windings.
The moment, therefore, that Thalcave got to a right distance,
he flung his BOLAS with such a powerful hand, and so skillfully,
that he caught the bird round the legs and paralyzed his efforts at once.
In a few seconds it lay flat on the ground.

The Indian had not made his capture for the mere pleasure and glory
of such a novel chase. The flesh of the NANDOU is highly esteemed,
and Thalcave felt bound to contribute his share of the common repast.

They returned to the RAMADA, bringing back the string
of partridges, the ostrich, the peccary, and the armadillo.
The ostrich and the peccary were prepared for cooking by divesting
them of their tough skins, and cutting them up into thin slices.
As to the armadillo, he carries his cooking apparatus with him,
and all that had to be done was to place him in his own shell
over the glowing embers.

The substantial dishes were reserved for the night-comers,
and the three hunters contented themselves with devouring
the partridges, and washed down their meal with clear, fresh water,
which was pronounced superior to all the porter in the world,
even to the famous Highland USQUEBAUGH, or whisky.

The horses had not been overlooked. A large quantity of dry
fodder was discovered lying heaped up in the RAMADA, and this
supplied them amply with both food and bedding.

When all was ready the three companions wrapped themselves in the ponchos,
and stretched themselves on an eiderdown of ALFAFARES, the usual bed
of hunters on the Pampas.

CHAPTER XIX THE RED WOLVES

NIGHT came, but the orb of night was invisible to the inhabitants
of the earth, for she was just in her first quarter.
The dim light of the stars was all that illumined the plain.
The waters of the Guamini ran silently, like a sheet of oil
over a surface of marble. Birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles were
resting motionless after the fatigues of the day, and the silence
of the desert brooded over the far-spreading Pampas.

Glenarvan, Robert, and Thalcave, had followed the common example,
and lay in profound slumber on their soft couch of lucerne.
The worn-out horses had stretched themselves full length on the ground,
except Thaouka, who slept standing, true to his high blood,
proud in repose as in action, and ready to start at his master's call.
Absolute silence reigned within the inclosure, over which the dying
embers of the fire shed a fitful light.

However, the Indian's sleep did not last long; for about ten
o'clock he woke, sat up, and turned his ear toward the plain,
listening intently, with half-closed eyes. An uneasy look began
to depict itself on his usually impassive face. Had he caught scent
of some party of Indian marauders, or of jaguars, water tigers,
and other terrible animals that haunt the neighborhood of rivers?

Apparently it was the latter, for he threw a rapid glance
on the combustible materials heaped up in the inclosure,
and the expression of anxiety on his countenance seemed to deepen.
This was not surprising, as the whole pile of ALFAFARES would
soon burn out and could only ward off the attacks of wild beasts
for a brief interval.

There was nothing to be done in the circumstances but wait;
and wait he did, in a half-recumbent posture, his head leaning
on his hands, and his elbows on his knees, like a man roused
suddenly from his night's sleep.

A whole hour passed, and anyone except Thalcave would have lain
down again on his couch, reassured by the silence round him.
But where a stranger would have suspected nothing, the sharpened
senses of the Indian detected the approach of danger.

As he was thus watching and listening, Thaouka gave a low neigh,
and stretched his nostrils toward the entrance of the RAMADA.

This startled the Patagonian, and made him rise to his feet at once.

"Thaouka scents an enemy," he said to himself, going toward the opening,
to make careful survey of the plains.

Silence still prevailed, but not tranquillity; for Thalcave
caught a glimpse of shadows moving noiselessly over the tufts
of CURRA-MAMMEL. Here and there luminous spots appeared,
dying out and rekindling constantly, in all directions,
like fantastic lights dancing over the surface of an immense lagoon.
An inexperienced eye might have mistaken them for fireflies,
which shine at night in many parts of the Pampas; but Thalcave
was not deceived; he knew the enemies he had to deal with,
and lost no time in loading his carbine and taking up his post
in front of the fence.

He did not wait long, for a strange cry--a confused sound of barking
and howling--broke over the Pampas, followed next instant by the report
of the carbine, which made the uproar a hundred times worse.

Glenarvan and Robert woke in alarm, and started to their feet instantly.

"What is it?" exclaimed Robert.

"Is it the Indians?" asked Glenarvan.

"No," replied Thalcave, "the AGUARAS."

"AGUARAS?" said Robert, looking inquiringly at Glenarvan.

"Yes," replied Glenarvan, "the red wolves of the Pampas."

They seized their weapons at once, and stationed themselves
beside the Patagonian, who pointed toward the plain from whence
the yelling resounded.

Robert drew back involuntarily.

"You are not afraid of wolves, my boy?" said Glenarvan.

"No, my Lord," said the lad in a firm tone, "and moreover,
beside you I am afraid of nothing."

"So much the better. These AGUARAS are not very formidable either;
and if it were not for their number I should not give them a thought."

"Never mind; we are all well armed; let them come."

"We'll certainly give them a warm reception," rejoined Glenarvan.

His Lordship only spoke thus to reassure the child, for a secret
terror filled him at the sight of this legion of bloodthirsty
animals let loose on them at midnight.

There might possibly be some hundreds, and what could three men do,
even armed to the teeth, against such a multitude?

As soon as Thalcave said the word AGUARA, Glenarvan knew
that he meant the red wolf, for this is the name given to it by
the Pampas Indians. This voracious animal, called by naturalists
the _Canis jubatus_, is in shape like a large dog, and has the head
of a fox. Its fur is a reddish-cinnamon color, and there is
a black mane all down the back. It is a strong, nimble animal,
generally inhabiting marshy places, and pursuing aquatic animals
by swimming, prowling about by night and sleeping during the day.
Its attacks are particularly dreaded at the ESTANCIAS,
or sheep stations, as it often commits considerable ravages,
carrying off the finest of the flock. Singly, the AGUARA is
not much to be feared; but they generally go in immense packs,
and one had better have to deal with a jaguar or cougar
than with them.

Both from the noise of the howling and the multitude of shadows leaping
about, Glenarvan had a pretty good idea of the number of the wolves,
and he knew they had scented a good meal of human flesh or horse flesh,
and none of them would go back to their dens without a share.
It was certainly a very alarming situation to be in.

The assailants were gradually drawing closer. The horses displayed
signs of the liveliest terror, with the exception of Thaouka,
who stamped his foot, and tried to break loose and get out.
His master could only calm him by keeping up a low, continuous whistle.

Glenarvan and Robert had posted themselves so as to defend the opening
of the RAMADA. They were just going to fire into the nearest ranks
of the wolves when Thalcave lowered their weapons.

"What does Thalcave mean?" asked Robert.

"He forbids our firing."

"And why?"

"Perhaps he thinks it is not the right time."

But this was not the Indian's reason, and so Glenarvan saw when he lifted
the powder-flask, showed him it was nearly empty.

"What's wrong?" asked Robert.

"We must husband our ammunition," was the reply. "To-day's shooting has cost us dear, and we are short of powder and shot. We can't fire more than twenty times."

The boy made no reply, and Glenarvan asked him if he was frightened.

"No, my Lord," he said.

"That's right," returned Glenarvan.

A fresh report resounded that instant. Thalcave had made short work of one assailant more audacious than the rest, and the infuriated pack had retreated to within a hundred steps of the inclosure.

On a sign from the Indian Glenarvan took his place, while Thalcave went back into the inclosure and gathered up all the dried grass and ALFAFARES, and, indeed, all the combustibles he could rake together, and made a pile of them at the entrance. Into this he flung one of the still-glowing embers, and soon the bright flames shot up into the dark night. Glenarvan could now get a good glimpse of his antagonists, and saw that it was impossible to exaggerate their numbers or their fury. The barrier of fire just raised by Thalcave had redoubled their anger, though it had cut off their approach. Several of them, however, urged on by the hindmost ranks, pushed forward into the very flames, and burned their paws for their pains.

From time to time another shot had to be fired, notwithstanding the fire, to keep off the howling pack, and in the course of an hour fifteen dead animals lay stretched on the prairie.

The situation of the besieged was, relatively speaking, less dangerous now. As long as the powder lasted and the barrier of fire burned on, there was no fear of being overmastered. But what was to be done afterward, when both means of defense failed at once?

Glenarvan's heart swelled as he looked at Robert. He forgot himself in thinking of this poor child, as he saw him showing a courage so far above his years. Robert was pale, but he kept his gun steady, and stood with firm foot ready to meet the attacks of the infuriated wolves.

However, after Glenarvan had calmly surveyed the actual state of affairs, he determined to bring things to a crisis.

"In an hour's time," he said, "we shall neither have powder nor fire. It will never do to wait till then before we settle what to do."

Accordingly, he went up to Thalcave, and tried to talk to him by the help of the few Spanish words his memory could muster, though their conversation was often interrupted by one or the other having to fire a shot.

It was no easy task for the two men to understand each other, but, most fortunately, Glenarvan knew a great deal of the peculiarities

of the red wolf; otherwise he could never have interpreted the Indian's words and gestures.

As it was, fully a quarter of an hour elapsed before he could get any answer from Thalcave to tell Robert in reply to his inquiry.

"What does he say?"

"He says that at any price we must hold out till daybreak. The AGUARA only prowls about at night, and goes back to his lair with the first streak of dawn. It is a cowardly beast, that loves the darkness and dreads the light--an owl on four feet."

"Very well, let us defend ourselves, then, till morning."

"Yes, my boy, and with knife-thrusts, when gun and shots fail."

Already Thalcave had set the example, for whenever a wolf came too near the burning pile, the long arm of the Patagonian dashed through the flames and came out again reddened with blood.

But very soon this means of defense would be at an end. About two o'clock, Thalcave flung his last armful of combustibles into the fire, and barely enough powder remained to load a gun five times.

Glenarvan threw a sorrowful glance round him. He thought of the lad standing there, and of his companions and those left behind, whom he loved so dearly.

Robert was silent. Perhaps the danger seemed less imminent to his imagination. But Glenarvan thought for him, and pictured to himself the horrible fate that seemed to await him inevitably. Quite overcome by his emotion, he took the child in his arms, and straining him convulsively to his heart, pressed his lips on his forehead, while tears he could not restrain streamed down his cheeks.

Robert looked up into his face with a smile, and said, "I am not frightened."

"No, my child, no! and you are right. In two hours daybreak will come, and we shall be saved. Bravo, Thalcave! my brave Patagonian! Bravo!" he added as the Indian that moment leveled two enormous beasts who endeavored to leap across the barrier of flames.

But the fire was fast dying out, and the DENOUEMENT of the terrible drama was approaching. The flames got lower and lower. Once more the shadows of night fell on the prairie, and the glaring eyes of the wolves glowed like phosphorescent balls in the darkness. A few minutes longer, and the whole pack would be in the inclosure.

Thalcave loaded his carbine for the last time, killed one more enormous monster, and then folded his arms. His head sank on his chest, and he appeared buried in deep thought. Was he planning some daring, impossible, mad attempt to repulse the infuriated horde? Glenarvan did not venture to ask.

At this very moment the wolves began to change their tactics.
The deafening howls suddenly ceased: they seemed to be going away.
Gloomy silence spread over the prairie, and made Robert exclaim:

"They're gone!"

But Thalcave, guessing his meaning, shook his head.
He knew they would never relinquish their sure prey till daybreak
made them hasten back to their dens.

Still, their plan of attack had evidently been altered.
They no longer attempted to force the entrance, but their new
maneuvers only heightened the danger.

They had gone round the RAMADA, as by common consent, and were trying
to get in on the opposite side.

The next minute they heard their claws attacking the moldering wood,
and already formidable paws and hungry, savage jaws had found their way
through the palings. The terrified horses broke loose from their halters
and ran about the inclosure, mad with fear.

Glenarvan put his arms round the young lad, and resolved to defend him
as long as his life held out. Possibly he might have made a useless
attempt at flight when his eye fell on Thalcave.

The Indian had been stalking about the RAMADA like a stag,
when he suddenly stopped short, and going up to his horse,
who was trembling with impatience, began to saddle him with the most
scrupulous care, without forgetting a single strap or buckle.
He seemed no longer to disturb himself in the least about the
wolves outside, though their yells had redoubled in intensity.
A dark suspicion crossed Glenarvan's mind as he watched him.

"He is going to desert us," he exclaimed at last, as he saw him
seize the reins, as if preparing to mount.

"He! never!" replied Robert. Instead of deserting them,
the truth was that the Indian was going to try and save his
friends by sacrificing himself.

Thaouka was ready, and stood champing his bit. He reared up,
and his splendid eyes flashed fire; he understood his master.

But just as the Patagonian caught hold of the horse's mane,
Glenarvan seized his arm with a convulsive grip, and said,
pointing to the open prairie.

"You are going away?"

"Yes," replied the Indian, understanding his gesture.
Then he said a few words in Spanish, which meant:
"_Thaouka; good horse; quick; will draw all the wolves
away after him_."

"Oh, Thalcave," exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Quick, quick!" replied the Indian, while Glenarvan said, in a broken, agitated voice to Robert:

"Robert, my child, do you hear him? He wants to sacrifice himself for us. He wants to rush away over the Pampas, and turn off the wolves from us by attracting them to himself."

"Friend Thalcave," returned Robert, throwing himself at the feet of the Patagonian, "friend Thalcave, don't leave us!"

"No," said Glenarvan, "he shall not leave us."

And turning toward the Indian, he said, pointing to the frightened horses, "Let us go together."

"No," replied Thalcave, catching his meaning. "Bad beasts; frightened; Thaouka, good horse."

"Be it so then!" returned Glenarvan. "Thalcave will not leave you, Robert. He teaches me what I must do. It is for me to go, and for him to stay by you."

Then seizing Thaouka's bridle, he said, "I am going, Thalcave, not you."

"No," replied the Patagonian quietly.

"I am," exclaimed Glenarvan, snatching the bridle out of his hands. "I, myself! Save this boy, Thalcave! I commit him to you."

Glenarvan was so excited that he mixed up English words with his Spanish. But what mattered the language at such a terrible moment. A gesture was enough. The two men understood each other.

However, Thalcave would not give in, and though every instant's delay but increased the danger, the discussion continued.

Neither Glenarvan nor Thalcave appeared inclined to yield. The Indian had dragged his companion towards the entrance of the RAMADA, and showed him the prairie, making him understand that now was the time when it was clear from the wolves; but that not a moment was to be lost, for should this maneuver not succeed, it would only render the situation of those left behind more desperate. and that he knew his horse well enough to be able to trust his wonderful lightness and swiftness to save them all. But Glenarvan was blind and obstinate, and determined to sacrifice himself at all hazards, when suddenly he felt himself violently pushed back. Thaouka pranced up, and reared himself bolt upright on his hind legs, and made a bound over the barrier of fire, while a clear, young voice called out:

"God save you, my lord."

But before either Thalcave or Glenarvan could get more than a glimpse of the boy, holding on fast by Thaouka's mane, he was out of sight.

"Robert! oh you unfortunate boy," cried Glenarvan.

But even Thalcave did not catch the words, for his voice was drowned

in the frightful uproar made by the wolves, who had dashed off at a tremendous speed on the track of the horse.

Thalcave and Glenarvan rushed out of the RAMADA. Already the plain had recovered its tranquillity, and all that could be seen of the red wolves was a moving line far away in the distant darkness.

Glenarvan sank prostrate on the ground, and clasped his hands despairingly. He looked at Thalcave, who smiled with his accustomed calmness, and said:

"Thaouka, good horse. Brave boy. He will save himself!"

"And suppose he falls?" said Glenarvan.

"He'll not fall."

But notwithstanding Thalcave's assurances, poor Glenarvan spent the rest of the night in torturing anxiety. He seemed quite insensible now to the danger they had escaped through the departure of the wolves, and would have hastened immediately after Robert if the Indian had not kept him back by making him understand the impossibility of their horses overtaking Thaouka; and also that boy and horse had outdistanced the wolves long since, and that it would be useless going to look for them till daylight.

At four o'clock morning began to dawn. A pale glimmer appeared in the horizon, and pearly drops of dew lay thick on the plain and on the tall grass, already stirred by the breath of day.

The time for starting had arrived.

"Now!" cried Thalcave, "come."

Glenarvan made no reply, but took Robert's horse and sprung into the saddle. Next minute both men were galloping at full speed toward the west, in the line in which their companions ought to be advancing. They dashed along at a prodigious rate for a full hour, dreading every minute to come across the mangled corpse of Robert. Glenarvan had torn the flanks of his horse with his spurs in his mad haste, when at last gun-shots were heard in the distance at regular intervals, as if fired as a signal.

"There they are!" exclaimed Glenarvan; and both he and the Indian urged on their steeds to a still quicker pace, till in a few minutes more they came up to the little detachment conducted by Paganel. A cry broke from Glenarvan's lips, for Robert was there, alive and well, still mounted on the superb Thaouka, who neighed loudly with delight at the sight of his master.

"Oh, my child, my child!" cried Glenarvan, with indescribable tenderness in his tone.

Both he and Robert leaped to the ground, and flung themselves into each other's arms. Then the Indian hugged the brave boy in his arms.

"He is alive, he is alive," repeated Glenarvan again and again.

"Yes," replied Robert; "and thanks to Thaouka."

This great recognition of his favorite's services was wholly unexpected by the Indian, who was talking to him that minute, caressing and speaking to him, as if human blood flowed in the veins of the proud creature. Then turning to Paganel, he pointed to Robert, and said, "A brave!" and employing the Indian metaphor, he added, "his spurs did not tremble!"

But Glenarvan put his arms round the boy and said, "Why wouldn't you let me or Thalcave run the risk of this last chance of deliverance, my son?"

"My lord," replied the boy in tones of gratitude, "wasn't it my place to do it? Thalcave has saved my life already, and you-- you are going to save my father."

CHAPTER XX STRANGE SIGNS

AFTER the first joy of the meeting was over, Paganel and his party, except perhaps the Major, were only conscious of one feeling-- they were dying of thirst. Most fortunately for them, the Guamini ran not far off, and about seven in the morning the little troop reached the inclosure on its banks. The precincts were strewed with the dead wolves, and judging from their numbers, it was evident how violent the attack must have been, and how desperate the resistance.

As soon as the travelers had drunk their fill, they began to demolish the breakfast prepared in the RAMADA, and did ample justice to the extraordinary viands. The NANDOU fillets were pronounced first-rate, and the armadillo was delicious.

"To eat moderately," said Paganel, "would be positive ingratitude to Providence. We must eat immoderately."

And so they did, but were none the worse for it. The water of the Guamini greatly aided digestion apparently.

Glenarvan, however, was not going to imitate Hannibal at Capua, and at ten o'clock next morning gave the signal for starting. The leathern bottles were filled with water, and the day's march commenced. The horses were so well rested that they were quite fresh again, and kept up a canter almost constantly. The country was not so parched up now, and consequently less sterile, but still a desert. No incident occurred of any importance during the 2d and 3d of November, and in the evening they reached the boundary of the Pampas, and camped for the night on the frontiers of the province of Buenos Ayres. Two-thirds of their journey was now accomplished. It was twenty-two days since they left the Bay of Talcahuano, and they had gone 450 miles.

Next morning they crossed the conventional line which separates the Argentine plains from the region of the Pampas. It was here that Thalcave hoped to meet the Caciques, in whose hands, he had no doubt, Harry Grant and his men were prisoners.

From the time of leaving the Guamini, there was marked change in the temperature, to the great relief of the travelers.

It was much cooler, thanks to the violent and cold winds
from Patagonia, which constantly agitate the atmospheric waves.
Horses and men were glad enough of this, after what they had suffered
from the heat and drought, and they felt animated with fresh
ardor and confidence. But contrary to what Thalcave had said,
the whole district appeared uninhabited, or rather abandoned.

Their route often led past or went right through small lagoons,
sometimes of fresh water, sometimes of brackish. On the banks
and bushes about these, king-wrens were hopping about and larks
singing joyously in concert with the tangaras, the rivals in color
of the brilliant humming birds. On the thorny bushes the nests
of the ANNUBIS swung to and fro in the breeze like an Indian hammock;
and on the shore magnificent flamingos stalked in regular order
like soldiers marching, and spread out their flaming red wings.
Their nests were seen in groups of thousands, forming a complete town,
about a foot high, and resembling a truncated cone in shape.
The flamingos did not disturb themselves in the least at the approach
of the travelers, but this did not suit Paganel.

"I have been very desirous a long time," he said to the Major,
"to see a flamingo flying."

"All right," replied McNabbs.

"Now while I have the opportunity, I should like to make the most
of it," continued Paganel.

"Very well; do it, Paganel."

"Come with me, then, Major, and you too Robert. I want witnesses."

And all three went off towards the flamingos, leaving the others
to go on in advance.

As soon as they were near enough, Paganel fired, only loading
his gun, however, with powder, for he would not shed even
the blood of a bird uselessly. The shot made the whole assemblage
fly away _en masse_, while Paganel watched them attentively
through his spectacles.

"Well, did you see them fly?" he asked the Major.

"Certainly I did," was the reply. "I could not help seeing them,
unless I had been blind."

"Well and did you think they resembled feathered arrows when
they were flying?"

"Not in the least."

"Not a bit," added Robert.

"I was sure of it," said the geographer, with a satisfied air;
"and yet the very proudest of modest men, my illustrious
countryman, Chateaubriand, made the inaccurate comparison.
Oh, Robert, comparison is the most dangerous figure in rhetoric
that I know. Mind you avoid it all your life, and only employ
it in a last extremity."

"Are you satisfied with your experiment?" asked McNabbs.

"Delighted."

"And so am I. But we had better push on now, for your illustrious Chateaubriand has put us more than a mile behind."

On rejoining their companions, they found Glenarvan busily engaged in conversation with the Indian, though apparently unable to make him understand. Thalcave's gaze was fixed intently on the horizon, and his face wore a puzzled expression.

The moment Paganel came in sight, Glenarvan called out:

"Come along, friend Paganel. Thalcave and I can't understand each other at all."

After a few minute's talk with the Patagonian, the interpreter turned to Glenarvan and said:

"Thalcave is quite astonished at the fact, and certainly it is very strange that there are no Indians, nor even traces of any to be seen in these plains, for they are generally thick with companies of them, either driving along cattle stolen from the ESTANCIAS, or going to the Andes to sell their zorillo cloths and plaited leather whips."

"And what does Thalcave think is the reason?"

"He does not know; he is amazed and that's all."

"But what description of Indians did he reckon on meeting in this part of the Pampas?"

"Just the very ones who had the foreign prisoners in their hands, the natives under the rule of the Caciques Calfoucoura, Catriel, or Yanchetruz."

"Who are these Caciques?"

"Chiefs that were all powerful thirty years ago, before they were driven beyond the sierras. Since then they have been reduced to subjection as much as Indians can be, and they scour the plains of the Pampas and the province of Buenos Ayres. I quite share Thalcave's surprise at not discovering any traces of them in regions which they usually infest as SALTEADORES, or bandits."

"And what must we do then?"

"I'll go and ask him," replied Paganel.

After a brief colloquy he returned and said:

"This is his advice, and very sensible it is, I think.
He says we had better continue our route to the east as far as Fort Independence, and if we don't get news of Captain Grant there we shall hear, at any rate, what has become of the Indians of the Argentine plains."

"Is Fort Independence far away?" asked Glenarvan.

"No, it is in the Sierra Tandil, a distance of about sixty miles."

"And when shall we arrive?"

"The day after to-morrow, in the evening."

Glenarvan was considerably disconcerted by this circumstance. Not to find an Indian where in general there were only too many, was so unusual that there must be some grave cause for it; but worse still if Harry Grant were a prisoner in the hands of any of those tribes, had be been dragged away with them to the north or south? Glenarvan felt that, cost what it might, they must not lose his track, and therefore decided to follow the advice of Thalcave, and go to the village of Tandil. They would find some one there to speak to, at all events.

About four o'clock in the evening a hill, which seemed a mountain in so flat a country, was sighted in the distance. This was Sierra Tapalquem, at the foot of which the travelers camped that night.

The passage in the morning over this sierra, was accomplished without the slightest difficulty; after having crossed the Cordillera of the Andes, it was easy work to ascend the gentle heights of such a sierra as this. The horses scarcely slackened their speed. At noon they passed the deserted fort of Tapalquem, the first of the chain of forts which defend the southern frontiers from Indian marauders. But to the increasing surprise of Thalcave, they did not come across even the shadow of an Indian. About the middle of the day, however, three flying horsemen, well mounted and well armed came in sight, gazed at them for an instant, and then sped away with inconceivable rapidity. Glenarvan was furious.

"Gauchos," said the Patagonian, designating them by the name which had caused such a fiery discussion between the Major and Paganel.

"Ah! the Gauchos," replied McNabbs. "Well, Paganel, the north wind is not blowing to-day. What do you think of those fellows yonder?"

"I think they look like regular bandits."

"And how far is it from looking to being, my good geographer?"

"Only just a step, my dear Major."

Paganel's admission was received with a general laugh, which did not in the least disconcert him. He went on talking about the Indians however, and made this curious observation:

"I have read somewhere," he said, "that about the Arabs there is a peculiar expression of ferocity in the mouth, while the eyes have a kindly look. Now, in these American savages it is quite the reverse, for the eye has a particularly villainous aspect."

No physiognomist by profession could have better characterized the Indian race.

But desolate as the country appeared, Thalcave was on his guard against surprises, and gave orders to his party to form themselves in a close platoon. It was a useless precaution, however; for that same evening, they camped for the night in an immense TOLDERIA, which they not only found perfectly empty, but which the Patagonian declared, after he had examined it all round, must have been uninhabited for a long time.

Next day, the first ESTANCIAS of the Sierra Tandil came in sight. The ESTANCIAS are large cattle stations for breeding cattle; but Thalcave resolved not to stop at any of them, but to go straight on to Fort Independence. They passed several farms fortified by battlements and surrounded by a deep moat, the principal building being encircled by a terrace, from which the inhabitants could fire down on the marauders in the plain. Glenarvan might, perhaps, have got some information at these houses, but it was the surest plan to go straight on to the village of Tandil. Accordingly they went on without stopping, fording the RIO of Los Huasos and also the Chapaleofu, a few miles further on. Soon they were treading the grassy slopes of the first ridges of the Sierra Tandil, and an hour afterward the village appeared in the depths of a narrow gorge, and above it towered the lofty battlements of Fort Independence.

CHAPTER XXI A FALSE TRAIL

THE Sierra Tandil rises a thousand feet above the level of the sea. It is a primordial chain--that is to say, anterior to all organic and metamorphic creation. It is formed of a semi-circular ridge of gneiss hills, covered with fine short grass. The district of Tandil, to which it has given its name, includes all the south of the Province of Buenos Ayres, and terminates in a river which conveys north all the RIOS that take their rise on its slopes.

After making a short ascent up the sierra, they reached the postern gate, so carelessly guarded by an Argentine sentinel, that they passed through without difficulty, a circumstance which betokened extreme negligence or extreme security.

A few minutes afterward the Commandant appeared in person. He was a vigorous man about fifty years of age, of military aspect, with grayish hair, and an imperious eye, as far as one could see through the clouds of tobacco smoke which escaped from his short pipe. His walk reminded Paganel instantly of the old subalterns in his own country.

Thalcave was spokesman, and addressing the officer, presented Lord Glenarvan and his companions. While he was speaking, the Commandant kept staring fixedly at Paganel in rather an embarrassing manner. The geographer could not understand what he meant by it, and was just about to interrogate him, when the Commandant came forward, and seizing both his hands in the most free-and-easy fashion, said in a joyous voice, in the mother tongue of the geographer:

"A Frenchman!"

"Yes, a Frenchman," replied Paganel.

"Ah! delightful! Welcome, welcome. I am a Frenchman too," he added, shaking Paganel's hand with such vigor as to be almost alarming.

"Is he a friend of yours, Paganel?" asked the Major.

"Yes," said Paganel, somewhat proudly. "One has friends in every division of the globe."

After he had succeeded in disengaging his hand, though not without difficulty, from the living vise in which it was held, a lively conversation ensued. Glenarvan would fain have put in a word about the business on hand, but the Commandant related his entire history, and was not in a mood to stop till he had done. It was evident that the worthy man must have left his native country many years back, for his mother tongue had grown unfamiliar, and if he had not forgotten the words he certainly did not remember how to put them together. He spoke more like a negro belonging to a French colony.

The fact was that the Governor of Fort Independence was a French sergeant, an old comrade of Parachapee. He had never left the fort since it had been built in 1828; and, strange to say, he commanded it with the consent of the Argentine Government. He was a man about fifty years of age, a Basque by birth, and his name was Manuel Ipharaguerre, so that he was almost a Spaniard. A year after his arrival in the country he was naturalized, took service in the Argentine army, and married an Indian girl, who was then nursing twin babies six months old-- two boys, be it understood, for the good wife of the Commandant would have never thought of presenting her husband with girls. Manuel could not conceive of any state but a military one, and he hoped in due time, with the help of God, to offer the republic a whole company of young soldiers.

"You saw them. Charming! good soldiers are Jose, Juan, and Miquele! Pepe, seven year old; Pepe can handle a gun."

Pepe, hearing himself complimented, brought his two little feet together, and presented arms with perfect grace.

"He'll get on!" added the sergeant. "He'll be colonel-major or brigadier-general some day."

Sergeant Manuel seemed so enchanted that it would have been useless to express a contrary opinion, either to the profession of arms or the probable future of his children. He was happy, and as Goethe says, "Nothing that makes us happy is an illusion."

All this talk took up a quarter of an hour, to the great astonishment of Thalcave. The Indian could not understand how so many words could come out of one throat. No one interrupted the Sergeant, but all things come to an end, and at last he was silent, but not till he had made his guests enter his dwelling, and be presented to Madame Ipharaguerre. Then, and not till then, did he ask his guests what had procured him the honor of their visit. Now or never was the moment to explain, and Paganel, seizing the chance at once, began an account of their journey across the Pampas, and ended by inquiring the reason of the Indians having

deserted the country.

"Ah! there was no one!" replied the Sergeant, shrugging his shoulders--"really no one, and us, too, our arms crossed! Nothing to do!"

"But why?"

"War."

"War?"

"Yes, civil war between the Paraguayans and Buenos Ayriens," replied the Sergeant.

"Well?"

"Well, Indians all in the north, in the rear of General Flores. Indian pillagers find pillage there."

"But where are the Caciques?"

"Caciques are with them."

"What! Catriel?"

"There is no Catriel."

"And Calfoucoura?"

"There is no Calfoucoura."

"And is there no Yanchetruz?"

"No; no Yanchetruz."

The reply was interpreted by Thalcave, who shook his head and gave an approving look. The Patagonian was either unaware of, or had forgotten that civil war was decimating the two parts of the republic--a war which ultimately required the intervention of Brazil. The Indians have everything to gain by these intestine strifes, and can not lose such fine opportunities of plunder. There was no doubt the Sergeant was right in assigning war then as the cause of the forsaken appearance of the plains.

But this circumstance upset all Glenarvan's projects, for if Harry Grant was a prisoner in the hands of the Caciques, he must have been dragged north with them. How and where should they ever find him if that were the case? Should they attempt a perilous and almost useless journey to the northern border of the Pampas? It was a serious question which would need to be well talked over.

However, there was one inquiry more to make to the Sergeant; and it was the Major who thought of it, for all the others looked at each other in silence.

"Had the Sergeant heard whether any Europeans were prisoners in the hands of the Caciques?"

Manuel looked thoughtful for a few minutes, like a man trying to ransack his memory. At last he said:

"Yes."

"Ah!" said Glenarvan, catching at the fresh hope.

They all eagerly crowded round the Sergeant, exclaiming,

"Tell us, tell us."

"It was some years ago," replied Manuel. "Yes; all I heard was that some Europeans were prisoners, but I never saw them."

"You are making a mistake," said Glenarvan. "It can't be some years ago; the date of the shipwreck is explicitly given. The BRITANNIA was wrecked in June, 1862. It is scarcely two years ago."

"Oh, more than that, my Lord."

"Impossible!" said Paganel.

"Oh, but it must be. It was when Pepe was born. There were two prisoners."

"No, three!" said Glenarvan.

"Two!" replied the Sergeant, in a positive tone.

"Two?" echoed Glenarvan, much surprised. "Two Englishmen?"

"No, no. Who is talking of Englishmen? No; a Frenchman and an Italian."

"An Italian who was massacred by the Poyuches?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Yes; and I heard afterward that the Frenchman was saved."

"Saved!" exclaimed young Robert, his very life hanging on the lips of the Sergeant.

Yes; delivered out of the hands of the Indians."

Paganel struck his forehead with an air of desperation, and said at last,

"Ah! I understand. It is all clear now; everything is explained."

"But what is it?" asked Glenarvan, with as much impatience.

"My friends," replied Paganel, taking both Robert's hands in his own, "we must resign ourselves to a sad disaster. We have been on a wrong track. The prisoner mentioned is not the captain at all, but one of my own countrymen; and his companion, who was assassinated by the Poyuches, was Marco Vazello. The Frenchman was dragged along by the cruel Indians several times as far as the shores of the Colorado,

but managed at length to make his escape, and return
to Colorado. Instead of following the track of Harry Grant,
we have fallen on that of young Guinnard."

This announcement was heard with profound silence.
The mistake was palpable. The details given by the Sergeant,
the nationality of the prisoner, the murder of his companions,
his escape from the hands of the Indians, all evidenced the fact.
Glenarvan looked at Thalcave with a crestfallen face,
and the Indian, turning to the Sergeant, asked whether he had
never heard of three English captives.

"Never," replied Manuel. "They would have known of them
at Tandil, I am sure. No, it cannot be."

After this, there was nothing further to do at Fort Independence
but to shake hands with the Commandant, and thank him and take leave.

Glenarvan was in despair at this complete overthrow of his hopes,
and Robert walked silently beside him, with his eyes full of tears.
Glenarvan could not find a word of comfort to say to him.
Paganel gesticulated and talked away to himself. The Major never
opened his mouth, nor Thalcave, whose _amour propre_, as an Indian,
seemed quite wounded by having allowed himself to go on a wrong scent.
No one, however, would have thought of reproaching him for an
error so pardonable.

They went back to the FONDA, and had supper; but it was a gloomy party
that surrounded the table. It was not that any one of them regretted
the fatigue they had so heedlessly endured or the dangers they had run,
but they felt their hope of success was gone, for there was no chance
of coming across Captain Grant between the Sierra Tandil and the sea,
as Sergeant Manuel must have heard if any prisoners had fallen into
the hands of the Indians on the coast of the Atlantic. Any event of this
nature would have attracted the notice of the Indian traders who traffic
between Tandil and Carmen, at the mouth of the Rio Negro. The best
thing to do now was to get to the DUNCAN as quick as possible at
the appointed rendezvous.

Paganel asked Glenarvan, however, to let him have the document again,
on the faith of which they had set out on so bootless a search.
He read it over and over, as if trying to extract some new meaning
out of it.

"Yet nothing can be clearer," said Glenarvan; "it gives the date
of the shipwreck, and the manner, and the place of the captivity
in the most categorical manner."

"That it does not--no, it does not!" exclaimed Paganel, striking the table
with his fist. "Since Harry Grant is not in the Pampas, he is not
in America; but where he is the document must say, and it shall say,
my friends, or my name is not Jacques Paganel any longer."

CHAPTER XXII THE FLOOD

A DISTANCE of 150 miles separates Fort Independence from the shores
of the Atlantic. Unless unexpected and certainly improbable delays

should occur, in four days Glenarvan would rejoin the DUNCAN. But to return on board without Captain Grant, and after having so completely failed in his search, was what he could not bring himself to do. Consequently, when next day came, he gave no orders for departure; the Major took it upon himself to have the horses saddled, and make all preparations. Thanks to his activity, next morning at eight o'clock the little troop was descending the grassy slopes of the Sierra.

Glenarvan, with Robert at his side, galloped along without saying a word. His bold, determined nature made it impossible to take failure quietly. His heart throbbed as if it would burst, and his head was burning. Paganel, excited by the difficulty, was turning over and over the words of the document, and trying to discover some new meaning. Thalcave was perfectly silent, and left Thaouka to lead the way. The Major, always confident, remained firm at his post, like a man on whom discouragement takes no hold. Tom Austin and his two sailors shared the dejection of their master. A timid rabbit happened to run across their path, and the superstitious men looked at each other in dismay.

"A bad omen," said Wilson.

"Yes, in the Highlands," repeated Mulrady.

"What's bad in the Highlands is not better here," returned Wilson sententiously.

Toward noon they had crossed the Sierra, and descended into the undulating plains which extend to the sea. Limpid RIOS intersected these plains, and lost themselves among the tall grasses. The ground had once more become a dead level, the last mountains of the Pampas were passed, and a long carpet of verdure unrolled itself over the monotonous prairie beneath the horses' tread.

Hitherto the weather had been fine, but to-day the sky presented anything but a reassuring appearance. The heavy vapors, generated by the high temperature of the preceding days, hung in thick clouds, which ere long would empty themselves in torrents of rain. Moreover, the vicinity of the Atlantic, and the prevailing west wind, made the climate of this district particularly damp. This was evident by the fertility and abundance of the pasture and its dark color. However, the clouds remained unbroken for the present, and in the evening, after a brisk gallop of forty miles, the horses stopped on the brink of deep CANADAS, immense natural trenches filled with water. No shelter was near, and ponchos had to serve both for tents and coverlets as each man lay down and fell asleep beneath the threatening sky.

Next day the presence of water became still more sensibly felt; it seemed to exude from every pore of the ground. Soon large ponds, some just beginning to form, and some already deep, lay across the route to the east. As long as they had only to deal with lagoons, circumscribed pieces of water unencumbered with aquatic plants, the horses could get through well enough, but when they encountered moving sloughs called PENTANOS, it was harder work. Tall grass blocked them up, and they were involved in the peril before they were aware.

These bogs had already proved fatal to more than one living thing, for Robert, who had got a good bit ahead of the party, came rushing

back at full gallop, calling out:

"Monsieur Paganel, Monsieur Paganel, a forest of horns."

"What!" exclaimed the geographer; "you have found a forest of horns?"

"Yes, yes, or at any rate a coppice."

"A coppice!" replied Paganel, shrugging his shoulders.
"My boy, you are dreaming."

"I am not dreaming, and you will see for yourself. Well, this is
a strange country. They sow horns, and they sprout up like wheat.
I wish I could get some of the seed."

"The boy is really speaking seriously," said the Major.

"Yes, Mr. Major, and you will soon see I am right."

The boy had not been mistaken, for presently they found themselves
in front of an immense field of horns, regularly planted and stretching
far out of sight. It was a complete copse, low and close packed,
but a strange sort.

"Well," said Robert.

"This is peculiar certainly," said Paganel, and he turned round
to question Thalcave on the subject.

"The horns come out of the ground," replied the Indian,
"but the oxen are down below."

"What!" exclaimed Paganel; "do you mean to say that a whole herd
was caught in that mud and buried alive?"

"Yes," said the Patagonian.

And so it was. An immense herd had been suffocated side by side
in this enormous bog, and this was not the first occurrence
of the kind which had taken place in the Argentine plains.

An hour afterward and the field of horns lay two miles behind.

Thalcave was somewhat anxiously observing a state of things
which appeared to him unusual. He frequently stopped and raised
himself on his stirrups and looked

V. IV Verne around. His great height gave him a commanding view
of the whole horizon; but after a keen rapid survey, he quickly
resumed his seat and went on. About a mile further he stopped again,
and leaving the straight route, made a circuit of some miles north
and south, and then returned and fell back in his place at the head
of the troop, without saying a syllable as to what he hoped or feared.
This strange behavior, several times repeated, made Glenarvan very uneasy,
and quite puzzled Paganel. At last, at Glenarvan's request,
he asked the Indian about it.

Thalcave replied that he was astonished to see the plains so saturated
with water. Never, to his knowledge, since he had followed the calling

of guide, had he found the ground in this soaking condition.
Even in the rainy season, the Argentine plains had always been passable.

"But what is the cause of this increasing humidity?" said Paganel.

"I do not know, and what if I did?"

"Could it be owing to the RIOS of the Sierra being swollen
to overflowing by the heavy rains?"

"Sometimes they are."

"And is it the case now?"

"Perhaps."

Paganel was obliged to be content with this unsatisfactory reply,
and went back to Glenarvan to report the result of his conversation.

"And what does Thalcave advise us to do?" said Glenarvan.

Paganel went back to the guide and asked him.

"Go on fast," was the reply.

This was easier said than done. The horses soon tired of treading over
ground that gave way at every step. It sank each moment more and more,
till it seemed half under water.

They quickened their pace, but could not go fast enough to
escape the water, which rolled in great sheets at their feet.
Before two hours the cataracts of the sky opened and deluged
the plain in true tropical torrents of rain. Never was there
a finer occasion for displaying philosophic equanimity.
There was no shelter, and nothing for it but to bear it stolidly.
The ponchos were streaming like the overflowing gutter-spouts
on the roof of a house, and the unfortunate horsemen had to
submit to a double bath, for their horses dashed up the water
to their waists at every step.

In this drenching, shivering state, and worn out with fatigue,
they came toward evening to a miserable RANCHO, which could
only have been called a shelter by people not very fastidious,
and certainly only travelers in extremity would even have entered it;
but Glenarvan and his companions had no choice, and were glad
enough to burrow in this wretched hovel, though it would have
been despised by even a poor Indian of the Pampas. A miserable
fire of grass was kindled, which gave out more smoke than heat,
and was very difficult to keep alight, as the torrents
of rain which dashed against the ruined cabin outside found
their way within and fell down in large drops from the roof.
Twenty times over the fire would have been extinguished if Mulrady
and Wilson had not kept off the water.

The supper was a dull meal, and neither appetizing nor reviving.
Only the Major seemed to eat with any relish. The impassive McNabbs
was superior to all circumstances. Paganel, Frenchman as he was,
tried to joke, but the attempt was a failure.

"My jests are damp," he said, "they miss fire."

The only consolation in such circumstances was to sleep,
and accordingly each one lay down and endeavored to find in slumber
a temporary forgetfulness of his discomforts and his fatigues.
The night was stormy, and the planks of the rancho cracked
before the blast as if every instant they would give way.
The poor horses outside, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather,
were making piteous moans, and their masters were suffering quite as much
inside the ruined RANCHO. However, sleep overpowered them at length.
Robert was the first to close his eyes and lean his head against
Glenarvan's shoulder, and soon all the rest were soundly sleeping
too under the guardian eye of Heaven.

The night passed safely, and no one stirred till Thaouka woke
them by tapping vigorously against the RANCHO with his hoof.
He knew it was time to start, and at a push could give the signal
as well as his master. They owed the faithful creature too much
to disobey him, and set off immediately.

The rain had abated, but floods of water still covered the ground.
Paganel, on consulting his map, came to the conclusion that
the RIOS Grande and Vivarota, into which the water from the plains
generally runs, must have been united in one large bed several
miles in extent.

Extreme haste was imperative, for all their lives depended on it.
Should the inundation increase, where could they find refuge?
Not a single elevated point was visible on the whole circle
of the horizon, and on such level plains water would sweep along
with fearful rapidity.

The horses were spurred on to the utmost, and Thaouka led the way,
bounding over the water as if it had been his natural element.
Certainly he might justly have been called a sea-horse--
better than many of the amphibious animals who bear that name.

All of a sudden, about ten in the morning, Thaouka betrayed symptoms
of violent agitation. He kept turning round toward the south,
neighing continually, and snorting with wide open nostrils.
He reared violently, and Thalcave had some difficulty in keeping
his seat. The foam from his mouth was tinged with blood
from the action of the bit, pulled tightly by his master's
strong hand, and yet the fiery animal would not be still.
Had he been free, his master knew he would have fled away
to the north as fast as his legs would have carried him.

"What is the matter with Thaouka?" asked Paganel. "Is he bitten
by the leeches? They are very voracious in the Argentine streams."

"No," replied the Indian.

"Is he frightened at something, then?"

"Yes, he scents danger."

"What danger?"

"I don't know."

But, though no danger was apparent to the eye, the ear could
catch the sound of a murmuring noise beyond the limits of
the horizon, like the coming in of the tide. Soon a confused
sound was heard of bellowing and neighing and bleating,
and about a mile to the south immense flocks appeared,
rushing and tumbling over each other in the greatest disorder,
as they hurried pell-mell along with inconceivable rapidity.
They raised such a whirlwind of water in their course
that it was impossible to distinguish them clearly.
A hundred whales of the largest size could hardly have dashed
up the ocean waves more violently.

"_Anda, anda!_" (quick, quick), shouted Thalcave, in a voice like thunder.

"What is it, then?" asked Paganel.

"The rising," replied Thalcave.

"He means an inundation," exclaimed Paganel, flying with the others
after Thalcave, who had spurred on his horse toward the north.

It was high time, for about five miles south an immense towering
wave was seen advancing over the plain, and changing the whole
country into an ocean. The tall grass disappeared before it
as if cut down by a scythe, and clumps of mimosas were torn up
and drifted about like floating islands.

The wave was speeding on with the rapidity of a racehorse,
and the travelers fled before it like a cloud before a storm-wind.
They looked in vain for some harbor of refuge, and the terrified
horses galloped so wildly along that the riders could hardly
keep their saddles.

"_Anda, anda!_" shouted Thalcave, and again they spurred on
the poor animals till the blood ran from their lacerated sides.
They stumbled every now and then over great cracks in the ground,
or got entangled in the hidden grass below the water.
They fell, and were pulled up only to fall again and again,
and be pulled up again and again. The level of the waters
was sensibly rising, and less than two miles off the gigantic
wave reared its crested head.

For a quarter of an hour this supreme struggle with the most
terrible of elements lasted. The fugitives could not tell how far
they had gone, but, judging by the speed, the distance must have
been considerable. The poor horses, however, were breast-high
in water now, and could only advance with extreme difficulty.
Glenarvan and Paganel, and, indeed, the whole party, gave themselves
up for lost, as the horses were fast getting out of their depth,
and six feet of water would be enough to drown them.

It would be impossible to tell the anguish of mind these eight
men endured; they felt their own impotence in the presence
of these cataclysms of nature so far beyond all human power.
Their salvation did not lie in their own hands.

Five minutes afterward, and the horses were swimming;
the current alone carried them along with tremendous force,

and with a swiftness equal to their fastest gallop; they must have gone fully twenty miles an hour.

All hope of delivery seemed impossible, when the Major suddenly called out:

"A tree!"

"A tree?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, there, there!" replied Thalcave, pointing with his finger to a species of gigantic walnut-tree, which raised its solitary head above the waters.

His companions needed no urging forward now; this tree, so opportunely discovered, they must reach at all hazards. The horses very likely might not be able to get to it, but, at all events, the men would, the current bearing them right down to it.

Just at that moment Tom Austin's horse gave a smothered neigh and disappeared. His master, freeing his feet from the stirrups, began to swim vigorously.

"Hang on to my saddle," called Glenarvan.

"Thanks, your honor, but I have good stout arms."

"Robert, how is your horse going?" asked his Lordship, turning to young Grant.

"Famously, my Lord, he swims like a fish."

"Lookout!" shouted the Major, in a stentorian voice.

The warning was scarcely spoken before the enormous billow, a monstrous wave forty feet high, broke over the fugitives with a fearful noise. Men and animals all disappeared in a whirl of foam; a liquid mass, weighing several millions of tons, engulfed them in its seething waters.

When it had rolled on, the men reappeared on the surface, and counted each other rapidly; but all the horses, except Thaouka, who still bore his master, had gone down forever.

"Courage, courage," repeated Glenarvan, supporting Paganel with one arm, and swimming with the other.

"I can manage, I can manage," said the worthy savant. "I am even not sorry--"

But no one ever knew what he was not sorry about, for the poor man was obliged to swallow down the rest of his sentence with half a pint of muddy water. The Major advanced quietly, making regular strokes, worthy of a master swimmer. The sailors took to the water like porpoises, while Robert clung to Thaouka's mane, and was carried along with him. The noble animal swam superbly, instinctively making for the tree in a straight line.

The tree was only twenty fathoms off, and in a few minutes
was safely reached by the whole party; but for this refuge they
must all have perished in the flood.

The water had risen to the top of the trunk, just to where the parent
branches fork out. It was consequently, quite easy to clamber up to it.
Thalcave climbed up first, and got off his horse to hoist up Robert
and help the others. His powerful arms had soon placed all the exhausted
swimmers in a place of security.

But, meantime, Thaouka was being rapidly carried away by the current.
He turned his intelligent face toward his master, and, shaking his
long mane, neighed as if to summon him to his rescue.

"Are you going to forsake him, Thalcave?" asked Paganel.

"I!" replied the Indian, and forthwith he plunged down into
the tumultuous waters, and came up again ten fathoms off.
A few instants afterward his arms were round Thaouka's neck,
and master and steed were drifting together toward the misty
horizon of the north.

CHAPTER XXIII A SINGULAR ABODE

THE tree on which Glenarvan and his companions had just found refuge,
resembled a walnut-tree, having the same glossy foliage and rounded form.
In reality, however, it was the OMBU, which grows solitarily on the
Argentine plains. The enormous and twisted trunk of this tree is planted
firmly in the soil, not only by its great roots, but still more by its
vigorous shoots, which fasten it down in the most tenacious manner.
This was how it stood proof against the shock of the mighty billow.

This OMBU measured in height a hundred feet, and covered with
its shadow a circumference of one hundred and twenty yards.
All this scaffolding rested on three great boughs which sprang
from the trunk. Two of these rose almost perpendicularly,
and supported the immense parasol of foliage, the branches of which
were so crossed and intertwined and entangled, as if by the hand
of a basket-maker, that they formed an impenetrable shade.
The third arm, on the contrary, stretched right out in a horizontal
position above the roaring waters, into which the lower leaves dipped.
There was no want of room in the interior of this gigantic tree,
for there were great gaps in the foliage, perfect glades,
with air in abundance, and freshness everywhere.
To see the innumerable branches rising to the clouds,
and the creepers running from bough to bough, and attaching
them together while the sunlight glinted here and there among
the leaves, one might have called it a complete forest instead
of a solitary tree sheltering them all.

On the arrival of the fugitives a myriad of the feathered tribes
fled away into the topmost branches, protesting by their outcries
against this flagrant usurpation of their domicile. These birds,
who themselves had taken refuge in the solitary OMBU, were in hundreds,
comprising blackbirds, starlings, isacas, HILGUEROS, and especially
the pica-flor, humming-birds of most resplendent colors.
When they flew away it seemed as though a gust of wind had blown

all the flowers off the tree.

Such was the asylum offered to the little band of Glenarvan. Young Grant and the agile Wilson were scarcely perched on the tree before they had climbed to the upper branches and put their heads through the leafy dome to get a view of the vast horizon. The ocean made by the inundation surrounded them on all sides, and, far as the eye could reach, seemed to have no limits. Not a single tree was visible on the liquid plain; the OMBU stood alone amid the rolling waters, and trembled before them. In the distance, drifting from south to north, carried along by the impetuous torrent, they saw trees torn up by the roots, twisted branches, roofs torn off, destroyed RANCHOS, planks of sheds stolen by the deluge from ESTANCIAS, carcasses of drowned animals, blood-stained skins, and on a shaky tree a complete family of jaguars, howling and clutching hold of their frail raft. Still farther away, a black spot almost invisible, already caught Wilson's eye. It was Thalcave and his faithful Thaouka.

"Thalcave, Thalcave!" shouted Robert, stretching out his hands toward the courageous Patagonian.

"He will save himself, Mr. Robert," replied Wilson; "we must go down to his Lordship."

Next minute they had descended the three stages of boughs, and landed safely on the top of the trunk, where they found Glenarvan, Paganel, the Major, Austin, and Mulrady, sitting either astride or in some position they found more comfortable. Wilson gave an account of their investigations aloft, and all shared his opinion with respect to Thalcave. The only question was whether it was Thalcave who would save Thaouka, or Thaouka save Thalcave.

Their own situation meantime was much more alarming than his. No doubt the tree would be able to resist the current, but the waters might rise higher and higher, till the topmost branches were covered, for the depression of the soil made this part of the plain a deep reservoir. Glenarvan's first care, consequently, was to make notches by which to ascertain the progress of the inundation. For the present it was stationary, having apparently reached its height. This was reassuring.

"And now what are we going to do?" said Glenarvan.

"Make our nest, of course!" replied Paganel

"Make our nest!" exclaimed Robert.

"Certainly, my boy, and live the life of birds, since we can't that of fishes."

"All very well, but who will fill our bills for us?" said Glenarvan.

"I will," said the Major.

All eyes turned toward him immediately, and there he sat in a natural arm-chair, formed of two elastic boughs, holding out his ALFORJAS damp, but still intact.

"Oh, McNabbs, that's just like you," exclaimed Glenarvan,
"you think of everything even under circumstances which would
drive all out of your head."

"Since it was settled we were not going to be drowned,
I had no intention of starving of hunger."

"I should have thought of it, too," said Paganel, "but I
am so DISTRAIT."

"And what is in the ALFORJAS?" asked Tom Austin.

"Food enough to last seven men for two days," replied McNabbs.

"And I hope the inundation will have gone down in twenty-four hours,"
said Glenarvan.

"Or that we shall have found some way of regaining _terra firma_,"
added Paganel.

"Our first business, then, now is to breakfast," said Glenarvan.

"I suppose you mean after we have made ourselves dry,"
observed the Major.

"And where's the fire?" asked Wilson.

"We must make it," returned Paganel.

"Where?"

"On the top of the trunk, of course."

"And what with?"

"With the dead wood we cut off the tree."

"But how will you kindle it?" asked Glenarvan. "Our tinder
is just like wet sponge."

"We can dispense with it," replied Paganel. "We only want a little
dry moss and a ray of sunshine, and the lens of my telescope,
and you'll see what a fire I'll get to dry myself by.
Who will go and cut wood in the forest?"

"I will," said Robert.

And off he scampered like a young cat into the depths of the foliage,
followed by his friend Wilson. Paganel set to work to find dry moss,
and had soon gathered sufficient. This he laid on a bed of damp leaves,
just where the large branches began to fork out, forming a natural hearth,
where there was little fear of conflagration.

Robert and Wilson speedily reappeared, each with an armful of
dry wood, which they threw on the moss. By the help of the lens
it was easily kindled, for the sun was blazing overhead.
In order to ensure a proper draught, Paganel stood over
the hearth with his long legs straddled out in the Arab manner.

Then stooping down and raising himself with a rapid motion,
he made a violent current of air with his poncho,
which made the wood take fire, and soon a bright flame
roared in the improvised brasier. After drying themselves,
each in his own fashion, and hanging their ponchos on the tree,
where they were swung to and fro in the breeze, they breakfasted,
carefully however rationing out the provisions, for the morrow
had to be thought of; the immense basin might not empty so soon
as Glenarvan expected, and, anyway, the supply was very limited.
The OMBU produced no fruit, though fortunately, it would likely
abound in fresh eggs, thanks to the numerous nests stowed away
among the leaves, not to speak of their feathered proprietors.
These resources were by no means to be despised.

The next business was to install themselves as comfortably as they could,
in prospect of a long stay.

"As the kitchen and dining-room are on the ground floor,"
said Paganel, "we must sleep on the first floor. The house is large,
and as the rent is not dear, we must not cramp ourselves for room.
I can see up yonder natural cradles, in which once safely tucked
up we shall sleep as if we were in the best beds in the world.
We have nothing to fear. Besides, we will watch, and we are numerous
enough to repulse a fleet of Indians and other wild animals."

"We only want fire-arms."

"I have my revolvers," said Glenarvan.

"And I have mine," replied Robert.

"But what's the good of them?" said Tom Austin, "unless Monsieur Paganel
can find out some way of making powder."

"We don't need it," replied McNabbs, exhibiting a powder flask
in a perfect state of preservation.

"Where did you get it from, Major," asked Paganel.

"From Thalcave. He thought it might be useful to us, and gave it
to me before he plunged into the water to save Thaouka."

"Generous, brave Indian!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes," replied Tom Austin, "if all the Patagonians are cut
after the same pattern, I must compliment Patagonia."

"I protest against leaving out the horse," said Paganel. "He is part
and parcel of the Patagonian, and I'm much mistaken if we don't see
them again, the one on the other's back."

"What distance are we from the Atlantic?" asked the Major.

"About forty miles at the outside," replied Paganel; "and now,
friends, since this is Liberty Hall, I beg to take leave of you.
I am going to choose an observatory for myself up there,
and by the help of my telescope, let you know how things are
going on in the world."

Forthwith the geographer set off, hoisting himself up very cleverly from bough to bough, till he disappeared beyond the thick foliage. His companions began to arrange the night quarters, and prepare their beds. But this was neither a long nor difficult task, and very soon they resumed their seats round the fire to have a talk.

As usual their theme was Captain Grant. In three days, should the water subside, they would be on board the DUNCAN once more. But Harry Grant and his two sailors, those poor shipwrecked fellows, would not be with them. Indeed, it even seemed after this ill success and this useless journey across America, that all chance of finding them was gone forever. Where could they commence a fresh quest? What grief Lady Helena and Mary Grant would feel on hearing there was no further hope.

"Poor sister!" said Robert. "It is all up with us."

For the first time Glenarvan could not find any comfort to give him. What could he say to the lad?

Had they not searched exactly where the document stated?

"And yet," he said, "this thirty-seventh degree of latitude is not a mere figure, and that it applies to the shipwreck or captivity of Harry Grant, is no mere guess or supposition. We read it with our own eyes."

"All very true, your Honor," replied Tom Austin, "and yet our search has been unsuccessful."

"It is both a provoking and hopeless business," replied Glenarvan.

"Provoking enough, certainly," said the Major, "but not hopeless. It is precisely because we have an uncon-testable figure, provided for us, that we should follow it up to the end."

"What do you mean?" asked Glenarvan. "What more can we do?"

"A very logical and simple thing, my dear Edward. When we go on board the DUNCAN, turn her beak head to the east, and go right along the thirty-seventh parallel till we come back to our starting point if necessary."

"Do you suppose that I have not thought of that, Mr. McNabbs?" replied Glenarvan. "Yes, a hundred times. But what chance is there of success? To leave the American continent, wouldn't it be to go away from the very spot indicated by Harry Grant, from this very Patagonia so distinctly named in the document."

"And would you recommence your search in the Pampas, when you have the certainty that the shipwreck of the BRITANNIA neither occurred on the coasts of the Pacific nor the Atlantic?"

Glenarvan was silent.

"And however small the chance of finding Harry Grant by following up the given parallel, ought we not to try?"

"I don't say no," replied Glenarvan.

"And are you not of my opinion, good friends," added the Major, addressing the sailors.

"Entirely," said Tom Austin, while Mulrady and Wilson gave an assenting nod.

"Listen to me, friends," said Glenarvan after a few minutes' reflection; "and remember, Robert, this is a grave discussion. I will do my utmost to find Captain Grant; I am pledged to it, and will devote my whole life to the task if needs be. All Scotland would unite with me to save so devoted a son as he has been to her. I too quite think with you that we must follow the thirty-seventh parallel round the globe if necessary, however slight our chance of finding him. But that is not the question we have to settle. There is one much more important than that is--should we from this time, and all together, give up our search on the American continent?"

No one made any reply. Each one seemed afraid to pronounce the word.

"Well?" resumed Glenarvan, addressing himself especially to the Major.

"My dear Edward," replied McNabbs, "it would be incurring too great a responsibility for me to reply _hic et nunc_. It is a question which requires reflection. I must know first, through which countries the thirty-seventh parallel of southern latitude passes?"

"That's Paganel's business; he will tell you that," said Glenarvan.

"Let's ask him, then," replied the Major.

But the learned geographer was nowhere to be seen. He was hidden among the thick leafage of the OMBU, and they must call out if they wanted him.

"Paganel, Paganel!" shouted Glenarvan.

"Here," replied a voice that seemed to come from the clouds.

"Where are you?"

"In my tower."

"What are you doing there?"

"Examining the wide horizon."

"Could you come down for a minute?"

"Do you want me?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"To know what countries the thirty-seventh parallel passes through."

"That's easily said. I need not disturb myself to come down for that."

"Very well, tell us now."

"Listen, then. After leaving America the thirty-seventh parallel crosses the Atlantic Ocean."

"And then?"

"It encounters Isle Tristan d'Acunha."

"Yes."

"It goes on two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope."

"And afterwards?"

"Runs across the Indian Ocean, and just touches Isle St. Pierre, in the Amsterdam group."

"Go on."

"It cuts Australia by the province of Victoria."

"And then."

"After leaving Australia in--"

This last sentence was not completed. Was the geographer hesitating, or didn't he know what to say?

No; but a terrible cry resounded from the top of the tree. Glenarvan and his friends turned pale and looked at each other. What fresh catastrophe had happened now? Had the unfortunate Paganel slipped his footing?

Already Wilson and Mulrady had rushed to his rescue when his long body appeared tumbling down from branch to branch.

But was he living or dead, for his hands made no attempt to seize anything to stop himself. A few minutes more, and he would have fallen into the roaring waters had not the Major's strong arm barred his passage.

"Much obliged, McNabbs," said Paganel.

"How's this? What is the matter with you? What came over you? Another of your absent fits."

"Yes, yes," replied Paganel, in a voice almost inarticulate with emotion. "Yes, but this was something extraordinary."

"What was it?"

"I said we had made a mistake. We are making it still, and have been all along."

"Explain yourself."

"Glenarvan, Major, Robert, my friends," exclaimed Paganel,

"all you that hear me, we are looking for Captain Grant where he is not to be found."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Not only where he is not now, but where he has never been."

CHAPTER XXIV PAGANEL'S DISCLOSURE

PROFOUND astonishment greeted these unexpected words of the learned geographer. What could he mean? Had he lost his sense? He spoke with such conviction, however, that all eyes turned toward Glenarvan, for Paganel's affirmation was a direct answer to his question, but Glenarvan shook his head, and said nothing, though evidently he was not inclined to favor his friend's views.

"Yes," began Paganel again, as soon as he had recovered himself a little; "yes, we have gone a wrong track, and read on the document what was never there."

"Explain yourself, Paganel," said the Major, "and more calmly if you can."

"The thing is very simple, Major. Like you, I was in error; like you, I had rushed at a false interpretation, until about an instant ago, on the top of the tree, when I was answering your questions, just as I pronounced the word 'Australia,' a sudden flash came across my mind, and the document became clear as day."

"What!" exclaimed Glenarvan, "you mean to say that Harry Grant--"

"I mean to say," replied Paganel, "that the word AUSTRAL that occurs in the document is not a complete word, as we have supposed up till now, but just the root of the word AUSTRALIE."

"Well, that would be strange," said the Major.

"Strange!" repeated Glenarvan, shrugging his shoulders; "it is simply impossible."

"Impossible?" returned Paganel. "That is a word we don't allow in France."

"What!" continued Glenarvan, in a tone of the most profound incredulity, "you dare to contend, with the document in your hand, that the shipwreck of the BRITANNIA happened on the shores of Australia."

"I am sure of it," replied Paganel.

"My conscience," exclaimed Glenarvan, "I must say I am surprised at such a declaration from the Secretary of a Geographical Society!"

"And why so?" said Paganel, touched in his weak point.

"Because, if you allow the word AUSTRALIE! you must also allow the word INDIENS, and Indians are never seen there."

Paganel was not the least surprised at this rejoinder.
Doubtless he expected it, for he began to smile, and said:

"My dear Glenarvan, don't triumph over me too fast.
I am going to floor you completely, and never was an
Englishman more thoroughly defeated than you will be.
It will be the revenge for Cressy and Agincourt."

"I wish nothing better. Take your revenge, Paganel."

"Listen, then. In the text of the document, there is neither mention
of the Indians nor of Patagonia! The incomplete word INDI does not
mean INDIENS, but of course, INDIGENES, aborigines! Now, do you admit
that there are aborigines in Australia?"

"Bravo, Paganel!" said the Major.

"Well, do you agree to my interpretation, my dear Lord?"
asked the geographer again.

"Yes," replied Glenarvan, "if you will prove to me that the fragment
of a word GONIE, does not refer to the country of the Patagonians."

"Certainly it does not. It has nothing to do with Patagonia,"
said Paganel. "Read it any way you please except that."

"How?"

"_Cosmogonie, theogonie, agonie_."

"AGONIE," said the Major.

"I don't care which," returned Paganel. "The word is
quite unimportant; I will not even try to find out its meaning.
The main point is that AUSTRAL means AUSTRALIE, and we must
have gone blindly on a wrong track not to have discovered
the explanation at the very beginning, it was so evident.
If I had found the document myself, and my judgment had not
been misled by your interpretation, I should never have
read it differently."

A burst of hurrahs, and congratulations, and compliments followed
Paganel's words. Austin and the sailors, and the Major and Robert,
most all overjoyed at this fresh hope, applauded him heartily;
while even Glenarvan, whose eyes were gradually getting open,
was almost prepared to give in.

"I only want to know one thing more, my dear Paganel," he said,
"and then I must bow to your perspicacity."

"What is it?"

"How will you group the words together according to your
new interpretation? How will the document read?"

"Easily enough answered. Here is the document," replied Paganel,
taking out the precious paper he had been studying so conscientiously
for the last few days.

For a few minutes there was complete silence, while the worthy SAVANT took time to collect his thoughts before complying with his lordship's request. Then putting his finger on the words, and emphasizing some of them, he began as follows:

"'_Le 7 juin_ 1862 _le trois-mats Britannia de Glasgow a sombre apres_,'--put, if you please, '_deux jours, trois jours_,' or '_une longue agonie_,' it doesn't signify, it is quite a matter of indifference,--'_sur les cotes de l'Australie. Se dirigeant a terre, deux matelots et le Capitaine Grant vont essayer d'aborder_,' or '_ont aborde le continent ou ils seront_,' or, '_sont prisonniers de cruels indigenes. Ils ont jete ce documents_,' etc. Is that clear?"

"Clear enough," replied Glenarvan, "if the word continent can be applied to Australia, which is only an island."

"Make yourself easy about that, my dear Glenarvan; the best geographers have agreed to call the island the Australian Continent."

V. IV Verne

"Then all I have now to say is, my friends," said Glenarvan, "away to Australia, and may Heaven help us!"

"To Australia!" echoed his companions, with one voice.

"I tell you what, Paganel," added Glenarvan, "your being on board the DUNCAN is a perfect providence."

"All right. Look on me as a messenger of providence, and let us drop the subject."

So the conversation ended--a conversation which great results were to follow; it completely changed the moral condition of the travelers; it gave the clew of the labyrinth in which they had thought themselves hopelessly entangled, and, amid their ruined projects, inspired them with fresh hope. They could now quit the American Continent without the least hesitation, and already their thoughts had flown to the Australias. In going on board the DUNCAN again they would not bring despair with them, and Lady Helena and Mary Grant would not have to mourn the irrevocable loss of Captain Grant. This thought so filled them with joy that they forgot all the dangers of their actual situation, and only regretted that they could not start immediately.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and they determined to have supper at six. Paganel wished to get up a splendid spread in honor of the occasion, but as the materials were very scanty, he proposed to Robert to go and hunt in the neighboring forest. Robert clapped his hands at the idea, so they took Thalcave's powder flask, cleaned the revolvers and loaded them with small shot, and set off.

"Don't go too far," said the Major, gravely, to the two hunters.

After their departure, Glenarvan and McNabbs went down to examine the state of the water by looking at the notches they had made on the tree, and Wilson and Mulrady replenished the fire.

No sign of decrease appeared on the surface of the immense lake,
yet the flood seemed to have reached its maximum height;
but the violence with which it rushed from the south to north proved
that the equilibrium of the Argentine rivers was not restored.
Before getting lower the liquid mass must remain stationary,
as in the case with the ocean before the ebb tide commences.

While Glenarvan and his cousin were making these observations,
the report of firearms resounded frequently above their heads,
and the jubilant outcries of the two sportsmen--for Paganel was every
whit as much a child as Robert. They were having a fine time of it
among the thick leaves, judging by the peals of laughter which rang
out in the boy's clear treble voice and Paganel's deep bass.
The chase was evidently successful, and wonders in culinary
art might be expected. Wilson had a good idea to begin with,
which he had skilfully carried out; for when Glenarvan came back
to the brasier, he found that the brave fellow had actually
managed to catch, with only a pin and a piece of string,
several dozen small fish, as delicate as smelts, called MOJARRAS,
which were all jumping about in a fold of his poncho, ready to be
converted into an exquisite dish.

At the same moment the hunters reappeared. Paganel was carefully
carrying some black swallows' eggs, and a string of sparrows,
which he meant to serve up later under the name of field larks.
Robert had been clever enough to bring down several brace of HILGUEROS,
small green and yellow birds, which are excellent eating, and greatly
in demand in the Montevideo market. Paganel, who knew fifty ways
of dressing eggs, was obliged for this once to be content with simply
hardening them on the hot embers. But notwithstanding this,
the viands at the meal were both dainty and varied. The dried beef,
hard eggs, grilled MOJARRAS, sparrows, and roast HILGUEROS,
made one of those gala feasts the memory of which is imperishable.

The conversation was very animated. Many compliments were paid
Paganel on his twofold talents as hunter and cook, which the SAVANT
accepted with the modesty which characterizes true merit.
Then he turned the conversation on the peculiarities of the OMBU,
under whose canopy they had found shelter, and whose depths
he declared were immense.

"Robert and I," he added, jestingly, "thought ourselves
hunting in the open forest. I was afraid, for the minute,
we should lose ourselves, for I could not find the road.
The sun was sinking below the horizon; I sought vainly for footmarks;
I began to feel the sharp pangs of hunger, and the gloomy depths
of the forest resounded already with the roar of wild beasts.
No, not that; there are no wild beasts here, I am sorry to say."

"What!" exclaimed Glenarvan, "you are sorry there are no wild beasts?"

"Certainly I am."

"And yet we should have every reason to dread their ferocity."

"Their ferocity is non-existent, scientifically speaking,"
replied the learned geographer.

"Now come, Paganel," said the Major, "you'll never make me admit

the utility of wild beasts. What good are they?"

"Why, Major," exclaimed Paganel, "for purposes of classification into orders, and families, and species, and sub-species."

"A mighty advantage, certainly!" replied McNabbs, "I could dispense with all that. If I had been one of Noah's companions at the time of the deluge, I should most assuredly have hindered the imprudent patriarch from putting in pairs of lions, and tigers, and panthers, and bears, and such animals, for they are as malevolent as they are useless."

"You would have done that?" asked Paganel.

"Yes, I would."

"Well, you would have done wrong in a zoological point of view," returned Paganel.

"But not in a humanitarian one," rejoined the Major.

"It is shocking!" replied Paganel. "Why, for my part, on the contrary, I should have taken special care to preserve megatheriums and pterodactyles, and all the antediluvian species of which we are unfortunately deprived by his neglect."

"And I say," returned McNabbs, "that Noah did a very good thing when he abandoned them to their fate--that is, if they lived in his day."

"And I say he did a very bad thing," retorted Paganel, "and he has justly merited the malediction of SAVANTS to the end of time!"

The rest of the party could not help laughing at hearing the two friends disputing over old Noah. Contrary to all his principles, the Major, who all his life had never disputed with anyone, was always sparring with Paganel. The geographer seemed to have a peculiarly exciting effect on him.

Glenarvan, as usual, always the peacemaker, interfered in the debate, and said:

"Whether the loss of ferocious animals is to be regretted or not, in a scientific point of view, there is no help for it now; we must be content to do without them. Paganel can hardly expect to meet with wild beasts in this aerial forest."

"Why not?" asked the geographer.

"Wild beasts on a tree!" exclaimed Tom Austin.

"Yes, undoubtedly. The American tiger, the jaguar, takes refuge in the trees, when the chase gets too hot for him. It is quite possible that one of these animals, surprised by the inundation, might have climbed up into this OMBU, and be hiding now among its thick foliage."

"You haven't met any of them, at any rate, I suppose?" said the Major.

"No," replied Paganel, "though we hunted all through the wood.
It is vexing, for it would have been a splendid chase.
A jaguar is a bloodthirsty, ferocious creature. He can
twist the neck of a horse with a single stroke of his paw.
When he has once tasted human flesh he scents it greedily.
He likes to eat an Indian best, and next to him a negro,
then a mulatto, and last of all a white man."

"I am delighted to hear we come number four," said McNabbs.

"That only proves you are insipid," retorted Paganel,
with an air of disdain.

"I am delighted to be insipid," was the Major's reply.

"Well, it is humiliating enough," said the intractable Paganel.
"The white man proclaimed himself chief of the human race;
but Mr. Jaguar is of a different opinion it seems."

"Be that as it may, my brave Paganel, seeing there are
neither Indians, nor negroes, nor mulattoes among us,
I am quite rejoiced at the absence of your beloved jaguars.
Our situation is not so particularly agreeable."

"What! not agreeable!" exclaimed Paganel, jumping at
the word as likely to give a new turn to the conversation.
"You are complaining of your lot, Glenarvan."

"I should think so, indeed," replied Glenarvan. "Do you find
these uncomfortable hard branches very luxurious?"

"I have never been more comfortable, even in my study.
We live like the birds, we sing and fly about. I begin to believe
men were intended to live on trees."

"But they want wings," suggested the Major.

"They'll make them some day."

"And till then," put in Glenarvan, "with your leave, I prefer
the gravel of a park, or the floor of a house, or the deck of a ship,
to this aerial dwelling."

"We must take things as they come, Glenarvan," returned Paganel.
"If good, so much the better; if bad, never mind. Ah, I see you
are wishing you had all the comforts of Malcolm Castle."

"No, but--"

"I am quite certain Robert is perfectly happy," interrupted Paganel,
eager to insure one partisan at least.

"Yes, that I am!" exclaimed Robert, in a joyous tone.

"At his age it is quite natural," replied Glenarvan.

"And at mine, too," returned the geographer. "The fewer
one's comforts, the fewer one's needs; and the fewer one's needs,
the greater one's happiness."

"Now, now," said the Major, "here is Paganel running a tilt
against riches and gilt ceilings."

"No, McNabbs," replied the SAVANT, "I'm not; but if you like,
I'll tell you a little Arabian story that comes into my mind,
very APROPOS this minute."

"Oh, do, do," said Robert.

"And what is your story to prove, Paganel?" inquired the Major.

"Much what all stories prove, my brave comrade."

"Not much then," rejoined McNabbs. "But go on, Scheherazade, and tell
us the story."

"There was once," said Paganel, "a son of the great Haroun-al-Raschid,
who was unhappy, and went to consult an old Dervish. The old sage
told him that happiness was a difficult thing to find in this world.
'However,' he added, 'I know an infallible means of procuring
your happiness.' 'What is it?' asked the young Prince. 'It is
to put the shirt of a happy man on your shoulders.'
Whereupon the Prince embraced the old man, and set out at once to search
for his talisman. He visited all the capital cities in the world.
He tried on the shirts of kings, and emperors, and princes and nobles;
but all in vain: he could not find a man among them that was happy.
Then he put on the shirts of artists, and warriors, and merchants;
but these were no better. By this time he had traveled a long way,
without finding what he sought. At last he began to despair of success,
and began sorrowfully to retrace his steps back to his father's palace,
when one day he heard an honest peasant singing so merrily
as he drove the plow, that he thought, 'Surely this man is happy,
if there is such a thing as happiness on earth.' Forthwith he
accosted him, and said, 'Are you happy?' 'Yes,' was the reply.
'There is nothing you desire?' 'Nothing.' 'You would not change your
lot for that of a king?' 'Never!' 'Well, then, sell me your shirt.'
'My shirt! I haven't one!'"

CHAPTER XXV BETWEEN FIRE AND WATER

BEFORE turning into "their nest," as Paganel had called it, he,
and Robert, and Glenarvan climbed up into the observatory to have
one more inspection of the liquid plain. It was about nine o'clock;
the sun had just sunk behind the glowing mists of the western horizon.

The eastern horizon was gradually assuming a most stormy aspect.
A thick dark bar of cloud was rising higher and higher, and by degrees
extinguishing the stars. Before long half the sky was overspread.
Evidently motive power lay in the cloud itself, for there was
not a breath of wind. Absolute calm reigned in the atmosphere;
not a leaf stirred on the tree, not a ripple disturbed the surface
of the water. There seemed to be scarcely any air even,
as though some vast pneumatic machine had rarefied it.
The entire atmosphere was charged to the utmost with electricity,
the presence of which sent a thrill through the whole nervous
system of all animated beings.

"We are going to have a storm," said Paganel.

"You're not afraid of thunder, are you, Robert?" asked Glenarvan.

"No, my Lord!" exclaimed Robert. "Well, my boy, so much the better, for a storm is not far off."

"And a violent one, too," added Paganel, "if I may judge by the look of things."

"It is not the storm I care about," said Glenarvan, "so much as the torrents of rain that will accompany it. We shall be soaked to the skin. Whatever you may say, Paganel, a nest won't do for a man, and you will learn that soon, to your cost."

"With the help of philosophy, it will," replied Paganel.

"Philosophy! that won't keep you from getting drenched."

"No, but it will warm you."

"Well," said Glenarvan, "we had better go down to our friends, and advise them to wrap themselves up in their philosophy and their ponchos as tightly as possible, and above all, to lay in a stock of patience, for we shall need it before very long."

Glenarvan gave a last glance at the angry sky. The clouds now covered it entirely; only a dim streak of light shone faintly in the west. A dark shadow lay on the water, and it could hardly be distinguished from the thick vapors above it. There was no sensation of light or sound. All was darkness and silence around.

"Let us go down," said Glenarvan; "the thunder will soon burst over us."

On returning to the bottom of the tree, they found themselves, to their great surprise, in a sort of dim twilight, produced by myriads of luminous specks which appeared buzzing confusedly over the surface of the water.

"It is phosphorescence, I suppose," said Glenarvan.

"No, but phosphorescent insects, positive glow-worms, living diamonds, which the ladies of Buenos Ayres convert into magnificent ornaments."

"What!" exclaimed Robert, "those sparks flying about are insects!"

"Yes, my boy."

Robert caught one in his hand, and found Paganel was right. It was a kind of large drone, an inch long, and the Indians call it "tuco-tuco." This curious specimen of the COLEOPTERA sheds its radiance from two spots in the front of its breast-plate, and the light is sufficient to read by. Holding his watch close to the insect, Paganel saw distinctly that the time was 10 P. M.

On rejoining the Major and his three sailors, Glenarvan warned

them of the approaching storm, and advised them to secure
themselves in their beds of branches as firmly as possible,
for there was no doubt that after the first clap of thunder the wind
would become unchained, and the OMBU would be violently shaken.
Though they could not defend themselves from the waters above,
they might at least keep out of the rushing current beneath.

They wished one another "good-night," though hardly daring to hope for it,
and then each one rolled himself in his poncho and lay down to sleep.

But the approach of the great phenomena of nature excites
vague uneasiness in the heart of every sentient being,
even in the most strong-minded. The whole party in the OMBU
felt agitated and oppressed, and not one of them could close
his eyes. The first peal of thunder found them wide awake.
It occurred about 11 P. M., and sounded like a distant rolling.
Glenarvan ventured to creep out of the sheltering foliage,
and made his way to the extremity of the horizontal branch
to take a look round.

The deep blackness of the night was already scarified with sharp bright
lines, which were reflected back by the water with unerring exactness.
The clouds had rent in many parts, but noiselessly, like some soft
cotton material. After attentively observing both the zenith and horizon,
Glenarvan went back to the center of the trunk.

"Well, Glenarvan, what's your report?" asked Paganel.

"I say it is beginning in good earnest, and if it goes on so we
shall have a terrible storm."

"So much the better," replied the enthusiastic Paganel; "I should
like a grand exhibition, since we can't run away."

"That's another of your theories," said the Major.

"And one of my best, McNabbs. I am of Glenarvan's opinion,
that the storm will be superb. Just a minute ago, when I
was trying to sleep, several facts occurred to my memory,
that make me hope it will, for we are in the region of great
electrical tempests. For instance, I have read somewhere,
that in 1793, in this very province of Buenos Ayres,
lightning struck thirty-seven times during one single storm.
My colleague, M. Martin de Moussy, counted fifty-five minutes
of uninterrupted rolling."

"Watch in hand?" asked the Major.

"Watch in hand. Only one thing makes me uneasy," added Paganel,
"if it is any use to be uneasy, and that is, that the culminating
point of this plain, is just this very OMBU where we are.
A lightning conductor would be very serviceable to us at present.
For it is this tree especially, among all that grow in the Pampas,
that the thunder has a particular affection for. Besides, I need
not tell you, friend, that learned men tell us never to take refuge
under trees during a storm."

"Most seasonable advice, certainly, in our circumstances,"
said the Major.

"I must confess, Paganel," replied Glenarvan, "that you might have chosen a better time for this reassuring information."

"Bah!" replied Paganel, "all times are good for getting information. Ha! now it's beginning."

Louder peals of thunder interrupted this inopportune conversation, the violence increasing with the noise till the whole atmosphere seemed to vibrate with rapid oscillations.

The incessant flashes of lightning took various forms. Some darted down perpendicularly from the sky five or six times in the same place in succession. Others would have excited the interest of a SAVANT to the highest degree, for though Arago, in his curious statistics, only cites two examples of forked lightning, it was visible here hundreds of times. Some of the flashes branched out in a thousand different directions, making coralliform zigzags, and threw out wonderful jets of arborescent light.

Soon the whole sky from east to north seemed supported by a phosphoric band of intense brilliancy. This kept increasing by degrees till it overspread the entire horizon, kindling the clouds which were faithfully mirrored in the waters as if they were masses of combustible material, beneath, and presented the appearance of an immense globe of fire, the center of which was the OMBU.

Glenarvan and his companions gazed silently at this terrifying spectacle. They could not make their voices heard, but the sheets of white light which enwrapped them every now and then, revealed the face of one and another, sometimes the calm features of the Major, sometimes the eager, curious glance of Paganel, or the energetic face of Glenarvan, and at others, the scared eyes of the terrified Robert, and the careless looks of the sailors, investing them with a weird, spectral aspect.

However, as yet, no rain had fallen, and the wind had not risen in the least. But this state of things was of short duration; before long the cataracts of the sky burst forth, and came down in vertical streams. As the large drops fell splashing into the lake, fiery sparks seemed to fly out from the illuminated surface.

Was the rain the FINALE of the storm? If so, Glenarvan and his companions would escape scot free, except for a few vigorous douche baths. No. At the very height of this struggle of the electric forces of the atmosphere, a large ball of fire appeared suddenly at the extremity of the horizontal parent branch, as thick as a man's wrist, and surrounded with black smoke. This ball, after turning round and round for a few seconds, burst like a bombshell, and with so much noise that the explosion was distinctly audible above the general FRACAS. A sulphurous smoke filled the air, and complete silence reigned till the voice of Tom Austin was heard shouting:

"The tree is on fire."

Tom was right. In a moment, as if some fireworks were being ignited, the flame ran along the west side of the OMBU; the dead wood and nests of dried grass, and the whole sap, which was of a spongy texture,

supplied food for its devouring activity.

The wind had risen now and fanned the flame. It was time to flee,
and Glenarvan and his party hurried away to the eastern side
of their refuge, which was meantime untouched by the fire.
They were all silent, troubled, and terrified, as they watched
branch after branch shrivel, and crack, and writhe in the flame like
living serpents, and then drop into the swollen torrent, still red
and gleaming, as it was borne swiftly along on the rapid current.
The flames sometimes rose to a prodigious height, and seemed almost
lost in the atmosphere, and sometimes, beaten down by the hurricane,
closely enveloped the OMBU like a robe of Nessus. Terror seized
the entire group. They were almost suffocated with smoke,
and scorched with the unbearable heat, for the conflagration
had already reached the lower branches on their side of
the OMBU. To extinguish it or check its progress was impossible;
and they saw themselves irrevocably condemned to a torturing death,
like the victims of Hindoo divinities.

At last, their situation was absolutely intolerable.
Of the two deaths staring them in the face, they had better
choose the less cruel.

"To the water!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

Wilson, who was nearest the flames, had already plunged into the lake,
but next minute he screamed out in the most violent terror:

"Help! Help!"

Austin rushed toward him, and with the assistance of the Major,
dragged him up again on the tree.

"What's the matter?" they asked.

"Alligators! alligators!" replied Wilson.

The whole foot of the tree appeared to be surrounded by these
formidable animals of the Saurian order. By the glare of the flames,
they were immediately recognized by Paganel, as the ferocious species
peculiar to America, called CAIMANS in the Spanish territories.
About ten of them were there, lashing the water with their powerful tails,
and attacking the OMBU with the long teeth of their lower jaw.

At this sight the unfortunate men gave themselves up to be lost.
A frightful death was in store for them, since they must either
be devoured by the fire or by the caimans. Even the Major said,
in a calm voice:

"This is the beginning of the end, now."

There are circumstances in which men are powerless, when the
unchained elements can only be combated by other elements.
Glenarvan gazed with haggard looks at the fire and water leagued
against him, hardly knowing what deliverance to implore from Heaven.

The violence of the storm had abated, but it had developed
in the atmosphere a considerable quantity of vapors,
to which electricity was about to communicate immense force.

An enormous water-spout was gradually forming in the south--
a cone of thick mists, but with the point at the bottom,
and base at the top, linking together the turbulent water
and the angry clouds. This meteor soon began to move forward,
turning over and over on itself with dizzy rapidity,
and sweeping up into its center a column of water from the lake,
while its gyratory motions made all the surrounding currents
of air rush toward it.

A few seconds more, and the gigantic water-spout threw itself on the OMBU,
and caught it up in its whirl. The tree shook to its roots.
Glenarvan could fancy the caimans' teeth were tearing it up from the soil;
for as he and his companions held on, each clinging firmly to the other,
they felt the towering OMBU give way, and the next minute it fell right
over with a terrible hissing noise, as the flaming branches touched
the foaming water.

It was the work of an instant. Already the water-spout
had passed, to carry on its destructive work elsewhere.
It seemed to empty the lake in its passage, by continually
drawing up the water into itself.

The OMBU now began to drift rapidly along, impelled by wind
and current. All the caimans had taken their departure,
except one that was crawling over the upturned roots,
and coming toward the poor refugees with wide open jaws.
But Mulrady, seizing hold of a branch that was half-burned off,
struck the monster such a tremendous blow, that it fell back
into the torrent and disappeared, lashing the water with
its formidable tail.

Glenarvan and his companions being thus delivered from the
voracious SAURIANS, stationed themselves on the branches windward
of the conflagration, while the OMBU sailed along like a blazing
fire-ship through the dark night, the flames spreading themselves
round like sails before the breath of the hurricane.

CHAPTER XXVI THE RETURN ON BOARD

FOR two hours the OMBU navigated the immense lake without
reaching _terra firma_. The flames which were devouring it
had gradually died out. The chief danger of their frightful
passage was thus removed, and the Major went the length of saying,
that he should not be surprised if they were saved after all.

The direction of the current remained unchanged, always running
from southwest to northeast. Profound darkness had again set in,
only illumined here and there by a parting flash of lightning.
The storm was nearly over. The rain had given place to light mists,
which a breath of wind dispersed, and the heavy masses of cloud
had separated, and now streaked the sky in long bands.

The OMBU was borne onward so rapidly by the impetuous torrent,
that anyone might have supposed some powerful locomotive
engine was hidden in its trunk. It seemed likely enough
they might continue drifting in this way for days.
About three o'clock in the morning, however, the Major noticed

that the roots were beginning to graze the ground occasionally,
and by sounding the depth of the water with a long branch,
Tom Austin found that they were getting on rising ground.
Twenty minutes afterward, the OMBU stopped short with a violent jolt.

"Land! land!" shouted Paganel, in a ringing tone.

The extremity of the calcined bough had struck some hillock,
and never were sailors more glad; the rock to them was the port.

Already Robert and Wilson had leaped on to the solid plateau
with a loud, joyful hurrah! when a well-known whistle was heard.
The gallop of a horse resounded over the plain, and the tall form
of Thalcave emerged from the darkness.

"Thalcave! Thalcave!" they all cried with one voice.

"Amigos!" replied the Patagonian, who had been waiting for the travelers
here in the same place where the current had landed himself.

As he spoke he lifted up Robert in his arms, and hugged him to
his breast, never imagining that Paganel was hanging on to him.
A general and hearty hand-shaking followed, and everyone rejoiced
at seeing their faithful guide again. Then the Patagonian led the way
into the HANGAR of a deserted ESTANCIA, where there was a good,
blazing fire to warm them, and a substantial meal of fine, juicy slices
of venison soon broiling, of which they did not leave a crumb.
When their minds had calmed down a little, and they were able to
reflect on the dangers they had come through from flood, and fire,
and alligators, they could scarcely believe they had escaped.

Thalcave, in a few words, gave Paganel an account of himself since
they parted, entirely ascribing his deliverance to his intrepid horse.
Then Paganel tried to make him understand their new interpretation
of the document, and the consequent hopes they were indulging.
Whether the Indian actually understood his ingenious hypothesis
was a question; but he saw that they were glad and confident,
and that was enough for him.

As can easily be imagined, after their compulsory rest on the OMBU,
the travelers were up betimes and ready to start. At eight o'clock
they set off. No means of transport being procurable so far south,
they were compelled to walk. However, it was not more than forty miles
now that they had to go, and Thaouka would not refuse to give a lift
occasionally to a tired pedestrian, or even to a couple at a pinch.
In thirty-six hours they might reach the shores of the Atlantic.

The low-lying tract of marshy ground, still under water, soon lay
behind them, as Thalcave led them upward to the higher plains.
Here the Argentine territory resumed its monotonous aspect.
A few clumps of trees, planted by European hands, might chance
to be visible among the pasturage, but quite as rarely as in Tandil
and Tapalquem Sierras. The native trees are only found on the edge
of long prairies and about Cape Corrientes.

Next day, though still fifteen miles distant, the proximity of the ocean
was sensibly felt. The VIRAZON, a peculiar wind, which blows regularly
half of the day and night, bent down the heads of the tall grasses.
Thinly planted woods rose to view, and small tree-like mimosas, bushes

of acacia, and tufts of CURRA-MANTEL. Here and there, shining like pieces of broken glass, were salinous lagoons, which increased the difficulty of the journey as the travelers had to wind round them to get past. They pushed on as quickly as possible, hoping to reach Lake Salado, on the shores of the ocean, the same day; and at 8 P. M., when they found themselves in front of the sand hills two hundred feet high, which skirt the coast, they were all tolerably tired. But when the long murmur of the distant ocean fell on their ears, the exhausted men forgot their fatigue, and ran up the sandhills with surprising agility. But it was getting quite dark already, and their eager gaze could discover no traces of the DUNCAN on the gloomy expanse of water that met their sight.

"But she is there, for all that," exclaimed Glenarvan, "waiting for us, and running alongside."

"We shall see her to-morrow," replied McNabbs.

Tom Austin hailed the invisible yacht, but there was no response. The wind was very high and the sea rough. The clouds were scudding along from the west, and the spray of the waves dashed up even to the sand-hills. It was little wonder, then, if the man on the look-out could neither hear nor make himself heard, supposing the DUNCAN were there. There was no shelter on the coast for her, neither bay nor cove, nor port; not so much as a creek. The shore was composed of sand-banks which ran out into the sea, and were more dangerous to approach than rocky shoals. The sand-banks irritate the waves, and make the sea so particularly rough, that in heavy weather vessels that run aground there are invariably dashed to pieces.

Though, then, the DUNCAN would keep far away from such a coast, John Mangles is a prudent captain to get near. Tom Austin, however, was of the opinion that she would be able to keep five miles out.

The Major advised his impatient relative to restrain himself to circumstances. Since there was no means of dissipating the darkness, what was the use of straining his eyes by vainly endeavoring to pierce through it.

He set to work immediately to prepare the night's encampment beneath the shelter of the sand-hills; the last provisions supplied the last meal, and afterward, each, following the Major's example, scooped out a hole in the sand, which made a comfortable enough bed, and then covered himself with the soft material up to his chin, and fell into a heavy sleep.

But Glenarvan kept watch. There was still a stiff breeze of wind, and the ocean had not recovered its equilibrium after the recent storm. The waves, at all times tumultuous, now broke over the sand-banks with a noise like thunder. Glenarvan could not rest, knowing the DUNCAN was so near him. As to supposing she had not arrived at the appointed rendezvous, that was out of the question. Glenarvan had left the Bay of Talcahuano on the 14th of October, and arrived on the shores of the Atlantic on the 12th of November. He had taken thirty days to cross Chili, the Cordilleras, the Pampas, and the Argentine plains, giving the DUNCAN ample time to double Cape Horn, and arrive on the opposite side.

For such a fast runner there were no impediments.
Certainly the storm had been very violent, and its fury must
have been terrible on such a vast battlefield as the Atlantic,
but the yacht was a good ship, and the captain was a good sailor.
He was bound to be there, and he would be there.

These reflections, however, did not calm Glenarvan. When the heart
and the reason are struggling, it is generally the heart that wins
the mastery. The laird of Malcolm Castle felt the presence of loved ones
about him in the darkness as he wandered up and down the lonely strand.
He gazed, and listened, and even fancied he caught occasional glimpses
of a faint light.

"I am not mistaken," he said to himself; "I saw a ship's light,
one of the lights on the DUNCAN! Oh! why can't I see in the dark?"

All at once the thought rushed across him that Paganel said he was
a nyctalope, and could see at night. He must go and wake him.

The learned geographer was sleeping as sound as a mole.
A strong arm pulled him up out of the sand and made him call out:

"Who goes there?"

"It is I, Paganel."

"Who?"

"Glenarvan. Come, I need your eyes."

"My eyes," replied Paganel, rubbing them vigorously.

"Yes, I need your eyes to make out the DUNCAN in this darkness, so come."

"Confound the nyctalopia!" said Paganel, inwardly, though delighted
to be of any service to his friend.

He got up and shook his stiffened limbs, and stretching and yawning
as most people do when roused from sleep, followed Glenarvan
to the beach.

Glenarvan begged him to examine the distant horizon across the sea,
which he did most conscientiously for some minutes.

"Well, do you see nothing?" asked Glenarvan.

"Not a thing. Even a cat couldn't see two steps before her."

"Look for a red light or a green one--her larboard or starboard light."

"I see neither a red nor a green light, all is pitch dark,"
replied Paganel, his eyes involuntarily beginning to close.

For half an hour he followed his impatient friend, mechanically letting
his head frequently drop on his chest, and raising it again with a start.
At last he neither answered nor spoke, and he reeled about like a
drunken man. Glenarvan looked at him, and found he was sound asleep!

Without attempting to wake him, he took his arm, led him back to his hole, and buried him again comfortably.

At dawn next morning, all the slumberers started to their feet and rushed to the shore, shouting "Hurrah, hurrah!" as Lord Glenarvan's loud cry, "The DUNCAN, the DUNCAN!" broke upon his ear.

There she was, five miles out, her courses carefully reefed, and her steam half up. Her smoke was lost in the morning mist. The sea was so violent that a vessel of her tonnage could not have ventured safely nearer the sand-banks.

Glenarvan, by the aid of Paganel's telescope, closely observed the movements of the yacht. It was evident that John Mangles had not perceived his passengers, for he continued his course as before.

But at this very moment Thalcave fired his carbine in the direction of the yacht. They listened and looked, but no signal of recognition was returned. A second and a third time the Indian fired, awakening the echoes among the sand-hills.

At last a white smoke was seen issuing from the side of the yacht.

"They see us!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "That's the cannon of the DUNCAN."

A few seconds, and the heavy boom of the cannon came across the water and died away on the shore. The sails were instantly altered, and the steam got up, so as to get as near the coast as possible.

Presently, through the glass, they saw a boat lowered.

"Lady Helena will not be able to come," said Tom Austin. "It is too rough."

"Nor John Mangles," added McNabbs; "he cannot leave the ship."

"My sister, my sister!" cried Robert, stretching out his arms toward the yacht, which was now rolling violently.

"Oh, how I wish I could get on board!" said Glenarvan.

"Patience, Edward! you will be there in a couple of hours," replied the Major.

Two hours! But it was impossible for a boat--a six-oared one-- to come and go in a shorter space of time.

Glenarvan went back to Thalcave, who stood beside Thaouka, with his arms crossed, looking quietly at the troubled waves.

Glenarvan took his hand, and pointing to the yacht, said: "Come!"

The Indian gently shook his head.

"Come, friend," repeated Glenarvan.

"No," said Thalcave, gently. "Here is Thaouka, and there--

the Pampas," he added, embracing with a passionate gesture
the wide-stretching prairies.

Glenarvan understood his refusal. He knew that the Indian
would never forsake the prairie, where the bones of his fathers
were whitening, and he knew the religious attachment of these
sons of the desert for their native land. He did not urge
Thalcave longer, therefore, but simply pressed his hand.
Nor could he find it in his heart to insist, when the Indian,
smiling as usual, would not accept the price of his services,
pushing back the money, and saying:

"For the sake of friendship."

Glenarvan could not reply; but he wished at least, to leave
the brave fellow some souvenir of his European friends.
What was there to give, however? Arms, horses, everything had
been destroyed in the unfortunate inundation, and his friends
were no richer than himself.

He was quite at a loss how to show his recognition of the
disinterestedness of this noble guide, when a happy thought struck him.
He had an exquisite portrait of Lady Helena in his pocket,
a CHEF-D'OEUVRE of Lawrence. This he drew out, and offered
to Thalcave, simply saying:

"My wife."

The Indian gazed at it with a softened eye, and said:

"Good and beautiful."

Then Robert, and Paganel, and the Major, and the rest,
exchanged touching farewells with the faithful Patagonian.
Thalcave embraced them each, and pressed them to his broad chest.
Paganel made him accept a map of South America and the two oceans,
which he had often seen the Indian looking at with interest.
It was the most precious thing the geographer possessed.
As for Robert, he had only caresses to bestow, and these he lavished
on his friend, not forgetting to give a share to Thaouka.

The boat from the DUNCAN was now fast approaching, and in another
minute had glided into a narrow channel between the sand-banks,
and run ashore.

"My wife?" were Glenarvan's first words.

"My sister?" said Robert.

"Lady Helena and Miss Grant are waiting for you on board,"
replied the coxswain; "but lose no time your honor, we have
not a minute, for the tide is beginning to ebb already."

The last kindly adieux were spoken, and Thalcave accompanied his
friends to the boat, which had been pushed back into the water.
Just as Robert was going to step in, the Indian took him in his arms,
and gazed tenderly into his face. Then he said:

"Now go. You are a man."

"Good-by, good-by, friend!" said Glenarvan, once more.

"Shall we never see each other again?" Paganel called out.

"_Quien sabe?_" (Who knows?) replied Thalcave, lifting his arms toward heaven.

These were the Indian's last words, dying away on the breeze, as the boat receded gradually from the shore. For a long time, his dark, motionless SILHOUETTE stood out against the sky, through the white, dashing spray of the waves. Then by degrees his tall form began to diminish in size, till at last his friends of a day lost sight of him altogether.

An hour afterward Robert was the first to leap on board the DUNCAN. He flung his arms round Mary's neck, amid the loud, joyous hurrahs of the crew on the yacht.

Thus the journey across South America was accomplished, the given line of march being scrupulously adhered to throughout.

Neither mountains nor rivers had made the travelers change their course; and though they had not had to encounter any ill-will from men, 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 or The Children of Captain Grant

Australia

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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.

CHAPTER II TRISTAN D'ACUNHA AND THE ISLE OF AMSTERDAM

IF the yacht had followed the line of the equator, the 196 degrees which separate Australia from America, or, more correctly, Cape Bernouilli from Cape Corrientes, would have been equal to 11,760 geographical miles; but along the 37th parallel these same degrees, owing to the form of the earth, only represent 9,480 miles. From the American coast to Tristan d'Acunha is reckoned 2,100 miles-- a distance which John Mangles hoped to clear in ten days, if east winds did not retard the motion of the yacht. But he was not long uneasy on that score, for toward evening the breeze sensibly lulled and then changed altogether, giving the DUNCAN a fair field on a calm sea for displaying her incomparable qualities as a sailor.

The passengers had fallen back into their ordinary ship life, and it hardly seemed as if they really could have been absent a whole month. Instead of the Pacific, the Atlantic stretched itself out before them, and there was scarcely a shade of difference in the waves of the two oceans. The elements, after having handled them so roughly, seemed now disposed to favor them to the utmost. The sea was tranquil, and the wind kept in the right quarter, so that the yacht could spread all her canvas, and lend its aid, if needed to the indefatigable steam stored up in the boiler.

Under such conditions, the voyage was safely and rapidly accomplished. Their confidence increased as they found themselves nearer the Australian coast. They began to talk of Captain Grant as if the yacht were going to take him on board at a given port. His cabin was got ready, and berths for the men. This cabin was next to the famous _number six_, which Paganel had taken possession of instead of the one he had booked on the SCOTIA. It had been till now occupied by M. Olbinett, who vacated it for the expected guest. Mary took great delight in arranging it with her own hands, and adorning it for the reception of the loved inmate.

The learned geographer kept himself closely shut up. He was working away from morning till night at a work entitled

"Sublime Impressions of a Geographer in the Argentine Pampas,"
and they could hear him repeating elegant periods aloud
before committing them to the white pages of his day-book;
and more than once, unfaithful to Clio, the muse of history,
he invoked in his transports the divine Calliope, the muse
of epic poetry.

Paganel made no secret of it either. The chaste daughters of Apollo
willingly left the slopes of Helicon and Parnassus at his call.
Lady Helena paid him sincere compliments on his mythological visitants,
and so did the Major, though he could not forbear adding:

"But mind no fits of absence of mind, my dear Paganel;
and if you take a fancy to learn Australian, don't go and study
it in a Chinese grammar."

Things went on perfectly smoothly on board. Lady Helena
and Lord Glenarvan found leisure to watch John Mangles'
growing attachment to Mary Grant. There was nothing to be
said against it, and, indeed, since John remained silent,
it was best to take no notice of it.

V. IV Verne

"What will Captain Grant think?" Lord Glenarvan asked his wife one day.

"He'll think John is worthy of Mary, my dear Edward,
and he'll think right."

Meanwhile, the yacht was making rapid progress. Five days
after losing sight of Cape Corrientes, on the 16th of November,
they fell in with fine westerly breezes, and the DUNCAN might
almost have dispensed with her screw altogether, for she flew over
the water like a bird, spreading all her sails to catch the breeze,
as if she were running a race with the Royal Thames Club yachts.

Next day, the ocean appeared covered with immense seaweeds,
looking like a great pond choked up with the DEBRIS of trees
and plants torn off the neighboring continents. Commander Murray
had specially pointed them out to the attention of navigators.
The DUNCAN appeared to glide over a long prairie, which Paganel
justly compared to the Pampas, and her speed slackened a little.

Twenty-four hours after, at break of day, the man on the look-out
was heard calling out, "Land ahead!"

"In what direction?" asked Tom Austin, who was on watch.

"Leeward!" was the reply.

This exciting cry brought everyone speedily on deck. Soon a telescope
made its appearance, followed by Jacques Paganel. The learned
geographer pointed the instrument in the direction indicated,
but could see nothing that resembled land.

"Look in the clouds," said John Mangles.

"Ah, now I do see a sort of peak, but very indistinctly."

"It is Tristan d'Acunha," replied John Mangles.

"Then, if my memory serves me right, we must be eighty miles
from it, for the peak of Tristan, seven thousand feet high,
is visible at that distance."

"That's it, precisely."

Some hours later, the sharp, lofty crags of the group
of islands stood out clearly on the horizon. The conical
peak of Tristan looked black against the bright sky,
which seemed all ablaze with the splendor of the rising sun.
Soon the principal island stood out from the rocky mass,
at the summit of a triangle inclining toward the northeast.

Tristan d'Acunha is situated in 37 degrees 8' of southern latitude,
and 10 degrees 44' of longitude west of the meridian
at Greenwich. Inaccessible Island is eighteen miles to the
southwest and Nightingale Island is ten miles to the southeast,
and this completes the little solitary group of islets in
the Atlantic Ocean. Toward noon, the two principal landmarks,
by which the group is recognized were sighted, and at 3
P. M. the DUNCAN entered Falmouth Bay in Tristan d'Acunha.

Several whaling vessels were lying quietly at anchor there,
for the coast abounds in seals and other marine animals.

John Mangle's first care was to find good anchorage, and then
all the passengers, both ladies and gentlemen, got into the long
boat and were rowed ashore. They stepped out on a beach covered
with fine black sand, the impalpable DEBRIS of the calcined rocks
of the island.

Tristan d'Acunha is the capital of the group, and consists
of a little village, lying in the heart of the bay, and watered
by a noisy, rapid stream. It contained about fifty houses,
tolerably clean, and disposed with geometrical regularity.
Behind this miniature town there lay 1,500 hectares of meadow land,
bounded by an embankment of lava. Above this embankment,
the conical peak rose 7,000 feet high.

Lord Glenarvan was received by a governor supplied from the English
colony at the Cape. He inquired at once respecting Harry Grant
and the BRITANNIA, and found the names entirely unknown.
The Tristan d'Acunha Isles are out of the route of ships,
and consequently little frequented. Since the wreck of the
Blendon Hall in 1821, on the rocks of Inaccessible Island,
two vessels have stranded on the chief island--the PRIMANGUET
in 1845, and the three-mast American, PHILADELPHIA, in 1857.
These three events comprise the whole catalogue of maritime
disasters in the annals of the Acunhas.

Lord Glenarvan did not expect to glean any information, and only asked
by the way of duty. He even sent the boats to make the circuit
of the island, the entire extent of which was not more than seventeen
miles at most.

In the interim the passengers walked about the village.
The population does not exceed 150 inhabitants, and consists

of English and Americans, married to negroes and Cape Hottentots, who might bear away the palm for ugliness. The children of these heterogeneous households are very disagreeable compounds of Saxon stiffness and African blackness.

It was nearly nightfall before the party returned to the yacht, chattering and admiring the natural riches displayed on all sides, for even close to the streets of the capital, fields of wheat and maize were waving, and crops of vegetables, imported forty years before; and in the environs of the village, herds of cattle and sheep were feeding.

The boats returned to the DUNCAN about the same time as Lord Glenarvan. They had made the circuit of the entire island in a few hours, but without coming across the least trace of the BRITANNIA. The only result of this voyage of circumnavigation was to strike out the name of Isle Tristan from the program of search.

CHAPTER III CAPE TOWN AND M. VIOT

As John Mangles intended to put in at the Cape of Good Hope for coals, he was obliged to deviate a little from the 37th parallel, and go two degrees north. In less than six days he cleared the thirteen hundred miles which separate the point of Africa from Tristan d'Acunha, and on the 24th of November, at 3 P. M. the Table Mountain was sighted. At eight o'clock they entered the bay, and cast anchor in the port of Cape Town. They sailed away next morning at daybreak.

Between the Cape and Amsterdam Island there is a distance of 2,900 miles, but with a good sea and favoring breeze, this was only a ten day's voyage. The elements were now no longer at war with the travelers, as on their journey across the Pampas-- air and water seemed in league to help them forward.

"Ah! the sea! the sea!" exclaimed Paganel, "it is the field _par excellence_ for the exercise of human energies, and the ship is the true vehicle of civilization. Think, my friends, if the globe had been only an immense continent, the thousandth part of it would still be unknown to us, even in this nineteenth century. See how it is in the interior of great countries. In the steppes of Siberia, in the plains of Central Asia, in the deserts of Africa, in the prairies of America, in the immense wilds of Australia, in the icy solitudes of the Poles, man scarcely dares to venture; the most daring shrinks back, the most courageous succumbs. They cannot penetrate them; the means of transport are insufficient, and the heat and disease, and savage disposition of the natives, are impassable obstacles. Twenty miles of desert separate men more than five hundred miles of ocean."

Paganel spoke with such warmth that even the Major had nothing to say against this panegyric of the ocean. Indeed, if the finding of Harry Grant had involved following a parallel across continents instead of oceans, the enterprise could not have been attempted; but the sea was there ready to carry the travelers from one country to another, and on the 6th of December, at the first streak of day, they saw a fresh mountain apparently emerging from the bosom

of the waves.

This was Amsterdam Island, situated in 37 degrees 47 minutes
latitude and 77 degrees 24 minutes longitude, the high cone
of which in clear weather is visible fifty miles off.
At eight o'clock, its form, indistinct though it still was,
seemed almost a reproduction of Teneriffe.

"And consequently it must resemble Tristan d'Acunha," observed Glenarvan.

"A very wise conclusion," said Paganel, "according to the geometrographic
axiom that two islands resembling a third must have a common likeness.
I will only add that, like Tristan d'Acunha, Amsterdam Island is equally
rich in seals and Robinsons."

"There are Robinsons everywhere, then?" said Lady Helena.

"Indeed, Madam," replied Paganel, "I know few islands without
some tale of the kind appertaining to them, and the romance
of your immortal countryman, Daniel Defoe, has been often enough
realized before his day."

"Monsieur Paganel," said Mary, "may I ask you a question?"

"Two if you like, my dear young lady, and I promise to answer them."

"Well, then, I want to know if you would be very much frightened
at the idea of being cast away alone on a desert island."

"I?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Come now, my good fellow," said the Major, "don't go and tell us
that it is your most cherished desire."

"I don't pretend it is that, but still, after all, such an adventure
would not be very unpleasant to me. I should begin a new life;
I should hunt and fish; I should choose a grotto for my domicile in Winter
and a tree in Summer. I should make storehouses for my harvests:
in one word, I should colonize my island."

"All by yourself?"

"All by myself if I was obliged. Besides, are we ever obliged?
Cannot one find friends among the animals, and choose some tame
kid or eloquent parrot or amiable monkey? And if a lucky
chance should send one a companion like the faithful Friday,
what more is needed? Two friends on a rock, there is happiness.
Suppose now, the Major and I--"

"Thank you," replied the Major, interrupting him; "I have no inclination
in that line, and should make a very poor Robinson Crusoe."

"My dear Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena, "you are
letting your imagination run away with you, as usual.
But the dream is very different from the reality.
You are thinking of an imaginary Robinson's life, thrown on
a picked island and treated like a spoiled child by nature.
You only see the sunny side."

"What, madam! You don't believe a man could be happy on a desert island?"

"I do not. Man is made for society and not for solitude,
and solitude can only engender despair. It is a question of time.
At the outset it is quite possible that material wants
and the very necessities of existence may engross the poor
shipwrecked fellow, just snatched from the waves; but afterward,
when he feels himself alone, far from his fellow men, without any
hope of seeing country and friends again, what must he think,
what must he suffer? His little island is all his world.
The whole human race is shut up in himself, and when
death comes, which utter loneliness will make terrible,
he will be like the last man on the last day of the world.
Believe me, Monsieur Paganel, such a man is not to be envied."

Paganel gave in, though regretfully, to the arguments of Lady Helena,
and still kept up a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages
of Isolation, till the very moment the DUNCAN dropped anchor about
a mile off Amsterdam Island.

This lonely group in the Indian Ocean consists of two distinct islands,
thirty-three miles apart, and situated exactly on the meridian
of the Indian peninsula. To the north is Amsterdam Island,
and to the south St. Paul; but they have been often confounded
by geographers and navigators.

At the time of the DUNCAN'S visit to the island, the population consisted
of three people, a Frenchman and two mulattoes, all three employed
by the merchant proprietor. Paganel was delighted to shake hands
with a countryman in the person of good old Monsieur Viot. He was far
advanced in years, but did the honors of the place with much politeness.
It was a happy day for him when these kindly strangers touched at
his island, for St. Peter's was only frequented by seal-fishers, and now
and then a whaler, the crews of which are usually rough, coarse men.

M. Viot presented his subjects, the two mulattoes.
They composed the whole living population of the island,
except a few wild boars in the interior and myriads of penguins.
The little house where the three solitary men lived was in the heart
of a natural bay on the southeast, formed by the crumbling away
of a portion of the mountain.

Twice over in the early part of the century, Amsterdam Island became
the country of deserted sailors, providentially saved from misery
and death; but since these events no vessel had been lost on its coast.
Had any shipwreck occurred, some fragments must have been thrown on
the sandy shore, and any poor sufferers from it would have found their
way to M. Viot's fishing-huts. The old man had been long on the island,
and had never been called upon to exercise such hospitality.
Of the BRITANNIA and Captain Grant he knew nothing, but he was certain
that the disaster had not happened on Amsterdam Island, nor on the islet
called St. Paul, for whalers and fishing-vessels went there constantly,
and must have heard of it.

Glenarvan was neither surprised nor vexed at the reply;
indeed, his object in asking was rather to establish the fact
that Captain Grant had not been there than that he had.
This done, they were ready to proceed on their voyage next day.

They rambled about the island till evening, as its appearance was very inviting. Its FAUNA and FLORA, however, were poor in the extreme. The only specimens of quadrupeds, birds, fish and cetacea were a few wild boars, stormy petrels, albatrosses, perch and seals. Here and there thermal springs and chalybeate waters escaped from the black lava, and thin dark vapors rose above the volcanic soil. Some of these springs were very hot. John Mangles held his thermometer in one of them, and found the temperature was 176 degrees Fahrenheit. Fish caught in the sea a few yards off, cooked in five minutes in these all but boiling waters, a fact which made Paganel resolve not to attempt to bathe in them.

Toward evening, after a long promenade, Glenarvan and his party bade adieu to the good old M. Viot, and returned to the yacht, wishing him all the happiness possible on his desert island, and receiving in return the old man's blessing on their expedition.

CHAPTER IV A WAGER AND HOW DECIDED

ON the 7th of December, at three A. M., the DUNCAN lay puffing out her smoke in the little harbor ready to start, and a few minutes afterward the anchor was lifted, and the screw set in motion. By eight o'clock, when the passengers came on deck, the Amsterdam Island had almost disappeared from view behind the mists of the horizon. This was the last halting-place on the route, and nothing now was between them and the Australian coast but three thousand miles' distance. Should the west wind continue but a dozen days longer, and the sea remain favorable, the yacht would have reached the end of her voyage.

Mary Grant and her brother could not gaze without emotion at the waves through which the DUNCAN was speeding her course, when they thought that these very same waves must have dashed against the prow of the BRITANNIA but a few days before her shipwreck. Here, perhaps, Captain Grant, with a disabled ship and diminished crew, had struggled against the tremendous hurricanes of the Indian Ocean, and felt himself driven toward the coast with irresistible force. The Captain pointed out to Mary the different currents on the ship's chart, and explained to her their constant direction. Among others there was one running straight to the Australian continent, and its action is equally felt in the Atlantic and Pacific. It was doubtless against this that the BRITANNIA, dismasted and rudderless, had been unable to contend, and consequently been dashed against the coast, and broken in pieces.

A difficulty about this, however, presented itself. The last intelligence of Captain Grant was from Callao on the 30th of May, 1862, as appeared in the _Mercantile and Shipping Gazette_. "How then was it possible that on the 7th of June, only eight days after leaving the shores of Peru, that the BRITANNIA could have found herself in the Indian Ocean? But to this, Paganel, who was consulted on the subject, found a very plausible solution.

It was one evening, about six days after their leaving Amsterdam Island, when they were all chatting together on the poop, that the above-named difficulty was stated by Glenarvan. Paganel made no reply, but went and fetched the document. After perusing it, he still remained silent,

simply shrugging his shoulders, as if ashamed of troubling himself about such a trifle.

"Come, my good friend," said Glenarvan, "at least give us an answer."

"No," replied Paganel, "I'll merely ask a question for Captain John to answer."

"And what is it, Monsieur Paganel?" said John Mangles.

"Could a quick ship make the distance in a month over that part of the Pacific Ocean which lies between America and Australia?"

"Yes, by making two hundred miles in twenty-four hours."

"Would that be an extraordinary rate of speed?"

"Not at all; sailing clippers often go faster."

"Well, then, instead of '7 June' on this document, suppose that one figure has been destroyed by the sea-water, and read '17 June' or '27 June,' and all is explained."

"That's to say," replied Lady Helena, "that between the 31st of May and the 27th of June--"

"Captain Grant could have crossed the Pacific and found himself in the Indian Ocean."

Paganel's theory met with universal acceptance.

"That's one more point cleared up," said Glenarvan. "Thanks to our friend, all that remains to be done now is to get to Australia, and look out for traces of the wreck on the western coast."

"Or the eastern?" said John Mangles.

"Indeed, John, you may be right, for there is nothing in the document to indicate which shore was the scene of the catastrophe, and both points of the continent crossed by the 37th parallel, must, therefore, be explored."

"Then, my Lord, it is doubtful, after all," said Mary.

"Oh no, Miss Mary," John Mangles hastened to reply, seeing the young girl's apprehension. "His Lordship will please to consider that if Captain Grant had gained the shore on the east of Australia, he would almost immediately have found refuge and assistance. The whole of that coast is English, we might say, peopled with colonists. The crew of the BRITANNIA could not have gone ten miles without meeting a fellow-countryman."

"I am quite of your opinion, Captain John," said Paganel. "On the eastern coast Harry Grant would not only have found an English colony easily, but he would certainly have met with some means of transport back to Europe."

"And he would not have found the same resources on the side we are making for?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, madam," replied Paganel; "it is a desert coast, with no communication between it and Melbourne or Adelaide. If the BRITANNIA was wrecked on those rocky shores, she was as much cut off from all chance of help as if she had been lost on the inhospitable shores of Africa."

"But what has become of my father there, then, all these two years?" asked Mary Grant.

"My dear Mary," replied Paganel, "you have not the least doubt, have you, that Captain Grant reached the Australian continent after his shipwreck?"

"No, Monsieur Paganel."

"Well, granting that, what became of him? The suppositions we might make are not numerous. They are confined to three. Either Harry Grant and his companions have found their way to the English colonies, or they have fallen into the hands of the natives, or they are lost in the immense wilds of Australia."

"Go on, Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, as the learned Frenchman made a pause.

"The first hypothesis I reject, then, to begin with, for Harry Grant could not have reached the English colonies, or long ago he would have been back with his children in the good town of Dundee."

"Poor father," murmured Mary, "away from us for two whole years."

"Hush, Mary," said Robert, "Monsieur Paganel will tell us."

"Alas! my boy, I cannot. All that I affirm is, that Captain Grant is in the hands of the natives."

"But these natives," said Lady Helena, hastily, "are they--"

"Reassure yourself, madam," said Paganel, divining her thoughts. "The aborigines of Australia are low enough in the scale of human intelligence, and most degraded and uncivilized, but they are mild and gentle in disposition, and not sanguinary like their New Zealand neighbors. Though they may be prisoners, their lives have never been threatened, you may be sure. All travelers are unanimous in declaring that the Australian natives abhor shedding blood, and many a time they have found in them faithful allies in repelling the attacks of evil-disposed convicts far more cruelly inclined."

"You hear what Monsieur Paganel tells us, Mary," said Lady Helena turning to the young girl. "If your father is in the hands of the natives, which seems probable from the document, we shall find him."

"And what if he is lost in that immense country?" asked Mary.

"Well, we'll find him still," exclaimed Paganel, in a confident tone. "Won't we, friends?"

"Most certainly," replied Glenarvan; and anxious to give a less gloomy turn to the conversation, he added--

"But I won't admit the supposition of his being lost,
not for an instant."

"Neither will I," said Paganel.

"Is Australia a big place?" inquired Robert.

"Australia, my boy, is about as large as four-fifths of Europe. It has
somewhere about 775,000 HECTARES."

"So much as that?" said the Major.

"Yes, McNabbs, almost to a yard's breadth. Don't you think now it
has a right to be called a continent?"

"I do, certainly."

"I may add," continued the SAVANT, "that there are but few
accounts of travelers being lost in this immense country.
Indeed, I believe Leichardt is the only one of whose fate we
are ignorant, and some time before my departure I learned
from the Geographical Society that Mcintyre had strong hopes
of having discovered traces of him."

"The whole of Australia, then, is not yet explored?"
asked Lady Helena.

"No, madam, but very little of it. This continent is not
much better known than the interior of Africa, and yet it
is from no lack of enterprising travelers. From 1606 to 1862,
more than fifty have been engaged in exploring along the coast
and in the interior."

"Oh, fifty!" exclaimed McNabbs incredulously.

"No, no," objected the Major; "that is going too far."

"And I might go farther, McNabbs," replied the geographer,
impatient of contradiction.

"Yes, McNabbs, quite that number."

"Farther still, Paganel."

"If you doubt me, I can give you the names."

"Oh, oh," said the Major, coolly. "That's just like
you SAVANTS. You stick at nothing."

"Major, will you bet your Purdy-Moore rifle against my telescope?"

"Why not, Paganel, if it would give you any pleasure."

"Done, Major!" exclaimed Paganel. "You may say good-by to your rifle,
for it will never shoot another chamois or fox unless I lend it to you,
which I shall always be happy to do, by the by."

"And whenever you require the use of your telescope, Paganel, I shall

be equally obliging," replied the Major, gravely.

"Let us begin, then; and ladies and gentlemen, you shall be our jury. Robert, you must keep count."

This was agreed upon, and Paganel forthwith commenced.

"Mnemosyne! Goddess of Memory, chaste mother of the Muses!" he exclaimed, "inspire thy faithful servant and fervent worshiper! Two hundred and fifty-eight years ago, my friends, Australia was unknown. Strong suspicions were entertained of the existence of a great southern continent. In the library of your British Museum, Glenarvan, there are two charts, the date of which is 1550, which mention a country south of Asia, called by the Portuguese Great Java. But these charts are not sufficiently authentic. In the seventeenth century, in 1606, Quiros, a Spanish navigator, discovered a country which he named Australia de Espiritu Santo. Some authors imagine that this was the New Hebrides group, and not Australia. I am not going to discuss the question, however. Count Quiros, Robert, and let us pass on to another."

"ONE," said Robert.

"In that same year, Louis Vas de Torres, the second in command of the fleet of Quiros, pushed further south. But it is to Theodore Hertoge, a Dutchman, that the honor of the great discovery belongs. He touched the western coast of Australia in 25 degrees latitude, and called it Eendracht, after his vessel. From this time navigators increased. In 1618, Zeachen discovered the northern parts of the coast, and called them Arnheim and Diemen. In 1618, Jan Edels went along the western coast, and christened it by his own name. In 1622, Leuwin went down as far as the cape which became his namesake." And so Paganel continued with name after name until his hearers cried for mercy.

"Stop, Paganel," said Glenarvan, laughing heartily, "don't quite crush poor McNabbs. Be generous; he owns he is vanquished."

"And what about the rifle?" asked the geographer, triumphantly.

"It is yours, Paganel," replied the Major, "and I am very sorry for it; but your memory might gain an armory by such feats."

"It is certainly impossible to be better acquainted with Australia; not the least name, not even the most trifling fact--"

"As to the most trifling fact, I don't know about that," said the Major, shaking his head.

"What do you mean, McNabbs?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Simply that perhaps all the incidents connected with the discovery of Australia may not be known to you."

"Just fancy," retorted Paganel, throwing back his head proudly.

"Come now. If I name one fact you don't know, will you give me back my rifle?" said McNabbs.

"On the spot, Major."

"Very well, it's a bargain, then."

"Yes, a bargain; that's settled."

"All right. Well now, Paganel, do you know how it is that Australia does not belong to France?"

"But it seems to me--"

"Or, at any rate, do you know what's the reason the English give?" asked the Major.

"No," replied Paganel, with an air of vexation.

"Just because Captain Baudin, who was by no means a timid man, was so afraid in 1802, of the croaking of the Australian frogs, that he raised his anchor with all possible speed, and quitted the coast, never to return."

"What!" exclaimed Paganel. "Do they actually give that version of it in England? But it is just a bad joke."

"Bad enough, certainly, but still it is history in the United Kingdom."

"It's an insult!" exclaimed the patriotic geographer; "and they relate that gravely?"

"I must own it is the case," replied Glenarvan, amidst a general outburst of laughter. "Do you mean to say you have never heard of it before?"

"Never! But I protest against it. Besides, the English call us 'frog-eaters.' Now, in general, people are not afraid of what they eat."

"It is said, though, for all that," replied McNabbs. So the Major kept his famous rifle after all.

CHAPTER V THE STORM ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

Two days after this conversation, John Mangles announced that the DUNCAN was in longitude 113 degrees 37 minutes, and the passengers found on consulting the chart that consequently Cape Bernouilli could not be more than five degrees off. They must be sailing then in that part of the Indian Ocean which washed the Australian continent, and in four days might hope to see Cape Bernouilli appear on the horizon.

Hitherto the yacht had been favored by a strong westerly breeze, but now there were evident signs that a calm was impending, and on the 13th of December the wind fell entirely; as the sailors say, there was not enough to fill a cap.

There was no saying how long this state of the atmosphere might last.

But for the powerful propeller the yacht would have been obliged to lie motionless as a log. The young captain was very much annoyed, however, at the prospect of emptying his coal-bunkers, for he had covered his ship with canvas, intending to take advantage of the slightest breeze.

"After all, though," said Glenarvan, with whom he was talking over the subject, "it is better to have no wind than a contrary one."

"Your Lordship is right," replied John Mangles; "but the fact is these sudden calms bring change of weather, and this is why I dread them. We are close on the trade winds, and if we get them ever so little in our teeth, it will delay us greatly."

"Well, John, what if it does? It will only make our voyage a little longer."

"Yes, if it does not bring a storm with it."

"Do you mean to say you think we are going to have bad weather?" replied Glenarvan, examining the sky, which from horizon to zenith seemed absolutely cloudless.

"I do," returned the captain. "I may say so to your Lordship, but I should not like to alarm Lady Glenarvan or Miss Grant."

"You are acting wisely; but what makes you uneasy?"

"Sure indications of a storm. Don't trust, my Lord, to the appearance of the sky. Nothing is more deceitful. For the last two days the barometer has been falling in a most ominous manner, and is now at 27 degrees. This is a warning I dare not neglect, for there is nothing I dread more than storms in the Southern Seas; I have had a taste of them already. The vapors which become condensed in the immense glaciers at the South Pole produce a current of air of extreme violence. This causes a struggle between the polar and equatorial winds, which results in cyclones, tornadoes, and all those multiplied varieties of tempest against which a ship is no match."

"Well, John," said Glenarvan, "the DUNCAN is a good ship, and her captain is a brave sailor. Let the storm come, we'll meet it!"

John Mangles remained on deck the whole night, for though as yet the sky was still unclouded, he had such faith in his weather-glass, that he took every precaution that prudence could suggest. About 11 P. M. the sky began to darken in the south, and the crew were called up, and all the sails hauled in, except the foresail, brigantine, top-sail, and jib-boom. At midnight the wind freshened, and before long the cracking of the masts, and the rattling of the cordage, and groaning of the timbers, awakened the passengers, who speedily made their appearance on deck-- at least Paganel, Glenarvan, the Major and Robert.

"Is it the hurricane?" asked Glenarvan quietly.

"Not yet," replied the captain; "but it is close at hand."

And he went on giving his orders to the men, and doing his best to make

ready for the storm, standing, like an officer commanding a breach, with his face to the wind, and his gaze fixed on the troubled sky. The glass had fallen to 26 degrees, and the hand pointed to tempest.

It was one o'clock in the morning when Lady Helena and Miss Grant ventured upstairs on deck. But they no sooner made their appearance than the captain hurried toward them, and begged them to go below again immediately. The waves were already beginning to dash over the side of the ship, and the sea might any moment sweep right over her from stem to stern. The noise of the warring elements was so great that his words were scarcely audible, but Lady Helena took advantage of a sudden lull to ask if there was any danger.

"None whatever," replied John Mangles; "but you cannot remain on deck, madam, no more can Miss Mary."

The ladies could not disobey an order that seemed almost an entreaty, and they returned to their cabin. At the same moment the wind redoubled its fury, making the masts bend beneath the weight of the sails, and completely lifting up the yacht.

"Haul up the foresail!" shouted the captain. "Lower the topsail and jib-boom!"

Glenarvan and his companions stood silently gazing at the struggle between their good ship and the waves, lost in wondering and half-terrified admiration at the spectacle.

Just then, a dull hissing was heard above the noise of the elements. The steam was escaping violently, not by the funnel, but from the safety-valves of the boiler; the alarm whistle sounded unnaturally loud, and the yacht made a frightful pitch, overturning Wilson, who was at the wheel, by an unexpected blow from the tiller. The DUNCAN no longer obeyed the helm.

"What is the matter?" cried the captain, rushing on the bridge.

"The ship is heeling over on her side," replied Wilson.

"The engine! the engine!" shouted the engineer.

Away rushed John to the engine-room. A cloud of steam filled the room. The pistons were motionless in their cylinders, and they were apparently powerless, and the engine-driver, fearing for his boilers, was letting off the steam.

"What's wrong?" asked the captain.

"The propeller is bent or entangled," was the reply. "It's not acting at all."

"Can't you extricate it?"

"It is impossible."

An accident like this could not be remedied, and John's only resource was to fall back on his sails, and seek to make an auxiliary of his most powerful enemy, the wind. He went up again on deck,

and after explaining in a few words to Lord Glenarvan how things stood,
begged him to retire to his cabin, with the rest of the passengers.
But Glenarvan wished to remain above.

"No, your Lordship," said the captain in a firm tone,
"I must be alone with my men. Go into the saloon.
The vessel will have a hard fight with the waves, and they
would sweep you over without mercy."

"But we might be a help."

"Go in, my Lord, go in. I must indeed insist on it.
There are times when I must be master on board, and retire you must."

Their situation must indeed be desperate for John Mangles to speak
in such authoritative language. Glenarvan was wise enough to
understand this, and felt he must set an example in obedience.
He therefore quitted the deck immediately with his three companions,
and rejoined the ladies, who were anxiously watching the DENOUEMENT
of this war with the elements.

"He's an energetic fellow, this brave John of mine!" said Lord Glenarvan,
as he entered the saloon.

"That he is," replied Paganel. "He reminds me of your great
Shakespeare's boatswain in the 'Tempest,' who says to the king
on board: 'Hence! What care these roarers for the name of king?
To cabin! Silence! Trouble us not.'"

However, John Mangles did not lose a second in extricating his
ship from the peril in which she was placed by the condition
of her screw propeller. He resolved to rely on the mainsail
for keeping in the right route as far as possible, and to brace
the yards obliquely, so as not to present a direct front to the storm.
The yacht turned about like a swift horse that feels the spur,
and presented a broadside to the billows. The only question was,
how long would she hold out with so little sail, and what sail could
resist such violence for any length of time. The great advantage
of keeping up the mainsail was that it presented to the waves only
the most solid portions of the yacht, and kept her in the right course.
Still it involved some peril, for the vessel might get
engulfed between the waves, and not be able to raise herself.
But Mangles felt there was no alternative, and all he could
do was to keep the crew ready to alter the sail at any moment,
and stay in the shrouds himself watching the tempest.

The remainder of the night was spent in this manner, and it was hoped
that morning would bring a calm. But this was a delusive hope.
At 8 A. M. the wind had increased to a hurricane.

John said nothing, but he trembled for his ship, and those on board.
The DUNCAN made a frightful plunge forward, and for an instant
the men thought she would never rise again. Already they had
seized their hatchets to cut away the shrouds from the mainmast,
but the next minute the sails were torn away by the tempest,
and had flown off like gigantic albatrosses.

The yacht had risen once more, but she found herself at the mercy
of the waves entirely now, with nothing to steady or direct her,
and was so fearfully pitched and tossed about that every moment
the captain expected the masts would break short off. John had no
resource but to put up a forestaysail, and run before the gale.
But this was no easy task. Twenty times over he had all his work
to begin again, and it was 3 P. M. before his attempt succeeded.
A mere shred of canvas though it was, it was enough to drive
the DUNCAN forward with inconceivable rapidity to the northeast,
of course in the same direction as the hurricane.
Swiftness was their only chance of safety. Sometimes she would
get in advance of the waves which carried her along, and cutting
through them with her sharp prow, bury herself in their depths.
At others, she would keep pace with them, and make such enormous
leaps that there was imminent danger of her being pitched over on
her side, and then again, every now and then the storm-driven sea
would out-distance the yacht, and the angry billows would sweep
over the deck from stem to stern with tremendous violence.

In this alarming situation and amid dreadful alternations of hope
and despair, the 12th of December passed away, and the ensuing night,
John Mangles never left his post, not even to take food.
Though his impassive face betrayed no symptoms of fear, he was
tortured with anxiety, and his steady gaze was fixed on the north,
as if trying to pierce through the thick mists that enshrouded it.

There was, indeed, great cause for fear. The DUNCAN was
out of her course, and rushing toward the Australian coast
with a speed which nothing could lessen. To John Mangles
it seemed as if a thunderbolt were driving them along.
Every instant he expected the yacht would dash against some rock,
for he reckoned the coast could not be more than twelve miles off,
and better far be in mid ocean exposed to all its fury than
too near land.

John Mangles went to find Glenarvan, and had a private talk with him
about their situation, telling him frankly the true state of affairs,
stating the case with all the coolness of a sailor prepared for anything
and everything and he wound up by saying he might, perhaps, be obliged
to cast the yacht on shore.

"To save the lives of those on board, my Lord," he added.

"Do it then, John," replied Lord Glenarvan.

"And Lady Helena, Miss Grant?"

"I will tell them at the last moment when all hope of keeping
out at sea is over. You will let me know?"

"I will, my Lord."

Glenarvan rejoined his companions, who felt they were in
imminent danger, though no word was spoken on the subject.
Both ladies displayed great courage, fully equal to any of the party.
Paganel descanted in the most inopportune manner about the direction
of atmospheric currents, making interesting comparisons,
between tornadoes, cyclones, and rectilinear tempests.
The Major calmly awaited the end with the fatalism of a Mussulman.

About eleven o'clock, the hurricane appeared to decrease slightly. The damp mist began to clear away, and a sudden gleam of light revealed a low-lying shore about six miles distant. They were driving right down on it. Enormous breakers fifty feet high were dashing over it, and the fact of their height showed John there must be solid ground before they could make such a rebound.

"Those are sand-banks," he said to Austin.

"I think they are," replied the mate.

"We are in God's hands," said John. "If we cannot find any opening for the yacht, and if she doesn't find the way in herself, we are lost."

"The tide is high at present, it is just possible we may ride over those sand-banks."

"But just see those breakers. What ship could stand them. Let us invoke divine aid, Austin!"

Meanwhile the DUNCAN was speeding on at a frightful rate. Soon she was within two miles of the sand-banks, which were still veiled from time to time in thick mist. But John fancied he could see beyond the breakers a quiet basin, where the DUNCAN would be in comparative safety. But how could she reach it?

All the passengers were summoned on deck, for now that the hour of shipwreck was at hand, the captain did not wish anyone to be shut up in his cabin.

"John!" said Glenarvan in a low voice to the captain, "I will try to save my wife or perish with her. I put Miss Grant in your charge."

"Yes, my Lord," replied John Mangles, raising Glenarvan's hand to his moistened eyes.

The yacht was only a few cables' lengths from the sandbanks. The tide was high, and no doubt there was abundance of water to float the ship over the dangerous bar; but these terrific breakers alternately lifting her up and then leaving her almost dry, would infallibly make her graze the sand-banks.

Was there no means of calming this angry sea? A last expedient struck the captain. "The oil, my lads!" he exclaimed. "Bring the oil here!"

The crew caught at the idea immediately; this was a plan that had been successfully tried already. The fury of the waves had been allayed before this time by covering them with a sheet of oil. Its effect is immediate, but very temporary. The moment after a ship has passed over the smooth surface, the sea redoubles its violence, and woe to the bark that follows. The casks of seal-oil were forthwith hauled up, for danger seemed to have given the men double strength. A few hatchet blows soon knocked in the heads, and they were then hung over the larboard and starboard.

"Be ready!" shouted John, looking out for a favorable moment.

In twenty seconds the yacht reached the bar. Now was the time.
"Pour out!" cried the captain, "and God prosper it!"

The barrels were turned upside down, and instantly a sheet of oil covered
the whole surface of the water. The billows fell as if by magic,
the whole foaming sea seemed leveled, and the DUNCAN flew over
its tranquil bosom into a quiet basin beyond the formidable bar;
but almost the same minute the ocean burst forth again with all its fury,
and the towering breakers dashed over the bar with increased violence.

CHAPTER VI A HOSPITABLE COLONIST

THE captain's first care was to anchor his vessel securely.
He found excellent moorage in five fathoms' depth of water,
with a solid bottom of hard granite, which afforded a firm hold.
There was no danger now of either being driven away or stranded
at low water. After so many hours of danger, the DUNCAN found
herself in a sort of creek, sheltered by a high circular point
from the winds outside in the open sea.

Lord Glenarvan grasped John Mangles' hand, and simply said:
"Thank you, John."

This was all, but John felt it ample recompense. Glenarvan kept to
himself the secret of his anxiety, and neither Lady Helena, nor Mary,
nor Robert suspected the grave perils they had just escaped.

One important fact had to be ascertained. On what part of the coast had
the tempest thrown them? How far must they go to regain the parallel.
At what distance S. W. was Cape Bernouilli? This was soon determined
by taking the position of the ship, and it was found that she had scarcely
deviated two degrees from the route. They were in longitude 36 degrees
12 minutes, and latitude 32 degrees 67 minutes, at Cape Catastrophe,
three hundred miles from Cape Bernouilli. The nearest port was Adelaide,
the Capital of Southern Australia.

Could the DUNCAN be repaired there? This was the question.
The extent of the injuries must first be ascertained, and in order
to do this he ordered some of the men to dive down below the stern.
Their report was that one of the branches of the screw was bent,
and had got jammed against the stern post, which of course prevented
all possibility of rotation. This was a serious damage, so serious
as to require more skilful workmen than could be found in Adelaide.

After mature reflection, Lord Glenarvan and John Mangles came
to the determination to sail round the Australian coast,
stopping at Cape Bernouilli, and continuing their route south
as far as Melbourne, where the DUNCAN could speedily be put right.
This effected, they would proceed to cruise along the eastern
coast to complete their search for the BRITANNIA.

This decision was unanimously approved, and it was agreed
that they should start with the first fair wind.
They had not to wait long for the same night the hurricane

had ceased entirely, and there was only a manageable breeze
from the S. W. Preparations for sailing were instantly commenced,
and at four o'clock in the morning the crew lifted the anchors,
and got under way with fresh canvas outspread, and a wind
blowing right for the Australian shores.

Two hours afterward Cape Catastrophe was out of sight.
In the evening they doubled Cape Borda, and came alongside
Kangaroo Island. This is the largest of the Australian islands,
and a great hiding place for runaway convicts. Its appearance
was enchanting. The stratified rocks on the shore were richly
carpeted with verdure, and innumerable kangaroos were jumping over
the woods and plains, just as at the time of its discovery in 1802.
Next day, boats were sent ashore to examine the coast minutely,
as they were now on the 36th parallel, and between that and the 38th
Glenarvan wished to leave no part unexplored.

The boats had hard, rough work of it now, but the men never complained.
Glenarvan and his inseparable companion, Paganel, and young Robert
generally accompanied them. But all this painstaking exploration came
to nothing. Not a trace of the shipwreck could be seen anywhere.
The Australian shores revealed no more than the Patagonian. However, it
was not time yet to lose hope altogether, for they had not reached
the exact point indicated by the document.

On the 20th of December, they arrived off Cape Bernouilli,
which terminates Lacepede Bay, and yet not a vestige of the
BRITANNIA had been discovered. Still this was not surprising,
as it was two years since the occurrence of the catastrophe,
and the sea might, and indeed must, have scattered and destroyed
whatever fragments of the brig had remained. Besides, the natives
who scent a wreck as the vultures do a dead body, would have
pounced upon it and carried off the smaller DEBRIS. There was
no doubt whatever Harry Grant and his companions had been
made prisoners the moment the waves threw them on the shore,
and been dragged away into the interior of the continent.

But if so, what becomes of Paganel's ingenious hypothesis about the
document? viz., that it had been thrown into a river and carried by a
current into the sea. That was a plausible enough theory in Patagonia,
but not in the part of Australia intersected by the 37th parallel.
Besides the Patagonian rivers, the Rio Colorado and the Rio Negro,
flow into the sea along deserted solitudes, uninhabited and uninhabitable;
while, on the contrary, the principal rivers of Australia--the Murray,
the Yarrow, the Torrens, the Darling--all connected with each other,
throw themselves into the ocean by well-frequented routes, and their
mouths are ports of great activity. What likelihood, consequently,
would there be that a fragile bottle would ever find its way along
such busy thoroughfares right out into the Indian Ocean?

Paganel himself saw the impossibility of it, and confessed to the Major,
who raised a discussion on the subject, that his hypothesis would
be altogether illogical in Australia. It was evident that the degrees
given related to the place where the BRITANNIA was actually shipwrecked
and not the place of captivity, and that the bottle therefore had been
thrown into the sea on the western coast of the continent.

However, as Glenarvan justly remarked, this did not alter
the fact of Captain Grant's captivity in the least degree,

though there was no reason now for prosecuting the search
for him along the 37th parallel, more than any other.
It followed, consequently, that if no traces of the BRITANNIA
were discovered at Cape Bernouilli, the only thing to be done was
to return to Europe. Lord Glenarvan would have been unsuccessful,
but he would have done his duty courageously and conscientiously.

But the young Grants did not feel disheartened. They had long since said
to themselves that the question of their father's deliverance was about
to be finally settled. Irrevocably, indeed, they might consider it,
for as Paganel had judiciously demonstrated, if the wreck had occurred
on the eastern side, the survivors would have found their way back
to their own country long since.

"Hope on! Hope on, Mary!" said Lady Helena to the young girl,
as they neared the shore; "God's hand will still lead us."

"Yes, Miss Mary," said Captain John. "Man's extremity
is God's opportunity. When one way is hedged up another is
sure to open."

"God grant it," replied Mary.

Land was quite close now. The cape ran out two miles into the sea,
and terminated in a gentle slope, and the boat glided easily
into a sort of natural creek between coral banks in a state
of formation, which in course of time would be a belt of coral
reefs round the southern point of the Australian coast.
Even now they were quite sufficiently formidable to destroy
the keel of a ship, and the BRITANNIA might likely enough
have been dashed to pieces on them.

The passengers landed without the least difficulty on an absolutely
desert shore. Cliffs composed of beds of strata made a coast
line sixty to eighty feet high, which it would have been
difficult to scale without ladders or cramp-irons. John Mangles
happened to discover a natural breach about half a mile south.
Part of the cliff had been partially beaten down, no doubt,
by the sea in some equinoctial gale. Through this opening the whole
party passed and reached the top of the cliff by a pretty steep path.
Robert climbed like a young cat, and was the first on the summit,
to the despair of Paganel, who was quite ashamed to see his long legs,
forty years old, out-distanced by a young urchin of twelve.
However, he was far ahead of the Major, who gave himself no concern
on the subject.

They were all soon assembled on the lofty crags, and from this
elevation could command a view of the whole plain below.
It appeared entirely uncultivated, and covered with shrubs and bushes.
Glenarvan thought it resembled some glens in the lowlands of Scotland,
and Paganel fancied it like some barren parts of Britanny. But along
the coast the country appeared to be inhabited, and significant signs
of industry revealed the presence of civilized men, not savages.

"A mill!" exclaimed Robert.

And, sure enough, in the distance the long sails of a mill appeared,
apparently about three miles off.

"It certainly is a windmill," said Paganel, after examining the object in question through his telescope.

"Let us go to it, then," said Glenarvan.

Away they started, and, after walking about half an hour, the country began to assume a new aspect, suddenly changing its sterility for cultivation. Instead of bushes, quick-set hedges met the eye, inclosing recent clearings. Several bullocks and about half a dozen horses were feeding in meadows, surrounded by acacias supplied from the vast plantations of Kangaroo Island. Gradually fields covered with cereals came in sight, whole acres covered with bristling ears of corn, hay-ricks in the shape of large bee-hives, blooming orchards, a fine garden worthy of Horace, in which the useful and agreeable were blended; then came sheds; commons wisely distributed, and last of all, a plain comfortable dwelling-house, crowned by a joyous-sounding mill, and fanned and shaded by its long sails as they kept constantly moving round.

Just at that moment a pleasant-faced man, about fifty years of age, came out of the house, warned, by the loud barking of four dogs, of the arrival of strangers. He was followed by five handsome strapping lads, his sons, and their mother, a fine tall woman. There was no mistaking the little group. This was a perfect type of the Irish colonist--a man who, weary of the miseries of his country, had come, with his family, to seek fortune and happiness beyond the seas.

Before Glenarvan and his party had time to reach the house and present themselves in due form, they heard the cordial words: "Strangers! welcome to the house of Paddy O'Moore!"

"You are Irish," said Glenarvan, "if I am not mistaken," warmly grasping the outstretched hand of the colonist.

"I was," replied Paddy O'Moore, "but now I am Australian. Come in, gentlemen, whoever you may be, this house is yours."

It was impossible not to accept an invitation given with such grace. Lady Helena and Mary Grant were led in by Mrs. O'Moore, while the gentlemen were assisted by his sturdy sons to disencumber themselves of their fire-arms.

An immense hall, light and airy, occupied the ground floor of the house, which was built of strong planks laid horizontally. A few wooden benches fastened against the gaily-colored walls, about ten stools, two oak chests on tin mugs, a large long table where twenty guests could sit comfortably, composed the furniture, which looked in perfect keeping with the solid house and robust inmates.

The noonday meal was spread; the soup tureen was smoking between roast beef and a leg of mutton, surrounded by large plates of olives, grapes, and oranges. The necessary was there and there was no lack of the superfluous. The host and hostess were so pleasant, and the big table, with its abundant fare, looked so inviting, that it would have been ungracious not to have seated themselves. The farm servants, on equal footing with their master, were already in their places to take their share of the meal.

Paddy O'Moore pointed to the seats reserved for the strangers,
and said to Glenarvan:

"I was waiting for you."

"Waiting for us!" replied Glenarvan in a tone of surprise.

"I am always waiting for those who come," said the Irishman; and then,
in a solemn voice, while the family and domestics reverently stood,
he repeated the BENEDICITE.

Dinner followed immediately, during which an animated conversation
was kept up on all sides. From Scotch to Irish is but a handsbreadth.
The Tweed, several fathoms wide, digs a deeper trench between Scotland
and England than the twenty leagues of Irish Channel, which separates
Old Caledonia from the Emerald Isle. Paddy O'Moore related his history.
It was that of all emigrants driven by misfortune from their own country.
Many come to seek fortunes who only find trouble and sorrow,
and then they throw the blame on chance, and forget the true
cause is their own idleness and vice and want of commonsense.
Whoever is sober and industrious, honest and economical, gets on.

Such a one had been and was Paddy O'Moore. He left Dundalk,
where he was starving, and came with his family to Australia,
landed at Adelaide, where, refusing employment as a miner,
he got engaged on a farm, and two months afterward commenced
clearing ground on his own account.

The whole territory of South Australia is divided into lots,
each containing eighty acres, and these are granted to colonists
by the government. Any industrious man, by proper cultivation,
can not only get a living out of his lot, but lay by pounds
80 a year.

Paddy O'Moore knew this. He profited by his own former experience,
and laid by every penny he could till he had saved enough
to purchase new lots. His family prospered, and his farm also.
The Irish peasant became a landed proprietor, and though his little
estate had only been under cultivation for two years, he had five hundred
acres cleared by his own hands, and five hundred head of cattle.
He was his own master, after having been a serf in Europe,
and as independent as one can be in the freest country in the world.

His guests congratulated him heartily as he ended his narration;
and Paddy O'Moore no doubt expected confidence for confidence,
but he waited in vain. However, he was one of those discreet people
who can say, "I tell you who I am, but I don't ask who you are."
Glenarvan's great object was to get information about the BRITANNIA,
and like a man who goes right to the point, he began at once
to interrogate O'Moore as to whether he had heard of the shipwreck.

The reply of the Irishman was not favorable; he had never
heard the vessel mentioned. For two years, at least,
no ship had been wrecked on that coast, neither above nor below
the Cape. Now, the date of the catastrophe was within two years.
He could, therefore, declare positively that the survivors of
the wreck had not been thrown on that part of the western shore.
Now, my Lord," he added, "may I ask what interest you have
in making the inquiry?"

This pointed question elicited in reply the whole history of the expedition. Glenarvan related the discovery of the document, and the various attempts that had been made to follow up the precise indications given of the whereabouts of the unfortunate captives; and he concluded his account by expressing his doubt whether they should ever find the Captain after all.

His dispirited tone made a painful impression on the minds of his auditors. Robert and Mary could not keep back their tears, and Paganel had not a word of hope or comfort to give them. John Mangles was grieved to the heart, though he, too, was beginning to yield to the feeling of hopelessness which had crept over the rest, when suddenly the whole party were electrified by hearing a voice exclaim: "My Lord, praise and thank God! if Captain Grant is alive, he is on this Australian continent."

CHAPTER VII THE QUARTERMASTER OF THE "BRITANNIA"

THE surprise caused by these words cannot be described. Glenarvan sprang to his feet, and pushing back his seat, exclaimed: "Who spoke?"

"I did," said one of the servants, at the far end of the table.

"You, Ayrton!" replied his master, not less bewildered than Glenarvan.

"Yes, it was I," rejoined Ayrton in a firm tone, though somewhat agitated voice. "A Scotchman like yourself, my Lord, and one of the shipwrecked crew of the BRITANNIA."

The effect of such a declaration may be imagined. Mary Grant fell back, half-fainting, in Lady Helena's arms, overcome by joyful emotion, and Robert, and Mangles, and Paganel started up and toward the man that Paddy O'Moore had addressed as AYRTON. He was a coarse-looking fellow, about forty-five years of age, with very bright eyes, though half-hidden beneath thick, overhanging brows. In spite of extreme leanness there was an air of unusual strength about him. He seemed all bone and nerves, or, to use a Scotch expression, as if he had not wasted time in making fat. He was broad-shouldered and of middle height, and though his features were coarse, his face was so full of intelligence and energy and decision, that he gave one a favorable impression. The interest he excited was still further heightened by the marks of recent suffering imprinted on his countenance. It was evident that he had endured long and severe hardships, and that he had borne them bravely and come off victor.

"You are one of the shipwrecked sailors of the BRITANNIA?" was Glenarvan's first question.

"Yes, my Lord; Captain Grant's quartermaster."

"And saved with him after the shipwreck?"

"No, my Lord, no. I was separated from him at that terrible moment,

for I was swept off the deck as the ship struck."

"Then you are not one of the two sailors mentioned in the document?"

"No; I was not aware of the existence of the document. The captain must have thrown it into the sea when I was no longer on board."

"But the captain? What about the captain?"

"I believed he had perished; gone down with all his crew. I imagined myself the sole survivor."

"But you said just now, Captain Grant was living."

"No, I said, '_if the captain is living_.'"

"And you added, '_he is on the Australian continent_.'"

"And, indeed, he cannot be anywhere else."

"Then you don't know where he is?"

"No, my Lord. I say again, I supposed he was buried beneath the waves, or dashed to pieces against the rocks. It was from you I learned that he was still alive."

"What then do you know?"

"Simply this--if Captain Grant is alive, he is in Australia."

"Where did the shipwreck occur?" asked Major McNabbs.

This should have been the first question, but in the excitement caused by the unexpected incident, Glenarvan cared more to know where the captain was, than where the BRITANNIA had been lost. After the Major's inquiry, however, Glenarvan's examination proceeded more logically, and before long all the details of the event stood out clearly before the minds of the company.

To the question put by the Major, Ayrton replied:

"When I was swept off the forecastle, when I was hauling in the jib-boom, the BRITANNIA was running right on the Australian coast. She was not more than two cables' length from it and consequently she must have struck just there."

"In latitude 37 degrees?" asked John Mangles.

"Yes, in latitude 37 degrees."

"On the west coast?"

"No, on the east coast," was the prompt reply.

"And at what date?"

"It was on the night of the 27th of June, 1862."

"Exactly, just exactly," exclaimed Glenarvan.

"You see, then, my Lord," continued Ayrton, "I might justly say,
If Captain Grant is alive, he is on the Australian continent,
and it is useless looking for him anywhere else."

"And we will look for him there, and find him too, and save him,"
exclaimed Paganel. "Ah, precious document," he added,
with perfect NAIVETE, "you must own you have fallen into the hands
of uncommonly shrewd people."

But, doubtless, nobody heard his flattering words,
for Glenarvan and Lady Helena, and Mary Grant, and Robert,
were too much engrossed with Ayrton to listen to anyone else.
They pressed round him and grasped his hands.
It seemed as if this man's presence was the sure pledge
of Harry Grant's deliverance. If this sailor had escaped
the perils of the shipwreck, why should not the captain?
Ayrton was quite sanguine as to his existence; but on what part
of the continent he was to be found, that he could not say.
The replies the man gave to the thousand questions that assailed
him on all sides were remarkably intelligent and exact.
All the while he spake, Mary held one of his hands in hers.
This sailor was a companion of her father's, one of
the crew of the BRITANNIA. He had lived with Harry Grant,
crossed the seas with him and shared his dangers. Mary could
not keep her eyes off his face, rough and homely though it was,
and she wept for joy.

Up to this time no one had ever thought of doubting either
the veracity or identity of the quartermaster; but the Major,
and perhaps John Mangles, now began to ask themselves
if this Ayrton's word was to be absolutely believed.
There was something suspicious about this unexpected meeting.
Certainly the man had mentioned facts and dates which corresponded,
and the minuteness of his details was most striking.
Still exactness of details was no positive proof.
Indeed, it has been noticed that a falsehood has sometimes
gained ground by being exceedingly particular in minutiae.
McNabbs, therefore, prudently refrained from committing himself
by expressing any opinion.

John Mangles, however, was soon convinced when he heard Ayrton
speak to the young girl about her father. He knew Mary and Robert
quite well. He had seen them in Glasgow when the ship sailed.
He remembered them at the farewell breakfast given on board the BRITANNIA
to the captain's friends, at which Sheriff Mcintyre was present.
Robert, then a boy of ten years old, had been given into his charge,
and he ran away and tried to climb the rigging.

"Yes, that I did, it is quite right," said Robert.

He went on to mention several other trifling incidents,
without attaching the importance to them that John Mangles did,
and when he stopped Mary Grant said, in her soft voice:
"Oh, go on, Mr. Ayrton, tell us more about our father."

The quartermaster did his best to satisfy the poor girl,
and Glenarvan did not interrupt him, though a score

of questions far more important crowded into his mind.
Lady Helena made him look at Mary's beaming face, and the words
he was about to utter remained unspoken.

Ayrton gave an account of the BRITANNIA'S voyage across
the Pacific. Mary knew most of it before, as news of the ship
had come regularly up to the month of May, 1862. In the course
of the year Harry Grant had touched at all the principal ports.
He had been to the Hebrides, to New Guinea, New Zealand,
and New Caledonia, and had succeeded in finding an important
point on the western coast of Papua, where the establishment
of a Scotch colony seemed to him easy, and its prosperity certain.
A good port on the Molucca and Philippine route must attract ships,
especially when the opening of the Suez Canal would have supplanted
the Cape route. Harry Grant was one of those who appreciated
the great work of M. De Lesseps, and would not allow political
rivalries to interfere with international interests.

After reconnoitering Papua, the BRITANNIA went to provision herself at
Callao, and left that port on the 30th of May, 1862, to return to Europe
by the Indian Ocean and the Cape. Three weeks afterward, his vessel was
disabled by a fearful storm in which they were caught, and obliged to cut
away the masts. A leak sprang in the hold, and could not be stopped.
The crew were too exhausted to work the pumps, and for eight days
the BRITANNIA was tossed about in the hurricane like a shuttlecock.
She had six feet of water in her hold, and was gradually sinking.
The boats had been all carried away by the tempest; death stared them
in the face, when, on the night of the 22d of June, as Paganel had
rightly supposed, they came in sight of the eastern coast of Australia.

The ship soon neared the shore, and presently dashed
violently against it. Ayrton was swept off by a wave,
and thrown among the breakers, where he lost consciousness.
When he recovered, he found himself in the hands of natives,
who dragged him away into the interior of the country.
Since that time he had never heard the BRITANNIA's name mentioned,
and reasonably enough came to the conclusion that she had gone
down with all hands off the dangerous reefs of Twofold Bay.

This ended Ayrton's recital, and more than once sorrowful exclamations
were evoked by the story. The Major could not, in common justice,
doubt its authenticity. The sailor was then asked to narrate
his own personal history, which was short and simple enough.
He had been carried by a tribe of natives four hundred miles north
of the 37th parallel. He spent a miserable existence there--
not that he was ill-treated, but the natives themselves lived miserably.
He passed two long years of painful slavery among them, but always
cherished in his heart the hope of one day regaining his freedom,
and watching for the slightest opportunity that might turn up,
though he knew that his flight would be attended with innumerable dangers.

At length one night in October, 1864, he managed to escape the vigilance
of the natives, and took refuge in the depths of immense forests.
For a whole month he subsisted on roots, edible ferns and mimosa gums,
wandering through vast solitudes, guiding himself by the sun during
the day and by the stars at night. He went on, though often
almost despairingly, through bogs and rivers, and across mountains,
till he had traversed the whole of the uninhabited part of the continent,
where only a few bold travelers have ventured; and at last,

in an exhausted and all but dying condition, he reached the hospitable dwelling of Paddy O'Moore, where he said he had found a happy home in exchange for his labor.

"And if Ayrton speaks well of me," said the Irish settler, when the narrative ended, "I have nothing but good to say of him. He is an honest, intelligent fellow and a good

V. IV Verne worker; and as long as he pleases, Paddy O'Moore's house shall be his."

Ayrton thanked him by a gesture, and waited silently for any fresh question that might be put to him, though he thought to himself that he surely must have satisfied all legitimate curiosity. What could remain to be said that he had not said a hundred times already. Glenarvan was just about to open a discussion about their future plan of action, profiting by this rencontre with Ayrton, and by the information he had given them, when Major McNabbs, addressing the sailor said, "You were quartermaster, you say, on the BRITANNIA?"

"Yes," replied Ayrton, without the least hesitation.

But as if conscious that a certain feeling of mistrust, however slight, had prompted the inquiry, he added, "I have my shipping papers with me; I saved them from the wreck."

He left the room immediately to fetch his official document, and, though hardly absent a minute, Paddy O'Moore managed to say, "My Lord, you may trust Ayrton; I vouch for his being an honest man. He has been two months now in my service, and I have never had once to find fault with him. I knew all this story of his shipwreck and his captivity. He is a true man, worthy of your entire confidence."

Glenarvan was on the point of replying that he had never doubted his good faith, when the man came in and brought his engagement written out in due form. It was a paper signed by the shipowners and Captain Grant. Mary recognized her father's writing at once. It was to certify that "Tom Ayrton, able-bodied seaman, was engaged as quartermaster on board the three-mast vessel, the BRITANNIA, Glasgow."

There could not possibly be the least doubt now of Ayrton's identity, for it would have been difficult to account for his possession of the document if he were not the man named in it.

"Now then," said Glenarvan, "I wish to ask everyone's opinion as to what is best to be done. Your advice, Ayrton, will be particularly valuable, and I shall be much obliged if you would let us have it."

After a few minutes' thought, Ayrton replied--"I thank you, my Lord, for the confidence you show towards me, and I hope to prove worthy of it. I have some knowledge of the country, and the habits of the natives, and if I can be of any service to you--"

"Most certainly you can," interrupted Glenarvan.

"I think with you," resumed Ayrton, "that the captain and his two

sailors have escaped alive from the wreck, but since they have not found their way to the English settlement, nor been seen any where, I have no doubt that their fate has been similar to my own, and that they are prisoners in the hands of some of the native tribes."

"That's exactly what I have always argued," said Paganel. "The shipwrecked men were taken prisoners, as they feared. But must we conclude without question that, like yourself, they have been dragged away north of the 37th parallel?"

"I should suppose so, sir; for hostile tribes would hardly remain anywhere near the districts under the British rule."

"That will complicate our search," said Glenarvan, somewhat disconcerted. "How can we possibly find traces of the captives in the heart of so vast a continent?"

No one replied, though Lady Helena's questioning glances at her companions seemed to press for an answer. Paganel even was silent. His ingenuity for once was at fault. John Mangles paced the cabin with great strides, as if he fancied himself on the deck of his ship, evidently quite nonplussed.

"And you, Mr. Ayrton," said Lady Helena at last, "what would you do?"

"Madam," replied Ayrton, readily enough, "I should re-embark in the DUNCAN, and go right to the scene of the catastrophe. There I should be guided by circumstances, and by any chance indications we might discover."

"Very good," returned Glenarvan; "but we must wait till the DUNCAN is repaired."

"Ah, she has been injured then?" said Ayrton.

"Yes," replied Mangles.

"To any serious extent?"

"No; but such injuries as require more skilful workmanship than we have on board. One of the branches of the screw is twisted, and we cannot get it repaired nearer than Melbourne."

"Well, let the ship go to Melbourne then," said Paganel, "and we will go without her to Twofold Bay."

"And how?" asked Mangles.

"By crossing Australia as we crossed America, keeping along the 37th parallel."

"But the DUNCAN?" repeated Ayrton, as if particularly anxious on that score.

"The DUNCAN can rejoin us, or we can rejoin her, as the case may be. Should we discover Captain Grant in the course of our journey, we can all return together to Melbourne. If we have to go on to the coast, on the contrary, then the DUNCAN can come to us there. Who has any objection to make? Have you, Major?"

"No, not if there is a practicable route across Australia."

"So practicable, that I propose Lady Helena and Miss Grant should accompany us."

"Are you speaking seriously?" asked Glenarvan.

"Perfectly so, my Lord. It is a journey of 350 miles, not more. If we go twelve miles a day it will barely take us a month, just long enough to put the vessel in trim. If we had to cross the continent in a lower latitude, at its wildest part, and traverse immense deserts, where there is no water and where the heat is tropical, and go where the most adventurous travelers have never yet ventured, that would be a different matter. But the 37th parallel cuts only through the province of Victoria, quite an English country, with roads and railways, and well populated almost everywhere. It is a journey you might make, almost, in a chaise, though a wagon would be better. It is a mere trip from London to Edinburgh, nothing more."

"What about wild beasts, though?" asked Glenarvan, anxious to go into all the difficulties of the proposal.

"There are no wild beasts in Australia."

"And how about the savages?"

"There are no savages in this latitude, and if there were, they are not cruel, like the New Zealanders."

"And the convicts?"

"There are no convicts in the southern provinces, only in the eastern colonies. The province of Victoria not only refused to admit them, but passed a law to prevent any ticket-of-leave men from other provinces from entering her territories. This very year the Government threatened to withdraw its subsidy from the Peninsular Company if their vessels continued to take in coal in those western parts of Australia where convicts are admitted. What! Don't you know that, and you an Englishman?"

"In the first place, I beg leave to say I am not an Englishman," replied Glenarvan.

"What M. Paganel says is perfectly correct," said Paddy O'Moore. "Not only the province of Victoria, but also Southern Australia, Queensland, and even Tasmania, have agreed to expel convicts from their territories. Ever since I have been on this farm, I have never heard of one in this Province."

"And I can speak for myself. I have never come across one."

"You see then, friends," went on Jacques Paganel, "there are few if any savages, no ferocious animals, no convicts, and there are not many countries of Europe for which you can say as much. Well, will you go?"

"What do you think, Helena?" asked Glenarvan.

"What we all think, dear Edward," replied Lady Helena, turning toward her companions; "let us be off at once."

CHAPTER VIII PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

GLENARVAN never lost much time between adopting an idea and carrying it out. As soon as he consented to Paganel's proposition, he gave immediate orders to make arrangements for the journey with as little delay as possible. The time of starting was fixed for the 22d of December, the next day but one.

What results might not come out of this journey. The presence of Harry Grant had become an indisputable fact, and the chances of finding him had increased. Not that anyone expected to discover the captain exactly on the 37th parallel, which they intended strictly to follow, but they might come upon his track, and at all events, they were going to the actual spot where the wreck had occurred. That was the principal point.

Besides, if Ayrton consented to join them and act as their guide through the forests of the province of Victoria and right to the eastern coast, they would have a fresh chance of success. Glenarvan was sensible of this, and asked his host whether he would have any great objection to his asking Ayrton to accompany them, for he felt particularly desirous of securing the assistance of Harry Grant's old companion.

Paddy O'Moore consented, though he would regret the loss of his excellent servant.

"Well, then, Ayrton, will you come with us in our search expedition?"

Ayrton did not reply immediately. He even showed signs of hesitation; but at last, after due reflection, said, "Yes, my Lord, I will go with you, and if I can not take you to Captain Grant, I can at least take you to the very place where his ship struck."

"Thanks, Ayrton."

"One question, my Lord."

"Well?"

"Where will you meet the DUNCAN again?"

"At Melbourne, unless we traverse the whole continent from coast to coast."

"But the captain?"

"The captain will await my instructions in the port of Melbourne."

"You may depend on me then, my Lord."

"I will, Ayrton."

The quartermaster was warmly thanked by the passengers
of the DUNCAN, and the children loaded him with caresses.
Everyone rejoiced in his decision except the Irishman,
who lost in him an intelligent and faithful helper.
But Paddy understood the importance Glenarvan attached to
the presence of the man, and submitted. The whole party then
returned to the ship, after arranging a rendezvous with Ayrton,
and ordering him to procure the necessary means of conveyance
across the country.

When John Mangles supported the proposition of Paganel,
he took for granted that he should accompany the expedition.
He began to speak to Glenarvan at once about it, and adduced all
sorts of arguments to advance his cause--his devotion to Lady Helena
and his Lordship, how useful could he be in organizing the party,
and how useless on board the DUNCAN; everything, in fact,
but the main reason, and that he had no need to bring forward.

"I'll only ask you one question, John," said Glenarvan. "Have you
entire confidence in your chief officer?"

"Absolute," replied Mangles, "Tom Austin is a good sailor.
He will take the ship to her destination, see that the repairs
are skilfully executed, and bring her back on the appointed day.
Tom is a slave to duty and discipline. Never would he take it
upon himself to alter or retard the execution of an order.
Your Lordship may rely on him as on myself."

"Very well then, John," replied Glenarvan. "You shall go with us,
for it would be advisable," he added, smiling, "that you should be
there when we find Mary Grant's father."

"Oh! your Lordship," murmured John, turning pale. He could say no more,
but grasped Lord Glenarvan's hand.

Next day, John Mangles and the ship's carpenter, accompanied by
sailors carrying provisions, went back to Paddy O'Moore's house
to consult the Irishman about the best method of transport.
All the family met him, ready to give their best help.
Ayrton was there, and gave the benefit of his experience.

On one point both he and Paddy agreed, that the journey should be made
in a bullock-wagon by the ladies, and that the gentlemen should ride
on horseback. Paddy could furnish both bullocks and vehicle.
The vehicle was a cart twenty feet long, covered over by a tilt,
and resting on four large wheels without spokes or felloes, or iron tires--
in a word, plain wooden discs. The front and hinder part were connected
by means of a rude mechanical contrivance, which did not allow of
the vehicle turning quickly. There was a pole in front thirty-five
feet long, to which the bullocks were to be yoked in couples.
These animals were able to draw both with head and neck, as their
yoke was fastened on the nape of the neck, and to this a collar
was attached by an iron peg. It required great skill to drive such
a long, narrow, shaky concern, and to guide such a team by a goad;
but Ayrton had served his apprenticeship to it on the Irishman's farm,
and Paddy could answer for his com-petency. The role of conductor
was therefore assigned to him.

There were no springs to the wagon, and, consequently, it was not likely

to be very comfortable; but, such as it was, they had to take it.
But if the rough construction could not be altered, John Mangles
resolved that the interior should be made as easy as possible.
His first care was to divide it into two compartments by a
wooden partition. The back one was intended for the provisions
and luggage, and M. Olbinett's portable kitchen. The front was set
apart especially for the ladies, and, under the carpenter's hands,
was to be speedily converted into a comfortable room,
covered with a thick carpet, and fitted up with a toilet table
and two couches. Thick leather curtains shut in this apartment,
and protected the occupants from the chilliness of the nights.
In case of necessity, the gentlemen might shelter themselves here,
when the violent rains came on, but a tent was to be their
usual resting-place when the caravan camped for the night.
John Mangles exercised all his ingenuity in furnishing the small
space with everything that the two ladies could possibly require,
and he succeeded so well, that neither Lady Helena nor Mary had much
reason to regret leaving their cosy cabins on board the DUNCAN.

For the rest of the party, the preparations were soon made,
for they needed much less. Strong horses were provided for
Lord Glenarvan, Paganel, Robert Grant, McNabbs, and John Mangles;
also for the two sailors, Wilson and Mulrady, who were
to accompany their captain. Ayrton's place was, of course,
to be in front of the wagon, and M. Olbinett, who did not much care
for equitation, was to make room for himself among the baggage.
Horses and bullocks were grazing in the Irishman's meadows,
ready to fetch at a moment's notice.

After all arrangements were made, and the carpenter set to work,
John Mangles escorted the Irishman and his family back to the vessel,
for Paddy wished to return the visit of Lord Glenarvan. Ayrton thought
proper to go too, and about four o'clock the party came over the side
of the DUNCAN.

They were received with open arms. Glenarvan would not be outstripped
in politeness, and invited his visitors to stop and dine.
His hospitality was willingly accepted. Paddy was quite amazed
at the splendor of the saloon, and was loud in admiration
of the fitting up of the cabins, and the carpets and hangings,
as well as of the polished maple-wood of the upper deck.
Ayrton's approbation was much less hearty, for he considered
it mere costly superfluity.

But when he examined the yacht with a sailor's eye, the quartermaster
of the BRITANNIA was as enthusiastic about it as Paddy. He went down into
the hold, inspected the screw department and the engine-room, examining
the engine thoroughly, and inquired about its power and consumption.
He explored the coal-bunkers, the store-room, the powder-store,
and armory, in which last he seemed to be particularly attracted
by a cannon mounted on the forecastle. Glenarvan saw he had to do with
a man who understood such matters, as was evident from his questions.
Ayrton concluded his investigations by a survey of the masts and rigging.

"You have a fine vessel, my Lord," he said after his
curiosity was satisfied.

"A good one, and that is best," replied Glenarvan.

"And what is her tonnage?"

"Two hundred and ten tons."

"I don't think I am far out," continued Ayrton, "in judging her speed at fifteen knots. I should say she could do that easily."

"Say seventeen," put in John Mangles, "and you've hit the mark."

"Seventeen!" exclaimed the quartermaster. "Why, not a man-of-war--not the best among them, I mean--could chase her!"

"Not one," replied Mangles. "The DUNCAN is a regular racing yacht, and would never let herself be beaten."

"Even at sailing?" asked Ayrton.

"Even at sailing."

"Well, my Lord, and you too, captain," returned Ayrton, "allow a sailor who knows what a ship is worth, to compliment you on yours."

"Stay on board of her, then, Ayrton," said Glenarvan; "it rests with yourself to call it yours."

"I will think of it, my Lord," was all Ayrton's reply.

Just then M. Olbinett came to announce dinner, and his Lordship repaired with his guests to the saloon.

"That Ayrton is an intelligent man," said Paganel to the Major.

"Too intelligent!" muttered McNabbs, who, without any apparent reason, had taken a great dislike to the face and manners of the quartermaster.

During the dinner, Ayrton gave some interesting details about the Australian continent, which he knew perfectly. He asked how many sailors were going to accompany the expedition, and seemed astonished to hear that only two were going. He advised Glenarvan to take all his best men, and even urged him to do it, which advice, by the way, ought to have removed the Major's suspicion.

"But," said Glenarvan, "our journey is not dangerous, is it?"

"Not at all," replied Ayrton, quickly.

"Well then, we'll have all the men we can on board. Hands will be wanted to work the ship, and to help in the repairs. Besides, it is of the utmost importance that she should meet us to the very day, at whatever place may be ultimately selected. Consequently, we must not lessen her crew."

Ayrton said nothing more, as if convinced his Lordship was right.

When evening came, Scotch and Irish separated. Ayrton and Paddy O'Moore and family returned home. Horses and wagons were to be ready the next day, and eight

o'clock in the morning was fixed for starting.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant soon made their preparations. They had less to do than Jacques Paganel, for he spent half the night in arranging, and wiping, and rubbing up the lenses of his telescope. Of course, next morning he slept on till the Major's stentorian voice roused him.

The luggage was already conveyed to the farm, thanks to John Mangles, and a boat was waiting to take the passengers. They were soon seated, and the young captain gave his final orders to Tom Austin, his chief officer. He impressed upon him that he was to wait at Melbourne for Lord Glenarvan's commands, and to obey them scrupulously, whatever they might be.

The old sailor told John he might rely on him, and, in the name of the men, begged to offer his Lordship their best wishes for the success of this new expedition.

A storm of hurrahs burst forth from the yacht as the boat rowed off. In ten minutes the shore was reached, and a quarter of an hour afterward the Irishman's farm. All was ready. Lady Helena was enchanted with her installation. The huge chariot, with its primitive wheels and massive planks, pleased her particularly. The six bullocks, yoked in pairs, had a patriarchal air about them which took her fancy. Ayrton, goad in hand, stood waiting the orders of this new master.

"My word," said Paganel, "this is a famous vehicle; it beats all the mail-coaches in the world. I don't know a better fashion of traveling than in a mountebank's caravan-- a movable house, which goes or stops wherever you please. What can one wish better? The Samaratians understood that, and never traveled in any other way."

"Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena, "I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in my SALONS."

"Assuredly, madam, I should count it an honor. Have you fixed the day?"

"I shall be at home every day to my friends," replied Lady Helena; "and you are--"

"The most devoted among them all," interrupted Paganel, gaily.

These mutual compliments were interrupted by the arrival of the seven horses, saddled and ready. They were brought by Paddy's sons, and Lord Glenarvan paid the sum stipulated for his various purchases, adding his cordial thanks, which the worthy Irishman valued at least as much as his golden guineas.

The signal was given to start, and Lady Helena and Mary took their places in the reserved compartment. Ayrton seated himself in front, and Olbinett scrambled in among the luggage. The rest of the party, well armed with carbines and revolvers, mounted their horses. Ayrton gave a peculiar cry, and his team set off. The wagon shook and the planks creaked, and the axles grated in the naves of the wheels; and before long the hospitable farm of the Irishman was out of sight.

CHAPTER IX A COUNTRY OF PARADOXES

IT was the 23d of December, 1864, a dull, damp, dreary month in the northern hemisphere; but on the Australian continent it might be called June. The hottest season of the year had already commenced, and the sun's rays were almost tropical, when Lord Glenarvan started on his new expedition.

Most fortunately the 37th parallel did not cross the immense deserts, inaccessible regions, which have cost many martyrs to science already. Glenarvan could never have encountered them. He had only to do with the southern part of Australia--viz., with a narrow portion of the province of Adelaide, with the whole of Victoria, and with the top of the reversed triangle which forms New South Wales.

It is scarcely sixty-two miles from Cape Bernouilli to the frontiers of Victoria. It was not above a two days' march, and Ayrton reckoned on their sleeping next night at Apsley, the most westerly town of Victoria.

The commencement of a journey is always marked by ardor, both in the horses and the horsemen. This is well enough in the horsemen, but if the horses are to go far, their speed must be moderated and their strength husbanded. It was, therefore, fixed that the average journey every day should not be more than from twenty-five to thirty miles.

Besides, the pace of the horses must be regulated by the slower pace of the bullocks, truly mechanical engines which lose in time what they gain in power. The wagon, with its passengers and provisions, was the very center of the caravan, the moving fortress. The horsemen might act as scouts, but must never be far away from it.

As no special marching order had been agreed upon, everybody was at liberty to follow his inclinations within certain limits. The hunters could scour the plain, amiable folks could talk to the fair occupants of the wagon, and philosophers could philosophize. Paganel, who was all three combined, had to be and was everywhere at once.

The march across Adelaide presented nothing of any particular interest. A succession of low hills rich in dust, a long stretch of what they call in Australia "bush," several prairies covered with a small prickly bush, considered a great dainty by the ovine tribe, embraced many miles. Here and there they noticed a species of sheep peculiar to New Holland--sheep with pig's heads, feeding between the posts of the telegraph line recently made between Adelaide and the coast.

Up to this time there had been a singular resemblance in the country to the monotonous plains of the Argentine Pampas. There was the same grassy flat soil, the same sharply-defined horizon against the sky. McNabbs declared they had never changed countries; but Paganel told him to wait, and he would soon see a difference. And on the faith of this assurance marvelous things were expected by the whole party.

In this fashion, after a march of sixty miles in two days,

the caravan reached the parish of Apsley, the first town
in the Province of Victoria in the Wimerra district.

The wagon was put up at the Crown Inn. Supper was soon smoking on
the table. It consisted solely of mutton served up in various ways.

They all ate heartily, but talked more than they ate, eagerly asking
Paganel questions about the wonders of the country they were just
beginning to traverse. The amiable geographer needed no pressing,
and told them first that this part of it was called Australia Felix.

"Wrongly named!" he continued. "It had better have been
called rich, for it is true of countries, as individuals,
that riches do not make happiness. Thanks to her gold mines,
Australia has been abandoned to wild devastating adventurers.
You will come across them when we reach the gold fields."

"Is not the colony of Victoria of but a recent origin?"
asked Lady Glenarvan.

"Yes, madam, it only numbers thirty years of existence.
It was on the 6th of June, 1835, on a Tuesday--"

"At a quarter past seven in the evening," put in the Major,
who delighted in teasing the Frenchman about his precise dates.

"No, at ten minutes past seven," replied the geographer, gravely,
"that Batman and Falckner first began a settlement at Port Phillip,
the bay on which the large city of Melbourne now stands.
For fifteen years the colony was part of New South Wales,
and recognized Sydney as the capital; but in 1851, she was
declared independent, and took the name of Victoria."

"And has greatly increased in prosperity since then,
I believe," said Glenarvan.

"Judge for yourself, my noble friend," replied Paganel. "Here are
the numbers given by the last statistics; and let McNabbs say as he likes,
I know nothing more eloquent than statistics."

"Go on," said the Major.

"Well, then, in 1836, the colony of Port Phillip had 224 inhabitants.
To-day the province of Victoria numbers 550,000. Seven
millions of vines produce annually 121,- 000 gallons of wine.
There are 103,000 horses spreading over the plains, and 675,272
horned cattle graze in her wide-stretching pastures."

"Is there not also a certain number of pigs?" inquired McNabbs.

"Yes, Major, 79,625."

"And how many sheep?"

"7,115,943, McNabbs."

"Including the one we are eating at this moment."

"No, without counting that, since it is three parts devoured."

"Bravo, Monsieur Paganel," exclaimed Lady Helena, laughing heartily.
"It must be owned you are posted up in geographical questions,
and my cousin McNabbs need not try and find you tripping."

"It is my calling, Madam, to know this sort of thing,
and to give you the benefit of my information when you please.
You may therefore believe me when I tell you that wonderful
things are in store for you in this strange country."

"It does not look like it at present," said McNabbs, on purpose
to tease Paganel.

"Just wait, impatient Major," was his rejoinder. "You have hardly
put your foot on the frontier, when you turn round and abuse it.
Well, I say and say again, and will always maintain that this is
the most curious country on the earth. Its formation, and nature,
and products, and climate, and even its future disappearance
have amazed, and are now amazing, and will amaze, all the SAVANTS
in the world. Think, my friends, of a continent, the margin
of which, instead of the center, rose out of the waves originally
like a gigantic ring, which encloses, perhaps, in its center,
a sea partly evaporated, the waves of which are drying up daily;
where humidity does not exist either in the air or in the soil;
where the trees lose their bark every year, instead of their leaves;
where the leaves present their sides to the sun and not their face,
and consequently give no shade; where the wood is often incombustible,
where good-sized stones are dissolved by the rain; where the forests
are low and the grasses gigantic; where the animals are strange;
where quadrupeds have beaks, like the echidna, or ornithorhynchus,
and naturalists have been obliged to create a special order for them,
called monotremes; where the kangaroos leap on unequal legs,
and sheep have pigs' heads; where foxes fly about from tree to tree;
where the swans are black; where rats make nests; where the bower-bird
opens her reception-rooms to receive visits from her feathered friends;
where the birds astonish the imagination by the variety of their notes
and their aptness; where one bird serves for a clock, and another
makes a sound like a postilion cracking of a whip, and a third
imitates a knife-grinder, and a fourth the motion of a pendulum;
where one laughs when the sun rises, and another cries when the sun sets!
Oh, strange, illogical country, land of paradoxes and anomalies,
if ever there was one on earth--the learned botanist Grimard was
right when he said, 'There is that Australia, a sort of parody,
or rather a defiance of universal laws in the face of the rest
of the world.'"

Paganel's tirade was poured forth in the most impetuous manner,
and seemed as if it were never coming to an end.
The eloquent secretary of the Geographical Society was no longer
master of himself. He went on and on, gesticulating furiously,
and brandishing his fork to the imminent danger of his neighbors.
But at last his voice was drowned in a thunder of applause,
and he managed to stop.

Certainly after such an enumeration of Australian peculiarities, he might
have been left in peace but the Major said in the coolest tone possible:
"And is that all, Paganel?"

"No, indeed not," rejoined the Frenchman, with renewed vehemence.

"What!" exclaimed Lady Helena; "there are more wonders still in Australia?"

"Yes, Madam, its climate. It is even stranger than its productions."

"Is it possible?" they all said.

"I am not speaking of the hygienic qualities of the climate," continued Paganel, "rich as it is in oxygen and poor in azote. There are no damp winds, because the trade winds blow regularly on the coasts, and most diseases are unknown, from typhus to measles, and chronic affections."

"Still, that is no small advantage," said Glenarvan.

"No doubt; but I am not referring to that, but to one quality it has which is incomparable."

"And what is that?"

"You will never believe me."

"Yes, we will," exclaimed his auditors, their curiosity aroused by this preamble.

"Well, it is--"

"It is what?"

"It is a moral regeneration."

"A moral regeneration?"

"Yes," replied the SAVANT, in a tone of conviction. "Here metals do not get rust on them by exposure to the air, nor men. Here the pure, dry atmosphere whitens everything rapidly, both linen and souls. The virtue of the climate must have been well known in England when they determined to send their criminals here to be reformed."

"What! do you mean to say the climate has really any such influence?" said Lady Helena.

"Yes, Madam, both on animals and men."

"You are not joking, Monsieur Paganel?"

"I am not, Madam. The horses and the cattle here are of incomparable docility. You see it?"

"It is impossible!"

"But it is a fact. And the convicts transported into this reviving, salubrious air, become regenerated in a few years. Philanthropists know this. In Australia all natures grow better."

"But what is to become of you then, Monsieur Paganel, in this privileged country--you who are so good already?" said Lady Helena. "What will you turn out?"

"Excellent, Madam, just excellent, and that's all."

CHAPTER X AN ACCIDENT

THE next day, the 24th of December, they started at daybreak.
The heat was already considerable, but not unbearable, and the road
was smooth and good, and allowed the cavalcade to make speedy progress.
In the evening they camped on the banks of the White Lake, the waters
of which are brackish and undrinkable.

Jacques Paganel was obliged to own that the name of this
lake was a complete misnomer, for the waters were no more
white than the Black Sea is black, or the Red Sea red,
or the Yellow River yellow, or the Blue Mountains blue.
However, he argued and disputed the point with all the _amour
propre_ of a geographer, but his reasoning made no impression.

M. Olbinett prepared the evening meal with his accustomed punctuality,
and after this was dispatched, the travelers disposed themselves
for the night in the wagon and in the tent, and were soon sleeping
soundly, notwithstanding the melancholy howling of the "dingoes,"
the jackals of Australia.

A magnificent plain, thickly covered with chrysanthemums, stretched out
beyond the lake, and Glenarvan and his friends would gladly have explored
its beauties when they awoke next morning, but they had to start. As far
as the eye could reach, nothing was visible but one stretch of prairie,
enameled with flower, in all the freshness and abundance of spring.
The blue flowers of the slender-leaved flax, combined with the bright
hues of the scarlet acanthus, a flower peculiar to the country.

A few cassowaries were bounding over the plain, but it was
impossible to get near them. The Major was fortunate enough,
however, to hit one very rare animal with a ball in the leg.
This was the jabiru, a species which is fast disappearing,
the gigantic crane of the English colonies. This winged
creature was five feet high, and his wide, conical,
extremely pointed beak, measured eighteen inches in length.
The violet and purple tints of his head contrasted vividly
with the glossy green of his neck, and the dazzling whiteness
of his throat, and the bright red of his long legs.
Nature seems to have exhausted in its favor all the primitive
colors on her palette.

Great admiration was bestowed on this bird, and the Major's spoil
would have borne the honors of the day, had not Robert come
across an animal a few miles further on, and bravely killed it.
It was a shapeless creature, half porcupine, half ant-eater, a sort
of unfinished animal belonging to the first stage of creation.
A long glutinous extensible tongue hung out of his jaws in search
of the ants, which formed its principal food.

"It is an echidna," said Paganel. "Have you ever seen such a creature?"

"It is horrible," replied Glenarvan.

"Horrible enough, but curious, and, what's more, peculiar to Australia. One might search for it in vain in any other part of the world."

Naturally enough, the geographer wished to preserve this interesting specimen of monotremata, and wanted to stow it away in the luggage; but M. Olbinett resented the idea so indignantly, that the SAVANT was obliged to abandon his project.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, John Mangles descried an enormous column of smoke about three miles off, gradually overspreading the whole horizon. What could be the cause of this phenomenon? Paganel was inclined to think it was some description of meteor, and his lively imagination was already in search of an explanation, when Ayrton cut short all his conjectures summarily, by announcing that the cloud of dust was caused by a drove of cattle on the road.

The quartermaster proved right, for as the cloud came nearer, quite a chorus of bleatings and neighings, and bel-lowings escaped from it, mingled with the loud tones of a human voice, in the shape of cries, and whistles, and vo-ciferations.

Presently a man came out of the cloud. This was the leader-in-chief of the four-footed army. Glenarvan advanced toward him, and friendly relations were speedily established between them. The leader, or to give him his proper designation, the stock-keeper, was part owner of the drove. His name was Sam Machell, and he was on his way from the eastern provinces to Portland Bay.

The drove numbered 12,075 head in all, or l,000 bullocks, 11,000 sheep, and 75 horses. All these had been bought in the Blue Mountains in a poor, lean condition, and were going to be fatted up on the rich pasture lands of Southern Australia, and sold again at a great profit. Sam Machell expected to get pounds 2 on each bullock, and 10s. on every sheep, which would bring him in pounds 3,750. This was doing good business; but what patience and energy were required to conduct such a restive, stubborn lot to their destination, and what fatigues must have to be endured. Truly the gain was hardly earned.

Sam Machell told his history in a few words, while the drove continued their march among the groves of mimosas. Lady Helena and Mary and the rest of the party seated themselves under the shade of a wide-spreading gum-tree, and listened to his recital.

It was seven months since Sam Machell had started. He had gone at the rate of ten miles a day, and his interminable journey would last three months longer. His assistants in the laborious task comprised twenty dogs and thirty men, five of whom were blacks, and very serviceable in tracking up any strayed beasts. Six wagons made the rear-guard. All the men were armed with stockwhips, the handles of which are eighteen inches long, and the lash nine feet, and they move about among the ranks, bringing refractory animals back into order, while the dogs, the light cavalry of the regiment, preserved discipline in the wings.

The travelers were struck with the admirable arrangement
of the drove. The different stock were kept apart, for wild
sheep and bullocks would not have got on together at all.
The bullocks would never have grazed where the sheep had passed along,
and consequently they had to go first, divided into two battalions.
Five regiments of sheep followed, in charge of twenty men,
and last of all came the horses.

Sam Machell drew the attention of his auditors to the fact that
the real guides of the drove were neither the men nor the dogs,
but the oxen themselves, beasts of superior intelligence,
recognized as leaders by their congenitors. They advanced in
front with perfect gravity, choosing the best route by instinct,
and fully alive to their claim to respect. Indeed, they were
obliged to be studied and humored in everything, for the whole drove
obeyed them implicitly. If they took it into their heads to stop,
it was a matter of necessity to yield to their good pleasure,
for not a single animal would move a step till these leaders gave
the signal to set off.

Sundry details, added by the stock-keeper, completed the history
of this expedition, worthy of being written, if not commended
by Xenophon himself. As long as the troop marched over the plains
it was well enough, there was little difficulty or fatigue.
The animals fed as they went along, and slaked their thirst at
the numerous creeks that watered the plains, sleeping at night
and making good progress in the day, always obedient and tractable
to the dogs. But when they had to go through great forests
and groves of eucalyptus and mimosas, the difficulties increased.
Platoons, battalions and regiments got all mixed together
or scattered, and it was a work of time to collect them again.
Should a "leader" unfortunately go astray, he had to be found,
cost what it might, on pain of a general disbandment,
and the blacks were often long days in quest of him, before their
search was successful. During the heavy rains the lazy beasts
refused to stir, and when violent storms chanced to occur,
the creatures became almost mad with terror, and were seized
with a wild, disorderly panic.

However, by dint of energy and ambition, the stock-keeper triumphed
over these difficulties, incessantly renewed though they were.
He kept steadily on; mile after mile of plains and woods,
and mountains, lay behind. But in addition to all his other qualities,
there was one higher than all that he specially needed when they
came to rivers. This was patience--patience that could stand
any trial, and not only could hold out for hours and days,
but for weeks. The stock-keeper would be himself forced to wait
on the banks of a stream that might have been crossed at once.
There was nothing to hinder but the obstinacy of the herd.
The bullocks would taste the water and turn back. The sheep
fled in all directions, afraid to brave the liquid element.
The stock-keeper hoped when night came he might manage them better,
but they still refused to go forward. The rams were dragged in by force,
but the sheep would not follow. They tried what thirst would do,
by keeping them without drink for several days, but when they
were brought to the river again, they simply quenched their thirst,
and declined a more intimate acquaintance with the water.
The next expedient employed was to carry all the lambs over,

hoping the mothers would be drawn after them, moved by their cries.
But the lambs might bleat as pitifully as they liked,
the mothers never stirred. Sometimes this state of affairs
would last a whole month, and the stock-keeper would be driven
to his wits' end by his bleating, bellowing, neighing army.
Then all of a sudden, one fine day, without rhyme or reason,
a detachment would take it into their heads to make a start across,
and the only difficulty now was to keep the whole herd from rushing
helter-skelter after them. The wildest confusion set in among
the ranks, and numbers of the animals were drowned in the passage.

Such was the narrative of Sam Machell. During its recital,
a considerable part of the troop had filed past in good order.
It was time for him to return to his place at their head,
that he might be able to choose the best pasturage.
Taking leave of Lord Glenarvan, he sprang on a capital horse
of the native breed, that one of his men held waiting for him,
and after shaking hands cordially with everybody all round,
took his departure. A few minutes later, nothing was visible
of the stock-keeper and his troop but a cloud of dust.

The wagon resumed its course in the opposite direction,
and did not stop again till they halted for the night at the foot
of Mount Talbot.

Paganel made the judicious observation that it was the 25th
of December, the Christmas Day so dear to English hearts.
But the steward had not forgotten it, and an appetizing meal was
soon ready under the tent, for which he deserved and received warm
compliments from the guests. Indeed, M. Olbinett had quite excelled
himself on this occasion. He produced from his stores such an array
of European dishes as is seldom seen in the Australian desert.
Reindeer hams, slices of salt beef, smoked salmon, oat cakes,
and barley meal scones; tea _ad libitum_, and whisky in abundance,
and several bottles of port, composed this astonishing meal.
The little party might have thought themselves in the grand dining-hall
of Malcolm Castle, in the heart of the Highlands of Scotland.

The next day, at 11 A. M., the wagon reached the banks of the Wimerra
on the 143d meridian.

The river, half a mile in width, wound its limpid course between
tall rows of gum-trees and acacias. Magnificent specimens
of the MYRTACEA, among others, the _metroside-ros speciosa_,
fifteen feet high, with long drooping branches, adorned with
red flowers. Thousands of birds, the lories, and greenfinches,
and gold-winged pigeons, not to speak of the noisy paroquets,
flew about in the green branches. Below, on the bosom of
the water, were a couple of shy and unapproachable black swans.
This _rara avis_ of the Australian rivers soon disappeared
among the windings of the Wimerra, which water the charming
landscape in the most capricious manner.

The wagon stopped on a grassy bank, the long fringes of which dipped
in the rapid current. There was neither raft nor bridge, but cross
over they must. Ayrton looked about for a practicable ford.
About a quarter of a mile up the water seemed shallower,
and it was here they determined to try to pass over.
The soundings in different parts showed a depth of three feet only,

so that the wagon might safely enough venture.

"I suppose there is no other way of fording the river?"
said Glenarvan to the quartermaster.

"No, my Lord; but the passage does not seem dangerous.
We shall manage it."

"Shall Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant get out of the wagon?"

"Not at all. My bullocks are surefooted, and you may rely on me
for keeping them straight."

"Very well, Ayrton; I can trust you."

The horsemen surrounded the ponderous vehicle, and all stepped boldly
into the current. Generally, when wagons have to ford rivers,
they have empty casks slung all round them, to keep them floating
on the water; but they had no such swimming belt with them
on this occasion, and they could only depend on the sagacity
of the animals and the prudence of Ayrton, who directed the team.
The Major and the two sailors were some feet in advance.
Glenarvan and John Mangles went at the sides of the wagon,
ready to lend any assistance the fair travelers might require,
and Paganel and Robert brought up the rear.

All went well till they reached the middle of the Wimerra,
but then the hollow deepened, and the water rose to the middle
of the wheels. The bullocks were in danger of losing
their footing, and dragging with them the oscillating vehicle.
Ayrton devoted himself to his task courageously.
He jumped into the water, and hanging on by the bullocks'
horns, dragged them back into the right course.

Suddenly the wagon made a jolt that it was impossible to prevent;
a crack was heard, and the vehicle began to lean over in a most
precarious manner. The water now rose to the ladies' feet; the whole
concern began to float, though John Mangles and Lord Glenarvan hung
on to the side. It was an anxious moment.

Fortunately a vigorous effort drove the wagon toward the opposite shore,
and the bank began to slope upward, so that the horses and bullocks
were able to regain their footing, and soon the whole party found
themselves on the other side, glad enough, though wet enough too.

The fore part of the wagon, however, was broken by the jolt,
and Glenarvan's horse had lost a shoe.

This was an accident that needed to be promptly repaired.
They looked at each other hardly knowing what to do, till Ayrton
proposed he should go to Black Point Station, twenty miles
further north, and bring back a blacksmith with him.

"Yes, go, my good fellow," said Glenarvan. "How long will it
take you to get there and back?"

"About fifteen hours," replied Ayrton, "but not longer."

"Start at once, then, and we will camp here, on the banks of the Wimerra,

till you return."

CHAPTER XI CRIME OR CALAMITY

IT was not without apprehension that the Major saw Ayrton quit the Wimerra camp to go and look for a blacksmith at the Black Point Station. But he did not breathe a word of his private misgivings, and contented himself with watching the neighborhood of the river; nothing disturbed the repose of those tranquil glades, and after a short night the sun reappeared on the horizon.

As to Glenarvan, his only fear was lest Ayrton should return alone. If they fail to find a workman, the wagon could not resume the journey. This might end in a delay of many days, and Glenarvan, impatient to succeed, could brook no delay, in his eagerness to attain his object.

Ayrton luckily had lost neither his time nor his trouble. He appeared next morning at daybreak, accompanied by a man who gave himself out as the blacksmith from BlackPoint Station. He was a powerful fellow, and tall, but his features were of a low, brutal type, which did not prepossess anyone in his favor. But that was nothing, provided he knew his business. He scarcely spoke, and certainly he did not waste his breath in useless words.

"Is he a good workman?" said John Mangles to the quartermaster.

"I know no more about him than you do, captain," said Ayrton. "But we shall see."

The blacksmith set to work. Evidently that was his trade, as they could plainly see from the way he set about repairing the forepart of the wagon. He worked skilfully and with uncommon energy. The Major observed that the flesh of his wrists was deeply furrowed, showing a ring of extravasated blood. It was the mark of a recent injury, which the sleeve of an old woolen shirt could not conceal. McNabbs questioned the blacksmith about those sores which looked so painful. The man continued his work without answering. Two hours more and the damage the carriage had sustained was made good. As to Glenarvan's horse, it was soon disposed of. The blacksmith had had the forethought to bring the shoes with him. These shoes had a peculiarity which did not escape the Major; it was a trefoil clumsily cut on the back part. McNabbs pointed it out to Ayrton.

"It is the Black-Point brand," said the quartermaster. "That enables them to track any horses that may stray from the station, and prevents their being mixed with other herds."

The horse was soon shod. The blacksmith claimed his wage, and went off without uttering four words.

Half an hour later, the travelers were on the road. Beyond the grove of mimosas was a stretch of sparsely timbered country, which quite deserved its name of "open plain." Some fragments of quartz and ferruginous rock lay among the scrub

and the tall grass, where numerous flocks were feeding.
Some miles farther the wheels of the wagon plowed deep into
the alluvial soil, where irregular creeks murmured in their beds,
half hidden among giant reeds. By-and-by they skirted vast
salt lakes, rapidly evaporating. The journey was accomplished
without trouble, and, indeed, without fatigue.

Lady Helena invited the horsemen of the party to pay her a visit in turns,
as her reception-room was but small, and in pleasant converse with this
amiable woman they forgot the fatigue of their day's ride.

Lady Helena, seconded by Miss Mary, did the honors of their
ambulatory house with perfect grace. John Mangles was not
forgotten in these daily invitations, and his somewhat serious
conversation was not unpleasing.

The party crossed, in a diagonal direction, the mail-coach
road from Crowland to Horsham, which was a very dusty one,
and little used by pedestrians.

The spurs of some low hills were skirted at the boundary of Talbot County,
and in the evening the travelers reached a point about three miles
from Maryborough. The fine rain was falling, which, in any other country,
would have soaked the ground; but here the air absorbed the moisture
so wonderfully that the camp did not suffer in the least.

Next day, the 29th of December, the march was delayed somewhat by a
succession of little hills, resembling a miniature Switzerland. It was
a constant repetition of up and down hill, and many a jolt besides,
all of which were scarcely pleasant. The travelers walked part
of the way, and thought it no hardship.

At eleven o'clock they arrived at Carisbrook, rather an
important municipality. Ayrton was for passing outside the town
without going through it, in order, he said, to save time.
Glenarvan concurred with him, but Paganel, always eager
for novelties, was for visiting Carisbrook. They gave him his way,
and the wagon went on slowly.

Paganel, as was his custom, took Robert with him. His visit
to the town was very short, but it sufficed to give him an exact
idea of Australian towns. There was a bank, a court-house,
a market, a church, and a hundred or so of brick houses,
all exactly alike. The whole town was laid out in squares,
crossed with parallel streets in the English fashion.
Nothing could be more simple, nothing less attractive.
As the town grows, they lengthen the streets as we lengthen
the trousers of a growing child, and thus the original
symmetry is undisturbed.

Carisbrook was full of activity, a remarkable feature in these towns
of yesterday. It seems in Australia as if towns shot up like trees,
owing to the heat of the sun. Men of business were hurrying along
the streets; gold buyers were hastening to meet the in-coming escort;
the precious metal, guarded by the local police, was coming from
the mines at Bendigo and Mount Alexander. All the little world was
so absorbed in its own interests, that the strangers passed unobserved
amid the laborious inhabitants.

After an hour devoted to visiting Carisbrook, the two visitors rejoined their companions, and crossed a highly cultivated district. Long stretches of prairie, known as the "Low Level Plains," next met their gaze, dotted with countless sheep, and shepherds' huts. And then came a sandy tract, without any transition, but with the abruptness of change so characteristic of Australian scenery. Mount Simpson and Mount Terrengower marked the southern point where the boundary of the Loddon district cuts the 144th meridian.

As yet they had not met with any of the aboriginal tribes living in the savage state. Glenarvan wondered if the Australians were wanting in Australia, as the Indians had been wanting in the Pampas of the Argentine district; but Paganel told him that, in that latitude, the natives frequented chiefly the Murray Plains, about one hundred miles to the eastward.

"We are now approaching the gold district," said he, "in a day or two we shall cross the rich region of Mount Alexander. It was here that the swarm of diggers alighted in 1852; the natives had to fly to the interior. We are in civilized districts without seeing any sign of it; but our road will, before the day is over, cross the railway which connects the Murray with the sea. Well, I must confess, a railway in Australia does seem to me an astonishing thing!"

"And pray, why, Paganel?" said Glenarvan.

"Why? because it jars on one's ideas. Oh! I know you English are so used to colonizing distant possessions. You, who have electric telegraphs and universal exhibitions in New Zealand, you think it is all quite natural. But it dumb-founders the mind of a Frenchman like myself, and confuses all one's notions of Australia!"

"Because you look at the past, and not at the present," said John Mangles.

A loud whistle interrupted the discussion. The party were within a mile of the railway. Quite a number of persons were hastening toward the railway bridge. The people from the neighboring stations left their houses, and the shepherds their flocks, and crowded the approaches to the railway. Every now and then there was a shout, "The railway! the railway!"

Something serious must have occurred to produce such an agitation. Perhaps some terrible accident.

Glenarvan, followed by the rest, urged on his horse. In a few minutes he arrived at Camden Bridge and then he became aware of the cause of such an excitement.

A fearful accident had occurred; not a collision, but a train had gone off the line, and then there had been a fall. The affair recalled the worst disasters of American railways. The river crossed by the railway was full of broken carriages and the engine. Whether the weight of the train had been too much for the bridge, or whether the train had gone off the rails, the fact remained that five carriages out of six fell into the bed of the Loddon, dragged down by the locomotive. The sixth carriage, miraculously preserved by the breaking of the coupling chain,

remained on the rails, six feet from the abyss. Below nothing was discernible but a melancholy heap of twisted and blackened axles, shattered wagons, bent rails, charred sleepers; the boiler, burst by the shock, had scattered its plates to enormous distances. From this shapeless mass of ruins flames and black smoke still rose. After the fearful fall came fire, more fearful still! Great tracks of blood, scattered limbs, charred trunks of bodies, showed here and there; none could guess how many victims lay dead and mangled under those ruins.

Glenarvan, Paganel, the Major, Mangles, mixing with the crowd, heard the current talk. Everyone tried to account for the accident, while doing his utmost to save what could be saved.

"The bridge must have broken," said one.

"Not a bit of it. The bridge is whole enough; they must have forgotten to close it to let the train pass. That is all."

It was, in fact, a swing bridge, which opened for the convenience of the boats. Had the guard, by an unpardonable oversight, omitted to close it for the passage of the train, so that the train, coming on at full speed, was precipitated into the Loddon? This hypothesis seemed very admissible; for although one-half of the bridge lay beneath the ruins of the train, the other half, drawn up to the opposite shore, hung, still unharmed, by its chains. No one could doubt that an oversight on the part of the guard had caused the catastrophe.

The accident had occurred in the night, to the express train which left Melbourne at 11:45 in the evening. About a quarter past three in the morning, twenty-five minutes after leaving Castlemaine, it arrived at Camden Bridge, where the terrible disaster befell. The passengers and guards of the last and only remaining carriage at once tried to obtain help. But the telegraph, whose posts were lying on the ground, could not be worked. It was three hours before the authorities from Castlemaine reached the scene of the accident, and it was six o'clock in the morning when the salvage party was organized, under the direction of Mr. Mitchell, the surveyor-general of the colony, and a detachment of police, commanded by an inspector. The squatters and their "hands" lent their aid, and directed their efforts first to extinguishing the fire which raged in the ruined heap with unconquerable violence. A few unrecognizable bodies lay on the slope of the embankment, but from that blazing mass no living thing could be saved. The fire had done its work too speedily. Of the passengers ten only survived--those in the last carriage. The railway authorities sent a locomotive to bring them back to Castlemaine.

Lord Glenarvan, having introduced himself to the surveyor-general, entered into conversation with him and the inspector of police. The latter was a tall, thin man, im-perturbably cool, and, whatever he may have felt, allowed no trace of it to appear on his features. He contemplated this calamity as a mathematician does a problem; he was seeking to solve it, and to find the unknown; and when Glenarvan observed, "This is a great misfortune," he quietly replied, "Better than that, my Lord."

"Better than that?" cried Glenarvan. "I do not understand you."

"It is better than a misfortune, it is a crime!" he replied,
in the same quiet tone.

Glenarvan looked inquiringly at Mr. Mitchell for a solution.
"Yes, my Lord," replied the surveyor-general, "our inquiries
have resulted in the conclusion that the catastrophe is the result
of a crime. The last luggage-van has been robbed. The surviving
passengers were attacked by a gang of five or six villains.
The bridge was intentionally opened, and not left open
by the negligence of the guard; and connecting with this fact
the guard's disappearance, we may conclude that the wretched
fellow was an accomplice of these ruffians."

The police-officer shook his head at this inference.

"You do not agree with me?" said Mr. Mitchell.

"No, not as to the complicity of the guard."

"Well, but granting that complicity, we may attribute the crime
to the natives who haunt the Murray. Without him the blacks
could never have opened a swing-bridge; they know nothing
of its mechanism."

"Exactly so," said the police-inspector.

"Well," added Mr. Mitchell, "we have the evidence of a boatman
whose boat passed Camden Bridge at 10:40 P. M., that the bridge
was properly shut after he passed."

"True."

"Well, after that I cannot see any doubt as to the complicity
of the guard."

The police-officer shook his head gently, but continuously.

"Then you don't attribute the crime to the natives?"

"Not at all."

"To whom then?"

Just at this moment a noise was heard from about half a mile up
the river. A crowd had gathered, and quickly increased. They soon
reached the station, and in their midst were two men carrying a corpse.
It was the body of the guard, quite cold, stabbed to the heart.
The murderers had no doubt hoped, by dragging their victim to a distance,
that the police would be put on a wrong scent in their first inquiries.
This discovery, at any rate, justified the doubts of the police-inspector.
The poor blacks had had no hand in the matter.

"Those who dealt that blow," said he, "were already well used to this
little instrument"; and so saying he produced a pair of "darbies,"
a kind of handcuff made of a double ring of iron secured by a lock.
"I shall soon have the pleasure of presenting them with these bracelets
as a New Year's gift."

"Then you suspect--"

"Some folks who came out free in Her Majesty's ships."

"What! convicts?" cried Paganel, who recognized the formula employed in the Australian colonies.

"I thought," said Glenarvan, "convicts had no right in the province of Victoria."

"Bah!" said the inspector, "if they have no right, they take it! They escape sometimes, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, this lot have come straight from Perth, and, take my word for it, they will soon be there again."

Mr. Mitchell nodded acquiescence in the words of the police-inspector. At this moment the wagon arrived at the level crossing of the railway. Glenarvan wished to spare the ladies the horrible spectacle at Camden Bridge. He took courteous leave of the surveyor-general, and made a sign to the rest to follow him. "There is no reason," said he, "for delaying our journey."

When they reached the wagon, Glenarvan merely mentioned to Lady Helena that there had been a railway accident, without a hint of the crime that had played so great a part in it; neither did he make mention of the presence of a band of convicts in the neighborhood, reserving that piece of information solely for Ayrton's ear. The little procession now crossed the railway some two hundred yards below the bridge, and then resumed their eastward course.

CHAPTER XII TOLINE OF THE LACHLAN

ABOUT two miles from the railway, the plain terminated in a range of low hills, and it was not long before the wagon entered a succession of narrow gorges and capricious windings, out of which it emerged into a most charming region, where grand trees, not closely planted, but in scattered groups, were growing with absolutely tropical luxuriance. As the party drove on they stumbled upon a little native boy lying fast asleep beneath the shade of a magnificent banksia. He was dressed in European garb, and seemed about eight years of age. There was no mistaking the characteristic features of his race; the crisped hair, the nearly black skin, the flattened nose, the thick lips, the unusual length of the arms, immediately classed him among the aborigines of the interior. But a degree of intelligence appeared in his face that showed some educational influences must have been at work on his savage, untamed nature.

Lady Helena, whose interest was greatly excited by this spectacle, got out of the wagon, followed by Mary, and presently the whole company surrounded the peaceful little sleeper. "Poor child!" said Mary Grant. "Is he lost, I wonder, in this desert?"

"I suppose," said Lady Helena, "he has come a long way to visit this part. No doubt some he loves are here."

"But he can't be left here," added Robert. "We must--"

His compassionate sentence remained unfinished, for, just at that moment the child turned over in his sleep, and, to the extreme surprise of everybody, there was a large label on his shoulders, on which the following was written:

TOLINE.
To be conducted to Echuca.
Care of Jeffries Smith, Railway Porter.
Prepaid.

"That's the English all over!" exclaimed Paganel. "They send off a child just as they would luggage, and book him like a parcel. I heard it was done, certainly; but I could not believe it before."

"Poor child!" said Lady Helena. "Could he have been in the train that got off the line at Camden Bridge? Perhaps his parents are killed, and he is left alone in the world!"

"I don't think so, madam," replied John Mangles. "That card rather goes to prove he was traveling alone."

"He is waking up!" said Mary.

And so he was. His eyes slowly opened and then closed again, pained by the glare of light. But Lady Helena took his hand, and he jumped up at once and looked about him in bewilderment at the sight of so many strangers. He seemed half frightened at first, but the presence of Lady Helena reassured him. "Do you understand English, my little man?" asked the young lady.

"I understand it and speak it," replied the child in fluent enough English, but with a marked accent. His pronunciation was like a Frenchman's.

"What is your name?" asked Lady Helena.

"Toline," replied the little native.

"Toline!" exclaimed Paganel. "Ah! I think that means 'bark of a tree' in Australian."

Toline nodded, and looked again at the travelers.

"Where do you come from?" inquired Lady Helena.

"From Melbourne, by the railway from Sandhurst."

"Were you in the accident at Camden Bridge?" said Glenarvan.

"Yes, sir," was Toline's reply; "but the God of the Bible protected me."

"Are you traveling alone?"

"Yes, alone; the Reverend Paxton put me in charge of Jeffries Smith; but unfortunately the poor man was killed."

"And you did not know any one else on the train?"

"No one, madam; but God watches over children and never forsakes them."

Toline said this in soft, quiet tones, which went to the heart.
When he mentioned the name of God his voice was grave and his eyes
beamed with all the fervor that animated his young soul.

This religious enthusiasm at so tender an age was easily explained.
The child was one of the aborigines baptized by the English missionaries,
and trained by them in all the rigid principles of the Methodist Church.
His calm replies, proper behavior, and even his somber garb made him
look like a little reverend already.

But where was he going all alone in these solitudes and why had he left
Camden Bridge? Lady Helena asked him about this.

"I was returning to my tribe in the Lachlan," he replied.
"I wished to see my family again."

"Are they Australians?" inquired John Mangles.

"Yes, Australians of the Lachlan," replied Toline.

"Have you a father and mother?" said Robert Grant.

"Yes, my brother," replied Toline, holding out his hand
to little Grant. Robert was so touched by the word brother
that he kissed the black child, and they were friends forthwith.

The whole party were so interested in these replies of the little
Australian savage that they all sat round him in a listening group.
But the sun had meantime sunk behind the tall trees,
and as a few miles would not greatly retard their progress,
and the spot they were in would be suitable for a halt,
Glenarvan gave orders to prepare their camp for the night at once.
Ayrton unfastened the bullocks and turned them out to feed at will.
The tent was pitched, and Olbinett got the supper ready.
Toline consented, after some difficulty, to share it,
though he was hungry enough. He took his seat beside Robert,
who chose out all the titbits for his new friend.
Toline accepted them with a shy grace that was very charming.

The conversation with him, however, was still kept up,
for everyone felt an interest in the child, and wanted
to talk to him and hear his history. It was simple enough.
He was one of the poor native children confided to the care
of charitable societies by the neighboring tribes.
The Australian aborigines are gentle and inoffensive,
never exhibiting the fierce hatred toward their conquerors
which characterizes the New Zealanders, and possibly a few
of the races of Northern Australia. They often go to the
large towns, such as Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne, and walk
about in very primitive costume. They go to barter their few
articles of industry, hunting and fishing implements, weapons,
etc., and some of the chiefs, from pecuniary motives, no doubt,
willingly leave their children to profit by the advantages
of a gratuitous education in English.

This was how Toline's parents had acted. They were true Australian savages living in the Lachlan, a vast region lying beyond the Murray. The child had been in Melbourne five years, and during that time had never once seen any of his own people. And yet the imperishable feeling of kindred was still so strong in his heart that he had dared to brave this journey over the wilds to visit his tribe once more, scattered though perchance it might be, and his family, even should he find it decimated.

"And after you have kissed your parents, are you coming back to Melbourne?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

"Yes, Madam," replied Toline, looking at the lady with a loving expression.

"And what are you going to be some day?" she continued.

"I am going to snatch my brothers from misery and ignorance. I am going to teach them, to bring them to know and love God. I am going to be a missionary."

Words like those, spoken with such animation from a child of only eight years, might have provoked a smile in light, scoffing auditors, but they were understood and appreciated by the grave Scotch, who admired the courage of this young disciple, already armed for the battle. Even Paganel was stirred to the depths of his heart, and felt his warmer sympathy awakened for the poor child.

To speak the truth, up to that moment he did not care much for a savage in European attire. He had not come to Australia to see Australians in coats and trousers. He preferred them simply tattooed, and this conventional dress jarred on his preconceived notions. But the child's genuine religious fervor won him over completely. Indeed, the wind-up of the conversation converted the worthy geographer into his best friend.

It was in reply to a question Lady Helena had asked, that Toline said he was studying at the Normal School in Melbourne, and that the principal was the Reverend Mr. Paxton.

"And what do they teach you?" she went on to say.

"They teach me the Bible, and mathematics, and geography."

Paganel pricked up his ears at this, and said, "Indeed, geography!"

"Yes, sir," said Toline; "and I had the first prize for geography before the Christmas holidays."

"You had the first prize for geography, my boy?"

"Yes, sir. Here it is," returned Toline, pulling a book out of his pocket.

It was a bible, 32mo size, and well bound. On the first page was written the words: "Normal School, Melbourne. First Prize for Geography. Toline of the Lachlan."

Paganel was beside himself. An Australian well versed in geography. This was marvelous, and he could not help kissing Toline on both cheeks, just as if he had been the Reverend Mr. Paxton himself, on the day of the distribution of prizes.
Paganel need not have been so amazed at this circumstance, however, for it is frequent enough in Australian schools.
The little savages are very quick in learning geography.
They learn it eagerly, and on the other hand, are perfectly averse to the science of arithmetic.

Toline could not understand this outburst of affection on the part of the Frenchman, and looked so puzzled that Lady Helena thought she had better inform him that Paganel was a celebrated geographer and a distinguished professor on occasion.

"A professor of geography!" cried Toline. "Oh, sir, do question me!"

"Question you? Well, I'd like nothing better. Indeed, I was going to do it without your leave. I should very much like to see how they teach geography in the Normal School of Melbourne."

"And suppose Toline trips you up, Paganel!" said McNabbs.

"What a likely idea!" exclaimed the geographer. "Trip up the Secretary of the Geographical Society of France."

Their examination then commenced, after Paganel had settled his spectacles firmly on his nose, drawn himself up to his full height, and put on a solemn voice becoming to a professor.

"Pupil Toline, stand up."

As Toline was already standing, he could not get any higher, but he waited modestly for the geographer's questions.

"Pupil Toline, what are the five divisions of the globe?"

"Oceanica, Asia, Africa, America, and Europe."

"Perfectly so. Now we'll take Oceanica first; where are we at this moment? What are the principal divisions?"

"Australia, belonging to the English; New Zealand, belonging to the English; Tasmania, belonging to the English. The islands of Chatham, Auckland, Macquarie, Kermadec, Makin, Maraki, are also belonging to the English."

"Very good, and New Caledonia, the Sandwich Islands, the Mendana, the Pomotou?"

"They are islands under the Protectorate of Great Britain."

"What!" cried Paganel, "under the Protectorate of Great Britain. I rather think on the contrary, that France--"

"France," said the child, with an astonished look.

"Well, well," said Paganel; "is that what they teach you in the Melbourne Normal School?"

"Yes, sir. Isn't it right?"

"Oh, yes, yes, perfectly right. All Oceanica belongs to the English. That's an understood thing. Go on."

Paganel's face betrayed both surprise and annoyance, to the great delight of the Major.

"Let us go on to Asia," said the geographer.

"Asia," replied Toline, "is an immense country. Capital--Calcutta. Chief Towns--Bombay, Madras, Calicut, Aden, Malacca, Singapore, Pegu, Colombo. The Lacca-dive Islands, the Maldives, the Chagos, etc., belonging to the English."

"Very good, pupil Toline. And now for Africa."

"Africa comprises two chief colonies--the Cape on the south, capital Capetown; and on the west the English settlements, chief city, Sierra Leone."

"Capital!" said Paganel, beginning to enter into this perfectly taught but Anglo-colored fanciful geography. "As to Algeria, Morocco, Egypt--they are all struck out of the Britannic cities."

"Let us pass on, pray, to America."

"It is divided," said Toline, promptly, "into North and South America. The former belongs to the English in Canada, New Brunswick, New Scotland, and the United States, under the government of President Johnson."

"President Johnson," cried Paganel, "the successor of the great and good Lincoln, assassinated by a mad fanatic of the slave party. Capital; nothing could be better. And as to South America, with its Guiana, its archipelago of South Shetland, its Georgia, Jamaica, Trinidad, etc., that belongs to the English, too! Well, I'll not be the one to dispute that point! But, Toline, I should like to know your opinion of Europe, or rather your professor's."

"Europe?" said Toline not at all understanding Paganel's excitement.

"Yes, Europe! Who does Europe belong to?"

"Why, to the English," replied Toline, as if the fact was quite settled.

"I much doubt it," returned Paganel. "But how's that, Toline, for I want to know that?"

"England, Ireland, Scotland, Malta, Jersey and Guern-sey, the Ionian Islands, the Hebrides, the Shetlands, and the Orkneys."

"Yes, yes, my lad; but there are other states you forgot to mention."

"What are they?" replied the child, not the least disconcerted.

"Spain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, France," answered Paganel.

"They are provinces, not states," said Toline.

"Well, that beats all!" exclaimed Paganel, tearing off his spectacles.

"Yes," continued the child. "Spain--capital, Gibraltar."

"Admirable! perfect! sublime! And France, for I am French,
and I should like to know to whom I belong."

"France," said Toline, quietly, "is an English province;
chief city, Calais."

"Calais!" cried Paganel. "So you think Calais still belongs
to the English?"

"Certainly."

"And that it is the capital of France?"

"Yes, sir; and it is there that the Governor, Lord Napo-leon, lives."

This was too much for Paganel's risible faculties.
He burst out laughing. Toline did not know what to make of him.
He had done his best to answer every question put to him.
But the singularity of the answers were not his blame; indeed, he never
imagined anything singular about them. However, he took it
all quietly, and waited for the professor to recover himself.
These peals of laughter were quite incomprehensible to him.

"You see," said Major McNabbs, laughing, "I was right.
The pupil could enlighten you after all."

"Most assuredly, friend Major," replied the geographer. "So that's the
way they teach geography in Melbourne! They do it well, these professors
in the Normal School! Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Oceanica, the whole
world belongs to the English. My conscience! with such an ingenious
education it is no wonder the natives submit. Ah, well, Toline, my boy,
does the moon belong to England, too?"

"She will, some day," replied the young savage, gravely.

This was the climax. Paganel could not stand any more.
He was obliged to go away and take his laugh out, for he was
actually exploding with mirth, and he went fully a quarter of a
mile from the encampment before his equilibrium was restored.

Meanwhile, Glenarvan looked up a geography they had brought among
their books. It was "Richardson's Compendium," a work in great repute
in England, and more in agreement with modern science than the manual
in use in the Normal School in Melbourne.

"Here, my child," he said to Toline, "take this book and keep it.
You have a few wrong ideas about geography, which it would be well
for you to rectify. I will give you this as a keepsake from me."

Toline took the book silently; but, after examining it attentively,
he shook his head with an air of incredulity, and could not even make

up his mind to put it in his pocket.

By this time night had closed in; it was 10 P. M. and time to think of rest, if they were to start betimes next day. Robert offered his friend Toline half his bed, and the little fellow accepted it. Lady Helena and Mary Grant withdrew to the wagon, and the others lay down in the tent, Paganel's merry peals still mingling with the low, sweet song of the wild magpie.

But in the morning at six o'clock, when the sunshine wakened the sleepers, they looked in vain for the little Australian. Toline had disappeared. Was he in haste to get to the Lachlan district? or was he hurt by Paganel's laughter? No one could say.

But when Lady Helena opened her eyes she discovered a fresh branch of mimosa leaves lying across her, and Paganel found a book in his vest pocket, which turned out to be "Richardson's Geography."

CHAPTER XIII A WARNING

ON the 2d of January, at sunrise, the travelers forded the Colban and the Caupespe rivers. The half of their journey was now accomplished. In fifteen days more, should their journey continue to be prosperous, the little party would reach Twofold Bay.

They were all in good health. All that Paganel said of the hygienic qualities of the climate was realized. There was little or no humidity, and the heat was quite bearable. Neither horses nor bullocks could complain of it any more than human beings. The order of the march had been changed in one respect since the affair of Camden Bridge. That criminal catastrophe on the railway made Ayrton take sundry precautions, which had hitherto been unnecessary. The hunters never lost sight of the wagon, and whenever they camped, one was always placed on watch. Morning and evening the firearms were primed afresh. It was certain that a gang of ruffians was prowling about the country, and though there was no cause for actual fear, it was well to be ready for whatever might happen.

It need hardly be said these precautions were adopted without the knowledge of Lady Helena and Mary Grant, as Lord Glenarvan did not wish to alarm them.

They were by no means unnecessary, however, for any imprudence or carelessness might have cost the travelers dear. Others beside Glenarvan were on their guard. In lonely settlements and on stations, the inhabitants and the squatters prepared carefully against any attack or surprise. Houses are closed at nightfall; the dogs let loose inside the fences, barked at the slightest sound. Not a single shepherd on horseback gathered his numerous flocks together at close of day, without having a carbine slung from his saddle.

The outrage at Camden Bridge was the reason for all this, and many a colonist fastened himself in with bolts and bars now at dusk, who used to sleep with open doors and windows.

The Government itself displayed zeal and prudence, especially in
the Post-office department. On this very day, just as Glenarvan
and his party were on their way from Kilmore to Heathcote, the mail
dashed by at full speed; but though the horses were at a gallop,
Glenarvan caught sight of the glittering weapons of the mounted
police that rode by its side, as they swept past in a cloud of dust.
The travelers might have fancied themselves back in those lawless times
when the discovery of the first gold-fields deluged the Australian
continent with the scum of Europe.

A mile beyond the road to Kilmore, the wagon, for the first time
since leaving Cape Bernouilli, struck into one of those forests
of gigantic trees which extend over a super-fices of several degrees.
A cry of admiration escaped the travelers at the sight of the eucalyptus
trees, two hundred feet high, with tough bark five inches thick.
The trunks, measuring twenty feet round, and furrowed with foamy streaks
of an odorous resin, rose one hundred and fifty feet above the soil.
Not a branch, not a twig, not a stray shoot, not even a knot,
spoilt the regularity of their outline. They could not have come
out smoother from the hands of a turner. They stood like pillars
all molded exactly alike, and could be counted by hundreds.
At an enormous height they spread out in chaplets of branches,
rounded and adorned at their extremity with alternate leaves.
At the axle of these leaves solitary flowers drooped down,
the calyx of which resembles an inverted urn.

Under this leafy dome, which never lost its greenness, the air
circulated freely, and dried up the dampness of the ground.
Horses, cattle, and wagon could easily pass between the trees,
for they were standing in wide rows, and parceled out like a wood
that was being felled. This was neither like the densely-packed
woods choked up with brambles, nor the virgin forest barricaded
with the trunks of fallen trees, and overgrown with inextricable
tangles of creepers, where only iron and fire could open up a track.
A grassy carpet at the foot of the trees, and a canopy of verdure above,
long perspectives of bold colors, little shade, little freshness
at all, a peculiar light, as if the rays came through a thin veil,
dappled lights and shades sharply reflected on the ground, made up
a whole, and constituted a peculiar spectacle rich in novel effects.
The forests of the Oceanic continent do not in the least
resemble the forests of the New World; and the Eucalyptus,
the "Tara" of the aborigines, belonging to the family of MYRTACEA,
the different varieties of which can hardly be enumerated,
is the tree _par excellence_ of the Australian flora.

The reason of the shade not being deep, nor the darkness profound,
under these domes of verdure, was that these trees presented a curious
anomaly in the disposition of the leaves. Instead of presenting
their broad surface to the sunlight, only the side is turned.
Only the profile of the leaves is seen in this singular foliage.
Consequently the sun's rays slant down them to the earth,
as if through the open slants of a Venetian blind.

Glenarvan expressed his surprise at this circumstance, and wondered
what could be the cause of it. Paganel, who was never at a loss
for an answer, immediately replied:

"What astonishes me is not the caprice of nature. She knows what she
is about, but botanists don't always know what they are saying.

Nature made no mistake in giving this peculiar foliage to the tree,
but men have erred in calling them EUCALYPTUS."

"What does the word mean?" asked Mary Grant.

"It comes from a Greek word, meaning I _cover well_. They took care
to commit the mistake in Greek, that it might not be so self-evident,
for anyone can see that the ecualyptus covers badly."

"I agree with you there," said Glenarvan; "but now tell us, Paganel,
how it is that the leaves grow in this fashion?"

"From a purely physical cause, friends," said Paganel, "and one
that you will easily understand. In this country where the air
is dry and rain seldom falls, and the ground is parched, the trees
have no need of wind or sun. Moisture lacking, sap is lacking also.
Hence these narrow leaves, which seek to defend themselves
against the light, and prevent too great evaporation. This is why
they present the profile and not the face to the sun's rays.
There is nothing more intelligent than a leaf."

"And nothing more selfish," added the Major. "These only thought
of themselves, and not at all of travelers."

Everyone inclined to the opinion of McNabbs except Paganel,
who congratulated himself on walking under shadeless trees,
though all the time he was wiping the perspiration from his forehead.
However, this disposition of foliage was certainly to be regretted,
for the journey through the forest was often long and painful,
as the traveler had no protection whatever against the sun's fierce rays.

The whole of this day the wagon continued to roll along through
interminable rows of eucalyptus, without meeting either quadruped
or native. A few cockatoos lived in the tops of the trees,
but at such a height they could scarcely be distinguished,
and their noisy chatter was changed into an imperceptible murmur.
Occasionally a swarm of par-roquets flew along a distant path,
and lighted it up for an instant with gay colors; but otherwise,
solemn silence reigned in this vast green temple, and the tramp
of the horses, a few words exchanged with each other by the riders,
the grinding noise of the wheels, and from time to time a cry
from Ayrton to stir up his lazy team, were the only sounds
which disturbed this immense solitude.

When night came they camped at the foot of some eucalyptus,
which bore marks of a comparatively recent fire. They looked like
tall factory chimneys, for the flame had completely hollowed them
out their whole length. With the thick bark still covering them,
they looked none the worse. However, this bad habit of squatters
or natives will end in the destruction of these magnificent trees,
and they will disappear like the cedars of Lebanon, those world
monuments burnt by unlucky camp fires.

Olbinett, acting on Paganel's advice, lighted his fire to
prepare supper in one of these tubular trunks. He found it
drew capitally, and the smoke was lost in the dark foliage above.
The requisite precautions were taken for the night,
and Ayrton, Mulrady, Wilson and John Mangles undertook in turn
to keep watch until sunrise.

On the 3d of January, all day long, they came to nothing but the same symmetrical avenues of trees; it seemed as if they never were going to end. However, toward evening the ranks of trees began to thin, and on a little plain a few miles off an assemblage of regular houses.

"Seymour!" cried Paganel; "that is the last town we come to in the province of Victoria."

"Is it an important one?" asked Lady Helena.

"It is a mere village, madam, but on the way to become a municipality."

"Shall we find a respectable hotel there?" asked Glenarvan.

"I hope so," replied Paganel.

"Very well; let us get on to the town, for our fair travelers, with all their courage, will not be sorry, I fancy, to have a good night's rest."

"My dear Edward, Mary and I will accept it gladly, but only on the condition that it will cause no delay, or take us the least out of the road."

"It will do neither," replied Lord Glenarvan. "Besides, our bullocks are fatigued, and we will start to-morrow at daybreak."

It was now nine o'clock; the moon was just beginning to rise, but her rays were only slanting yet, and lost in the mist. It was gradually getting dark when the little party entered the wide streets of Seymour, under Paganel's guidance, who seemed always to know what he had never seen; but his instinct led him right, and he walked straight to Campbell's North British Hotel.

The Major without even leaving the hotel, was soon aware that fear absorbed the inhabitants of the little town. Ten minutes' conversation with Dickson, the loquacious landlord, made him completely acquainted with the actual state of affairs; but he never breathed a word to any one.

When supper was over, though, and Lady Glenarvan, and Mary, and Robert had retired, the Major detained his companions a little, and said, "They have found out the perpetrators of the crime on the Sandhurst railroad."

"And are they arrested?" asked Ayrton, eagerly.

"No," replied McNabbs, without apparently noticing the EMPRESSMENT of the quartermaster--an EMPRESSMENT which, moreover, was reasonable enough under the circumstances.

"So much the worse," replied Ayrton.

"Well," said Glenarvan, "who are the authors of the crime?"

"Read," replied the Major, offering Glenarvan a copy of the _Australian and New Zealand Gazette_, "and you will see that the inspector of the police was not mistaken."

Glenarvan read aloud the following message:

SYDNEY, Jan. 2, 1866.

It will be remembered that on the night of the 29th or 30th
of last December there was an accident at Camden Bridge,
five miles beyond the station at Castlemaine, on the railway
from Melbourne to Sandhurst. The night express, 11.45, dashing
along at full speed, was precipitated into the Loddon River.

Camden Bridge had been left open. The numerous robberies committed
after the accident, the body of the guard picked up about half a mile
from Camden Bridge, proved that this catastrophe was the result
of a crime.

Indeed, the coroner's inquest decided that the crime must
be attributed to the band of convicts which escaped six
months ago from the Penitentiary at Perth, Western Australia,
just as they were about to be transferred to Norfolk Island.

The gang numbers twenty-nine men; they are under the command
of a certain Ben Joyce, a criminal of the most dangerous class,
who arrived in Australia a few months ago, by what ship is not known,
and who has hitherto succeeded in evading the hands of justice.

The inhabitants of towns, colonists and squatters at stations,
are hereby cautioned to be on their guard, and to communicate
to the Surveyor-General any information that may aid his search.
J. P. MITCHELL, S. G.

When Glenarvan had finished reading this article, McNabbs turned
to the geographer and said, "You see, Paganel, there can be
convicts in Australia."

"Escaped convicts, that is evident," replied Paganel, "but not regularly
transported criminals. Those fellows have no business here."

"Well, they are here, at any rate," said Glenarvan; "but I
don't suppose the fact need materially alter our arrangements.
What do you think, John?"

John Mangles did not reply immediately; he hesitated between
the sorrow it would cause the two children to give up the search,
and the fear of compromising the expedition.

"If Lady Glenarvan, and Miss Grant were not with us," he said,
"I should not give myself much concern about these wretches."

Glenarvan understood him and added, "Of course I need
not say that it is not a question of giving up our task;
but would it perhaps be prudent, for the sake of our companions,
to rejoin the DUNCAN at Melbourne, and proceed with our
search for traces of Harry Grant on the eastern side.
What do you think of it, McNabbs?"

"Before I give my opinion," replied the Major, "I should like

to hear Ayrton's."

At this direct appeal, the quartermaster looked at Glenarvan, and said, "I think we are two hundred miles from Melbourne, and that the danger, if it exists, is as great on the route to the south as on the route to the east. Both are little frequented, and both will serve us. Besides, I do not think that thirty scoundrels can frighten eight well-armed, determined men. My advice, then, is to go forward."

"And good advice too, Ayrton," replied Paganel. "By going on we may come across the traces of Captain Grant. In returning south, on the contrary, we turn our backs to them. I think with you, then, and I don't care a snap for these escaped fellows. A brave man wouldn't care a bit for them!"

Upon this they agreed with the one voice to follow their original programme.

"Just one thing, my Lord," said Ayrton, when they were about to separate.

"Say on, Ayrton."

"Wouldn't it be advisable to send orders to the DUNCAN to be at the coast?"

"What good would that be," replied John Mangles. "When we reach Twofold Bay it will be time enough for that. If any unexpected event should oblige us to go to Melbourne, we might be sorry not to find the DUNCAN there. Besides, her injuries can not be repaired yet. For these reasons, then, I think it would be better to wait."

"All right," said Ayrton, and forbore to press the matter further.

CHAPTER XIV WEALTH IN THE WILDERNESS

ON January 6, at 7 A. M., after a tranquil night passed in longitude 146 degrees 15", the travelers continued their journey across the vast district. They directed their course steadily toward the rising sun, and made a straight line across the plain. Twice over they came upon the traces of squatters going toward the north, and their different footprints became confused, and Glenarvan's horse no longer left on the dust the Blackpoint mark, recognizable by its double shamrock.

The plain was furrowed in some places by fantastic winding creeks surrounded by box, and whose waters were rather temporary than permanent. They originated in the slopes of the Buffalo Ranges, a chain of mountains of moderate height, the undulating line of which was visible on the horizon. It was resolved to camp there the same night. Ayrton goaded on his team, and after a journey of thirty-five miles, the bullocks arrived, somewhat fatigued. The tent was pitched beneath the great trees, and as night had drawn on supper was served as quickly as possible, for all the party cared more for sleeping than eating, after such a day's march.

Paganel who had the first watch did not lie down, but shouldered

his rifle and walked up and down before the camp, to keep himself
from going to sleep. In spite of the absence of the moon, the night
was almost luminous with the light of the southern constellations.
The SAVANT amused himself with reading the great book of the firmament,
a book which is always open, and full of interest to those who can
read it. The profound silence of sleeping nature was only interrupted
by the clanking of the hobbles on the horses' feet.

Paganel was engrossed in his astronomical meditations, and thinking
more about the celestial than the terrestrial world, when a distant
sound aroused him from his reverie. He listened attentively,
and to his great amaze, fancied he heard the sounds of a piano.
He could not be mistaken, for he distinctly heard chords struck.

"A piano in the wilds!" said Paganel to himself.
"I can never believe it is that."

It certainly was very surprising, but Paganel found it easier
to believe it was some Australian bird imitating the sounds
of a Pleyel or Erard, as others do the sounds of a clock or mill.
But at this very moment, the notes of a clear ringing voice
rose on the air. The PIANIST was accompanied by singing.
Still Paganel was unwilling to be convinced. However, next minute
he was forced to admit the fact, for there fell on his ear
the sublime strains of Mozart's "Il mio tesoro tanto"
from Don Juan.

"Well, now," said the geographer to himself, "let the Australian
birds be as queer as they may, and even granting the paroquets
are the most musical in the world, they can't sing Mozart!"

He listened to the sublime inspiration of the great master to the end.
The effect of this soft melody on the still clear night
was indescribable. Paganel remained as if spellbound for a time;
the voice ceased and all was silence. When Wilson came to relieve
the watch, he found the geographer plunged into a deep reverie.
Paganel made no remark, however, to the sailor, but reserved
his information for Glenarvan in the morning, and went into
the tent to bed.

Next day, they were all aroused from sleep by the sudden
loud barking of dogs, Glenarvan got up forthwith.
Two magnificent pointers, admirable specimens of English
hunting dogs, were bounding in front of the little wood,
into which they had retreated at the approach of the travelers,
redoubling their clamor.

"There is some station in this desert, then," said Glenarvan,
"and hunters too, for these are regular setters."

Paganel was just about to recount his nocturnal experiences,
when two young men appeared, mounted on horses of the most
perfect breed, true "hunters."

The two gentlemen dressed in elegant hunting costume, stopped at
the sight of the little group camping in gipsy fashion.
They looked as if they wondered what could bring an armed
party there, but when they saw the ladies get out of the wagon,
they dismounted instantly, and went toward them hat in hand.

Lord Glenarvan came to meet them, and, as a stranger,
announced his name and rank.

The gentlemen bowed, and the elder of them said, "My Lord,
will not these ladies and yourself and friends honor us by resting
a little beneath our roof?"

"Mr.--," began Glenarvan.

"Michael and Sandy Patterson are our names, proprietors of
Hottam Station. Our house is scarcely a quarter of a mile distant."

"Gentlemen," replied Glenarvan, "I should not like to abuse
such kindly-offered hospitality."

"My Lord," returned Michael Patterson, "by accepting it you
will confer a favor on poor exiles, who will be only too happy
to do the honors of the wilds."

Glenarvan bowed in token of acquiescence.

"Sir," said Paganel, addressing Michael Patterson, "if it is not
an impudent question, may I ask whether it was you that sung an air
from the divine Mozart last night?"

"It was, sir," replied the stranger, "and my cousin Sandy accompanied me."

"Well, sir," replied Paganel, holding out his hand to the young man,
"receive the sincere compliments of a Frenchman, who is a passionate
admirer of this music."

Michael grasped his hand cordially, and then pointing out the road
to take, set off, accompanied by the ladies and Lord Glenarvan
and his friends, for the station. The horses and the camp were left
to the care of Ayrton and the sailors.

Hottam Station was truly a magnificent establishment, kept as
scrupulously in order as an English park. Immense meadows,
enclosed in gray fences, stretched away out of sight.
In these, thousands of bullocks and millions of sheep were grazing,
tended by numerous shepherds, and still more numerous dogs.
The crack of the stock-whip mingled continually with
the barking of the "collies" and the bellowing and bleating
of the cattle and sheep.

Toward the east there was a boundary of myalls and gum-trees, beyond
which rose Mount Hottam, its imposing peak towering 7,500 feet high.
Long avenues of green trees were visible on all sides. Here and there
was a thick clump of "grass trees," tall bushes ten feet high,
like the dwarf palm, quite lost in their crown of long narrow leaves.
The air was balmy and odorous with the perfume of scented laurels,
whose white blossoms, now in full bloom, distilled on the breeze
the finest aromatic perfume.

To these charming groups of native trees were added transplantations
from European climates. The peach, pear, and apple trees
were there, the fig, the orange, and even the oak, to the rapturous
delight of the travelers, who greeted them with loud hurrahs!
But astonished as the travelers were to find themselves walking beneath

the shadow of the trees of their own native land, they were still more so at the sight of the birds that flew about in the branches-- the "satin bird," with its silky plumage, and the "king-honeysuckers," with their plumage of gold and black velvet.

For the first time, too, they saw here the "Lyre" bird, the tail of which resembles in form the graceful instrument of Orpheus. It flew about among the tree ferns, and when its tail struck the branches, they were almost surprised not to hear the harmonious strains that inspired Amphion to rebuild the walls of Thebes. Paganel had a great desire to play on it.

However, Lord Glenarvan was not satisfied with admiring the fairy-like wonders of this oasis, improvised in the Australian desert. He was listening to the history of the young gentlemen. In England, in the midst of civilized countries, the new comer acquaints his host whence he comes and whither he is going; but here, by a refinement of delicacy, Michael and Sandy Patterson thought it a duty to make themselves known to the strangers who were about to receive their hospitality.

Michael and Sandy Patterson were the sons of London bankers. When they were twenty years of age, the head of their family said, "Here are some thousands, young men. Go to a distant colony; and start some useful settlement there. Learn to know life by labor. If you succeed, so much the better. If you fail, it won't matter much. We shall not regret the money which makes you men."

The two young men obeyed. They chose the colony of Victoria in Australia, as the field for sowing the paternal bank-notes, and had no reason to repent the selection. At the end of three years the establishment was flourishing. In Victoria, New South Wales, and Southern Australia, there are more than three thousand stations, some belonging to squatters who rear cattle, and others to settlers who farm the ground. Till the arrival of the two Pattersons, the largest establishment of this sort was that of Mr. Jamieson, which covered an area of seventy-five miles, with a frontage of about eight miles along the Peron, one of the affluents of the Darling.

Now Hottam Station bore the palm for business and extent. The young men were both squatters and settlers. They managed their immense property with rare ability and uncommon energy.

The station was far removed from the chief towns in the

V. IV Verne midst of the unfrequented districts of the Murray. It occupied a long wide space of five leagues in extent, lying between the Buffalo Ranges and Mount Hottam. At the two angles north of this vast quadrilateral, Mount Aberdeen rose on the left, and the peaks of High Barven on the right. Winding, beautiful streams were not wanting, thanks to the creeks and affluents of the Oven's River, which throws itself at the north into the bed of the Murray. Consequently they were equally successful in cattle breeding and farming. Ten thousand acres of ground, admirably cultivated, produced harvests of native productions and exotics, and several millions of animals fattened in the fertile pastures. The products of Hottam Station fetched the very highest price

in the markets of Castlemaine and Melbourne.

Michael and Sandy Patterson had just concluded these details
of their busy life, when their dwelling came in sight,
at the extremity of the avenue of the oaks.

It was a charming house, built of wood and brick,
hidden in groves of emerophilis. Nothing at all, however,
belonging to a station was visible--neither sheds, nor stables,
nor cart-houses. All these out-buildings, a perfect village,
comprising more than twenty huts and houses, were about
a quarter of a mile off in the heart of a little valley.
Electric communication was established between this village
and the master's house, which, far removed from all noise,
seemed buried in a forest of exotic trees.

At Sandy Patterson's bidding, a sumptuous breakfast was served
in less than a quarter of an hour. The wines and viands were
of the finest quality; but what pleased the guests most of all
in the midst of these refinements of opulence, was the joy of
the young squatters in offering them this splendid hospitality.

It was not long before they were told the history of the expedition,
and had their liveliest interest awakened for its success.
They spoke hopefully to the young Grants, and Michael said:
"Harry Grant has evidently fallen into the hands of natives,
since he has not turned up at any of the settlements on the coast.
He knows his position exactly, as the document proves, and the reason
he did not reach some English colony is that he must have been
taken prisoner by the savages the moment he landed!"

"That is precisely what befell his quartermaster, Ayrton,"
said John Mangles.

"But you, gentlemen, then, have never heard the catastrophe
of the BRITANNIA, mentioned?" inquired Lady Helena.

"Never, Madam," replied Michael.

"And what treatment, in your opinion, has Captain Grant met
with among the natives?"

"The Australians are not cruel, Madam," replied the young squatter,
"and Miss Grant may be easy on that score. There have been many
instances of the gentleness of their nature, and some Europeans
have lived a long time among them without having the least cause
to complain of their brutality."

"King, among others, the sole survivor of the Burke expedition,"
put in Paganel.

"And not only that bold explorer," returned Sandy, "but also an
English soldier named Buckley, who deserted at Port Philip in 1803,
and who was welcomed by the natives, and lived thirty-three
years among them."

"And more recently," added Michael," one of the last numbers
of the AUSTRALASIA informs us that a certain Morrilli has just
been restored to his countrymen after sixteen years of slavery.

His story is exactly similar to the captain's, for it was at the very time of his shipwreck in the PRUVIENNE, in 1846, that he was made prisoner by the natives, and dragged away into the interior of the continent. I therefore think you have reason to hope still."

The young squatter's words caused great joy to his auditors. They completely corroborated the opinions of Paganel and Ayrton.

The conversation turned on the convicts after the ladies had left the table. The squatters had heard of the catastrophe at Camden Bridge, but felt no uneasiness about the escaped gang. It was not a station, with more than a hundred men on it, that they would dare to attack. Besides, they would never go into the deserts of the Murray, where they could find no booty, nor near the colonies of New South Wales, where the roads were too well watched. Ayrton had said this too.

Glenarvan could not refuse the request of his amiable hosts, to spend the whole day at the station. It was twelve hours' delay, but also twelve hours' rest, and both horses and bullocks would be the better for the comfortable quarters they would find there. This was accordingly agreed upon, and the young squatters sketched out a programme of the day's amusements, which was adopted eagerly.

At noon, seven vigorous hunters were before the door. An elegant brake was intended for the ladies, in which the coachman could exhibit his skill in driving four-in-hand. The cavalcade set off preceded by huntsmen, and armed with first-rate rifles, followed by a pack of pointers barking joyously as they bounded through the bushes. For four hours the hunting party wandered through the paths and avenues of the park, which was as large as a small German state. The Reuiss-Schleitz, or Saxe-Coburg Gotha, would have gone inside it comfortably. Few people were to be met in it certainly, but sheep in abundance. As for game, there was a complete preserve awaiting the hunters. The noisy reports of guns were soon heard on all sides. Little Robert did wonders in company with Major McNabbs. The daring boy, in spite of his sister's injunctions, was always in front, and the first to fire. But John Mangles promised to watch over him, and Mary felt less uneasy.

During this BATTUE they killed certain animals peculiar to the country, the very names of which were unknown to Paganel; among others the "wombat" and the "bandicoot." The wombat is an herbivorous animal, which burrows in the ground like a badger. It is as large as a sheep, and the flesh is excellent.

The bandicoot is a species of marsupial animal which could outwit the European fox, and give him lessons in pillaging poultry yards. It was a repulsive-looking animal, a foot and a half long, but, as Paganel chanced to kill it, of course he thought it charming.

"An adorable creature," he called it.

But the most interesting event of the day, by far, was the kangaroo hunt. About four o'clock, the dogs roused a troop of these curious marsupials. The little ones retreated precipitately into the maternal pouch, and all the troop decamped in file. Nothing could be more astonishing than the enormous bounds of the kangaroo. The hind legs of the animal are twice as long as the front ones, and unbend like a spring. At the head of the flying troop was a male five feet high,

a magnificent specimen of the _macropus giganteus_, an "old man," as the bushmen say.

For four or five miles the chase was vigorously pursued. The kangaroos showed no signs of weariness, and the dogs, who had reason enough to fear their strong paws and sharp nails, did not care to approach them. But at last, worn out with the race, the troop stopped, and the "old man" leaned against the trunk of a tree, ready to defend himself. One of the pointers, carried away by excitement, went up to him. Next minute the unfortunate beast leaped into the air, and fell down again completely ripped up.

The whole pack, indeed, would have had little chance with these powerful marsupia. They had to dispatch the fellow with rifles. Nothing but balls could bring down the gigantic animal.

Just at this moment, Robert was well nigh the victim of his own imprudence. To make sure of his aim, he had approached too near the kangaroo, and the animal leaped upon him immediately. Robert gave a loud cry and fell. Mary Grant saw it all from the brake, and in an agony of terror, speechless and almost unable even to see, stretched out her arms toward her little brother. No one dared to fire, for fear of wounding the child.

But John Mangles opened his hunting knife, and at the risk of being ripped up himself, sprang at the animal, and plunged it into his heart. The beast dropped forward, and Robert rose unhurt. Next minute he was in his sister's arms.

"Thank you, Mr. John, thank you!" she said, holding out her hand to the young captain.

"I had pledged myself for his safety," was all John said, taking her trembling fingers into his own.

This occurrence ended the sport. The band of marsupia had disappeared after the death of their leader. The hunting party returned home, bringing their game with them. It was then six o'clock. A magnificent dinner was ready. Among other things, there was one dish that was a great success. It was kangaroo-tail soup, prepared in the native manner.

Next morning very early, they took leave of the young squatters, with hearty thanks and a positive promise from them of a visit to Malcolm Castle when they should return to Europe.

Then the wagon began to move away, round the foot of Mount Hottam, and soon the hospitable dwelling disappeared from the sight of the travelers like some brief vision which had come and gone.

For five miles further, the horses were still treading the station lands. It was not till nine o'clock that they had passed the last fence, and entered the almost unknown districts of the province of Victoria.

CHAPTER XV SUSPICIOUS OCCURRENCES

AN immense barrier lay across the route to the southeast.
It was the Australian Alps, a vast fortification, the fantastic
curtain of which extended 1,500 miles, and pierced the clouds
at the height of 4,000 feet.

The cloudy sky only allowed the heat to reach the ground through
a close veil of mist. The temperature was just bearable,
but the road was toilsome from its uneven character.
The extumescences on the plain became more and more marked.
Several mounds planted with green young gum trees appeared
here and there. Further on these protuberances rising sharply,
formed the first steps of the great Alps. From this time their
course was a continual ascent, as was soon evident in the strain
it made on the bullocks to drag along the cumbrous wagon.
Their yoke creaked, they breathed heavily, and the muscles
of their houghs were stretched as if they would burst.
The planks of the vehicle groaned at the unexpected jolts,
which Ayrton with all his skill could not prevent.
The ladies bore their share of discomfort bravely.

John Mangles and his two sailors acted as scouts, and went about
a hundred steps in advance. They found out practical paths,
or passes, indeed they might be called, for these projections
of the ground were like so many rocks, between which the wagon
had to steer carefully. It required absolute navigation to find
a safe way over the billowy region.

It was a difficult and often perilous task. Many a time Wilson's
hatchet was obliged to open a passage through thick tangles of shrubs.
The damp argillaceous soil gave way under their feet. The route
was indefinitely prolonged owing to the insurmountable obstacles,
huge blocks of granite, deep ravines, suspected lagoons, which obliged
them to make a thousand detours. When night came they found they had
only gone over half a degree. They camped at the foot of the Alps,
on the banks of the creek of Cobongra, on the edge of a little plain,
covered with little shrubs four feet high, with bright red leaves
which gladdened the eye.

"We shall have hard work to get over," said Glenarvan,
looking at the chain of mountains, the outlines of which were
fast fading away in the deepening darkness. "The very name
Alps gives plenty of room for reflection."

"It is not quite so big as it sounds, my dear Glenarvan.
Don't suppose you have a whole Switzerland to traverse.
In Australia there are the Grampians, the Pyrenees, the Alps,
the Blue Mountains, as in Europe and America, but in miniature.
This simply implies either that the imagination of geographers
is not infinite, or that their vocabulary of proper names
is very poor."

"Then these Australian Alps," said Lord Glenarvan, "are--"

"Mere pocket mountains," put in Paganel; "we shall get over them
without knowing it."

"Speak for yourself," said the Major. "It would certainly take
a very absent man who could cross over a chain of mountains
and not know it."

"Absent! But I am not an absent man now. I appeal to the ladies. Since ever I set foot on the Australian continent, have I been once at fault? Can you reproach me with a single blunder?"

"Not one. Monsieur Paganel," said Mary Grant. "You are now the most perfect of men."

"Too perfect," added Lady Helena, laughing; "your blunders suited you admirably."

"Didn't they, Madam? If I have no faults now, I shall soon get like everybody else. I hope then I shall make some outrageous mistake before long, which will give you a good laugh. You see, unless I make mistakes, it seems to me I fail in my vocation."

Next day, the 9th of January, notwithstanding the assurances of the confident geographer, it was not without great difficulty that the little troop made its way through the Alpine pass. They were obliged to go at a venture, and enter the depths of narrow gorges without any certainty of an outlet. Ayrton would doubtless have found himself very much embarrassed if a little inn, a miserable public house, had not suddenly presented itself.

"My goodness!" cried Paganel, "the landlord of this inn won't make his fortune in a place like this. What is the use of it here?"

"To give us the information we want about the route," replied Glenarvan. "Let us go in."

Glenarvan, followed by Ayrton, entered the inn forthwith. The landlord of the "Bush Inn," as it was called, was a coarse man with an ill-tempered face, who must have considered himself his principal customer for the gin, brandy and whisky he had to sell. He seldom saw any one but the squatters and rovers. He answered all the questions put to him in a surly tone. But his replies sufficed to make the route clear to Ayrton, and that was all that was wanted. Glenarvan rewarded him with a handful of silver for his trouble, and was about to leave the tavern, when a placard against the wall arrested his attention.

It was a police notice, and announcing the escape of the convicts from Perth, and offering a reward for the capture of Ben Joyce of pounds 100 sterling.

"He's a fellow that's worth hanging, and no mistake," said Glenarvan to the quartermaster.

"And worth capturing still more. But what a sum to offer! He is not worth it!"

"I don't feel very sure of the innkeeper though, in spite of the notice," said Glenarvan.

"No more do I," replied Ayrton.

They went back to the wagon, toward the point where the route to Lucknow stopped. A narrow path wound away from this

which led across the chain in a slanting direction.
They had commenced the ascent.

It was hard work. More than once both the ladies and gentlemen had to get down and walk. They were obliged to help to push round the wheels of the heavy vehicle, and to support it frequently in dangerous declivities, to unhar-ness the bullocks when the team could not go well round sharp turnings, prop up the wagon when it threatened to roll back, and more than once Ayrton had to reinforce his bullocks by harnessing the horses, although they were tired out already with dragging themselves along.

Whether it was this prolonged fatigue, or from some other cause altogether, was not known, but one of the horses sank suddenly, without the slightest symptom of illness.
It was Mulrady's horse that fell, and on attempting to pull it up, the animal was found to be dead. Ayrton examined it immediately, but was quite at a loss to account for the disaster.

"The beast must have broken some blood vessels," said Glenarvan.

"Evidently," replied Ayrton.

"Take my horse, Mulrady," added Glenarvan. "I will join Lady Helena in the wagon."

Mulrady obeyed, and the little party continued their fatiguing ascent, leaving the carcass of the dead animal to the ravens.

The Australian Alps are of no great thickness, and the base is not more than eight miles wide. Consequently if the pass chosen by Ayrton came out on the eastern side, they might hope to get over the high barrier within forty-eight hours more.
The difficulty of the route would then be surmounted, and they would only have to get to the sea.

During the 18th the travelers reached the top-most point of the pass, about 2,000 feet high. They found themselves on an open plateau, with nothing to intercept the view. Toward the north the quiet waters of Lake Omco, all alive with aquatic birds, and beyond this lay the vast plains of the Murray. To the south were the wide spreading plains of Gippsland, with its abundant gold-fields and tall forests.
There nature was still mistress of the products and water, and great trees where the woodman's ax was as yet unknown, and the squatters, then five in number, could not struggle against her.
It seemed as if this chain of the Alps separated two different countries, one of which had retained its primitive wildness.
The sun went down, and a few solitary rays piercing the rosy clouds, lighted up the Murray district, leaving Gippsland in deep shadow, as if night had suddenly fallen on the whole region. The contrast was presented very vividly to the spectators placed between these two countries so divided, and some emotion filled the minds of the travelers, as they contemplated the almost unknown district they were about to traverse right to the frontiers of Victoria.

They camped on the plateau that night, and next day the descent commenced. It was tolerably rapid.
A hailstorm of extreme violence assailed the travelers, and obliged them to seek a shelter among the rocks.

It was not hail-stones, but regular lumps of ice,
as large as one's hand, which fell from the stormy clouds.
A waterspout could not have come down with more violence,
and sundry big bruises warned Paganel and Robert to retreat.
The wagon was riddled in several places, and few coverings
would have held out against those sharp icicles, some of
which had fastened themselves into the trunks of the trees.
It was impossible to go on till this tremendous shower was over,
unless the travelers wished to be stoned. It lasted about an hour,
and then the march commenced anew over slanting rocks still
slippery after the hail.

Toward evening the wagon, very much shaken and disjointed
in several parts, but still standing firm on its wooden disks,
came down the last slopes of the Alps, among great isolated pines.
The passage ended in the plains of Gippsland. The chain
of the Alps was safely passed, and the usual arrangements
were made for the nightly encampment.

On the 21st, at daybreak, the journey was resumed with an ardor which
never relaxed. Everyone was eager to reach the goal--that is to say
the Pacific Ocean--at that part where the wreck of the BRITANNIA
had occurred. Nothing could be done in the lonely wilds of Gippsland,
and Ayrton urged Lord Glenarvan to send orders at once for the DUNCAN
to repair to the coast, in order to have at hand all means of research.
He thought it would certainly be advisable to take advantage of
the Lucknow route to Melbourne. If they waited it would be difficult
to find any way of direct communication with the capital.

This advice seemed good, and Paganel recommended that they should act
upon it. He also thought that the presence of the yacht would be
very useful, and he added, that if the Lucknow road was once passed,
it would be impossible to communicate with Melbourne.

Glenarvan was undecided what to do, and perhaps he would have
yielded to Ayrton's arguments, if the Major had not combated this
decision vigorously. He maintained that the presence of Ayrton
was necessary to the expedition, that he would know the country
about the coast, and that if any chance should put them on the track
of Harry Grant, the quartermaster would be better able to follow
it up than any one else, and, finally, that he alone could point
out the exact spot where the shipwreck occurred.

McNabbs voted therefore for the continuation of the voyage,
without making the least change in their programme.
John Mangles was of the same opinion. The young captain
said even that orders would reach the DUNCAN more easily
from Twofold Bay, than if a message was sent two hundred miles
over a wild country.

His counsel prevailed. It was decided that they should wait till
they came to Twofold Bay. The Major watched Ayrton narrowly,
and noticed his disappointed look. But he said nothing,
keeping his observations, as usual, to himself.

The plains which lay at the foot of the Australian Alps were level,
but slightly inclined toward the east. Great clumps of mimosas
and eucalyptus, and various odorous gum-trees, broke the uniform
monotony here and there. The _gastrolobium grandiflorum_

covered the ground, with its bushes covered with gay flowers.
Several unimportant creeks, mere streams full of little rushes,
and half covered up with orchids, often interrupted the route.
They had to ford these. Flocks of bustards and emus fled
at the approach of the travelers. Below the shrubs,
kangaroos were leaping and springing like dancing jacks.
But the hunters of the party were not thinking much of the sport,
and the horses little needed any additional fatigue.

Moreover, a sultry heat oppressed the plain. The atmosphere
was completely saturated with electricity, and its influence
was felt by men and beasts. They just dragged themselves along,
and cared for nothing else. The silence was only interrupted
by the cries of Ayrton urging on his burdened team.

From noon to two o'clock they went through a curious forest of ferns,
which would have excited the admiration of less weary travelers.
These plants in full flower measured thirty feet in height.
Horses and riders passed easily beneath their drooping leaves,
and sometimes the spurs would clash against the woody stems.
Beneath these immovable parasols there was a refreshing coolness
which every one appreciated. Jacques Paganel, always demonstrative,
gave such deep sighs of satisfaction that the paroquets and cockatoos
flew out in alarm, making a deafening chorus of noisy chatter.

The geographer was going on with his sighs and jubilations with the
utmost coolness, when his companions suddenly saw him reel forward,
and he and his horse fell down in a lump. Was it giddiness,
or worse still, suffocation, caused by the high temperature?
They ran to him, exclaiming: "Paganel! Paganel! what is the matter?"

"Just this. I have no horse, now!" he replied, disengaging his feet
from the stirrups.

"What! your horse?"

"Dead like Mulrady's, as if a thunderbolt had struck him."

Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Wilson examined the animal; and found
Paganel was right. His horse had been suddenly struck dead.

"That is strange," said John.

"Very strange, truly," muttered the Major.

Glenarvan was greatly disturbed by this fresh accident.
He could not get a fresh horse in the desert, and if an epidemic
was going to seize their steeds, they would be seriously
embarrassed how to proceed.

Before the close of the day, it seemed as if the word epidemic was
really going to be justified. A third horse, Wilson's, fell dead,
and what was, perhaps equally disastrous, one of the bullocks also.
The means of traction and transport were now reduced to three bullocks
and four horses.

The situation became grave. The unmounted horsemen
might walk, of course, as many squatters had done already;
but if they abandoned the wagon, what would the ladies do?

Could they go over the one hundred and twenty miles which lay between them and Twofold Bay? John Mangles and Lord Glenarvan examined the surviving horses with great uneasiness, but there was not the slightest symptom of illness or feebleness in them. The animals were in perfect health, and bravely bearing the fatigues of the voyage. This somewhat reassured Glenarvan, and made him hope the malady would strike no more victims. Ayrton agreed with him, but was unable to find the least solution of the mystery.

They went on again, the wagon serving, from time to time, as a house of rest for the pedestrians. In the evening, after a march of only ten miles, the signal to halt was given, and the tent pitched. The night passed without inconvenience beneath a vast mass of bushy ferns, under which enormous bats, properly called flying foxes, were flapping about.

The next day's journey was good; there were no new calamities. The health of the expedition remained satisfactory; horses and cattle did their task cheerily. Lady Helena's drawing-room was very lively, thanks to the number of visitors. M. Olbinett busied himself in passing round refreshments which were very acceptable in such hot weather. Half a barrel of Scotch ale was sent in bodily. Barclay and Co. was declared to be the greatest man in Great Britain, even above Wellington, who could never have manufactured such good beer. This was a Scotch estimate. Jacques Paganel drank largely, and discoursed still more _de omni re scibili_.

A day so well commenced seemed as if it could not but end well; they had gone fifteen good miles, and managed to get over a pretty hilly district where the soil was reddish. There was every reason to hope they might camp that same night on the banks of the Snowy River, an important river which throws itself into the Pacific, south of Victoria.

Already the wheels of the wagon were making deep ruts on the wide plains, covered with blackish alluvium, as it passed on between tufts of luxuriant grass and fresh fields of gastrolobium. As evening came on, a white mist on the horizon marked the course of the Snowy River. Several additional miles were got over, and a forest of tall trees came in sight at a bend of the road, behind a gentle eminence. Ayrton turned his team a little toward the great trunks, lost in shadow, and he had got to the skirts of the wood, about half-a-mile from the river, when the wagon suddenly sank up to the middle of the wheels.

"Stop!" he called out to the horsemen following him.

"What is wrong?" inquired Glenarvan.

"We have stuck in the mud," replied Ayrton.

He tried to stimulate the bullocks to a fresh effort by voice and goad, but the animals were buried half-way up their legs, and could not stir.

"Let us camp here," suggested John Mangles.

"It would certainly be the best place," said Ayrton. "We shall

see by daylight to-morrow how to get ourselves out."

Glenarvan acted on their advice, and came to a halt.
Night came on rapidly after a brief twilight, but the heat did
not withdraw with the light. Stifling vapors filled the air,
and occasionally bright flashes of lightning, the reflections
of a distant storm, lighted up the sky with a fiery glare.
Arrangements were made for the night immediately.
They did the best they could with the sunk wagon, and the tent
was pitched beneath the shelter of the great trees; and if the rain
did not come, they had not much to complain about.

Ayrton succeeded, though with some difficulty, in extricating
the three bullocks. These courageous beasts were engulfed up to
their flanks. The quartermaster turned them out with the four horses,
and allowed no one but himself to see after their pasturage.
He always executed his task wisely, and this evening Glenarvan noticed
he redoubled his care, for which he took occasion to thank him,
the preservation of the team being of supreme importance.

Meantime, the travelers were dispatching a hasty supper.
Fatigue and heat destroy appetite, and sleep was needed more than food.
Lady Helena and Miss Grant speedily bade the company good-night,
and retired. Their companions soon stretched themselves under
the tent or outside under the trees, which is no great hardship
in this salubrious climate.

Gradually they all fell into a heavy sleep. The darkness deepened
owing to a thick current of clouds which overspread the sky.
There was not a breath of wind. The silence of night was only
interrupted by the cries of the "morepork" in the minor key,
like the mournful cuckoos of Europe.

Towards eleven o'clock, after a wretched, heavy, unre-freshing sleep,
the Major woke. His half-closed eyes were struck with a faint
light running among the great trees. It looked like a white sheet,
and glittered like a lake, and McNabbs thought at first it was
the commencement of a fire.

He started up, and went toward the wood; but what was
his surprise to perceive a purely natural phenomenon!
Before him lay an immense bed of mushrooms, which emitted
a phosphorescent light. The luminous spores of the cryptograms
shone in the darkness with intensity.

The Major, who had no selfishness about him, was going
to waken Paganel, that he might see this phenomenon with
his own eyes, when something occurred which arrested him.
This phosphorescent light illumined the distance half a mile,
and McNabbs fancied he saw a shadow pass across the edge of it.
Were his eyes deceiving him? Was it some hallucination?

McNabbs lay down on the ground, and, after a close scrutiny,
he could distinctly see several men stooping down and lifting
themselves up alternately, as if they were looking on the ground
for recent marks.

The Major resolved to find out what these fellows were about,
and without the least hesitation or so much as arousing his companions,

crept along, lying flat on the ground, like a savage on the prairies, completely hidden among the long grass.

CHAPTER XVI A STARTLING DISCOVERY

IT was a frightful night. At two A. M. the rain began to fall in torrents from the stormy clouds, and continued till daybreak. The tent became an insufficient shelter. Glenarvan and his companions took refuge in the wagon; they did not sleep, but talked of one thing and another. The Major alone, whose brief absence had not been noticed, contented himself with being a silent listener. There was reason to fear that if the storm lasted longer the Snowy River would overflow its banks, which would be a very unlucky thing for the wagon, stuck fast as it was already in the soft ground. Mulrady, Ayrton and Mangles went several times to ascertain the height of the water, and came back dripping from head to foot.

At last day appeared; the rain ceased, but sunlight could not break through the thick clouds. Large patches of yellowish water--muddy, dirty ponds indeed they were--covered the ground. A hot steam rose from the soaking earth, and saturated the atmosphere with unhealthy humidity.

Glenarvan's first concern was the wagon; this was the main thing in his eyes. They examined the ponderous vehicle, and found it sunk in the mud in a deep hollow in the stiff clay. The forepart had disappeared completely, and the hind part up to the axle. It would be a hard job to get the heavy conveyance out, and would need the united strength of men, bullocks, and horses.

"At any rate, we must make haste," said John Mangles. "If the clay dries, it will make our task still more difficult."

"Let us be quick, then," replied Ayrton.

Glenarvan, his two sailors, John Mangles, and Ayrton went off at once into the wood, where the animals had passed the night. It was a gloomy-looking forest of tall gum-trees; nothing but dead trees, with wide spaces between, which had been barked for ages, or rather skinned like the cork-oak at harvest time. A miserable network of bare branches was seen above two hundred feet high in the air. Not a bird built its nest in these aerial skeletons; not a leaf trembled on the dry branches, which rattled together like bones. To what cataclysm is this phenomenon to be attributed, so frequent in Australia, entire forests struck dead by some epidemic; no one knows; neither the oldest natives, nor their ancestors who have lain long buried in the groves of the dead, have ever seen them green.

Glenarvan as he went along kept his eye fixed on the gray sky, on which the smallest branch of the gum-trees was sharply defined. Ayrton was astonished not to discover the horses and bullocks where he had left them the preceding night. They could not have wandered far with the hobbles on their legs.

They looked over the wood, but saw no signs of them, and Ayrton returned to the banks of the river, where magnificent mimosas were growing.

He gave a cry well known to his team, but there was no reply.
The quartermaster seemed uneasy, and his companions looked at him
with disappointed faces. An hour had passed in vain endeavors,
and Glenarvan was about to go back to the wagon, when a neigh struck
on his ear, and immediately after a bellow.

"They are there!" cried John Mangles, slipping between the tall branches
of gastrolobium, which grew high enough to hide a whole flock.
Glenarvan, Mulrady, and Ayrton darted after him, and speedily shared
his stupefaction at the spectacle which met their gaze.

Two bullocks and three horses lay stretched on the ground,
struck down like the rest. Their bodies were already cold,
and a flock of half-starved looking ravens croaking
among the mimosas were watching the unexpected prey.
Glenarvan and his party gazed at each other and Wilson could
not keep back the oath that rose to his lips.

"What do you mean, Wilson?" said Glenarvan, with difficulty
controlling himself. "Ayrton, bring away the bullock and the horse
we have left; they will have to serve us now."

"If the wagon were not sunk in the mud," said John Mangles,
"these two animals, by making short journeys, would be able
to take us to the coast; so we must get the vehicle out,
cost what it may."

"We will try, John," replied Glenarvan. "Let us go back now,
or they will be uneasy at our long absence."

Ayrton removed the hobbles from the bullock and Mulrady from the horse,
and they began to return to the encampment, following the winding margin
of the river. In half an hour they rejoined Paganel, and McNabbs,
and the ladies, and told them of this fresh disaster.

"Upon my honor, Ayrton," the Major could not help saying,
"it is a pity that you hadn't had the shoeing of all our beasts
when we forded the Wimerra."

"Why, sir?" asked Ayrton.

"Because out of all our horses only the one your blacksmith
had in his hands has escaped the common fate."

"That's true," said John Mangles. "It's strange it happens so."

"A mere chance, and nothing more," replied the quartermaster,
looking firmly at the Major.

Major McNabbs bit his lips as if to keep back something

V. IV Verne he was about to say. Glenarvan and the rest waited
for him to speak out his thoughts, but the Major was silent,
and went up to the wagon, which Ayrton was examining.

"What was he going to say. Mangles?" asked Glenarvan.

"I don't know," replied the young captain; "but the Major is not at
all a man to speak without reason."

"No, John," said Lady Helena. "McNabbs must have suspicions about Ayrton."

"Suspicions!" exclaimed Paganel, shrugging his shoulders.

"And what can they be?" asked Glenarvan. "Does he suppose him capable of having killed our horses and bullocks? And for what purpose? Is not Ayrton's interest identical with our own?"

"You are right, dear Edward," said Lady Helena! "and what is more, the quartermaster has given us incontestable proofs of his devotion ever since the commencement of the journey."

"Certainly he has," replied Mangles; "but still, what could the Major mean? I wish he would speak his mind plainly out."

"Does he suppose him acting in concert with the convicts?" asked Paganel, imprudently.

"What convicts?" said Miss Grant.

"Monsieur Paganel is making a mistake," replied John Mangles, instantly. "He knows very well there are no convicts in the province of Victoria."

"Ah, that is true," returned Paganel, trying to get out of his unlucky speech. "Whatever had I got in my head? Convicts! who ever heard of convicts being in Australia? Besides, they would scarcely have disembarked before they would turn into good, honest men. The climate, you know, Miss Mary, the regenerative climate--"

Here the poor SAVANT stuck fast, unable to get further, like the wagon in the mud. Lady Helena looked at him in surprise, which quite deprived him of his remaining _sang-froid;_ but seeing his embarrassment, she took Mary away to the side of the tent, where M. Olbinett was laying out an elaborate breakfast.

"I deserve to be transported myself," said Paganel, woefully.

"I think so," said Glenarvan.

And after this grave reply, which completely overwhelmed the worthy geographer, Glenarvan and John Mangles went toward the wagon.

They found Ayrton and the two sailors doing their best to get it out of the deep ruts, and the bullock and horse, yoked together, were straining every muscle. Wilson and Mulrady were pushing the wheels, and the quartermaster urging on the team with voice and goad; but the heavy vehicle did not stir, the clay, already dry, held it as firmly as if sealed by some hydraulic cement.

John Mangles had the clay watered to loosen it, but it was of no use. After renewed vigorous efforts, men and animals stopped. Unless the vehicle was taken to pieces, it would be impossible to extricate it from the mud; but they had no tools for the purpose, and could not attempt such a task.

However, Ayrton, who was for conquering this obstacle at all costs,

was about to commence afresh, when Glenarvan stopped him by saying:
"Enough, Ayrton, enough. We must husband the strength of our remaining horse and bullock. If we are obliged to continue our journey on foot, the one animal can carry the ladies and the other the provisions. They may thus still be of great service to us."

"Very well, my Lord," replied the quartermaster, un-yoking the exhausted beasts.

"Now, friends," added Glenarvan, "let us return to the encampment and deliberately examine our situation, and determine on our course of action."

After a tolerably good breakfast to make up for their bad night, the discussion was opened, and every one of the party was asked to give his opinion. The first point was to ascertain their exact position, and this was referred to Paganel, who informed them, with his customary rigorous accuracy, that the expedition had been stopped on the 37th parallel, in longitude 147 degrees 53 minutes, on the banks of the Snowy River.

"What is the exact longitude of Twofold Bay?" asked Glenarvan.

"One hundred and fifty degrees," replied Paganel; "two degrees seven minutes distant from this, and that is equal to seventy-five miles."

"And Melbourne is?"

"Two hundred miles off at least."

"Very good. Our position being then settled, what is best to do?"

The response was unanimous to get to the coast without delay. Lady Helena and Mary Grant undertook to go five miles a day. The courageous ladies did not shrink, if necessary, from walking the whole distance between the Snowy River and Twofold Bay.

"You are a brave traveling companion, dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan. "But are we sure of finding at the bay all we want when we get there?"

"Without the least doubt," replied Paganel. "Eden is a municipality which already numbers many years in existence; its port must have frequent communication with Melbourne. I suppose even at Delegete, on the Victoria frontier, thirty-five miles from here, we might revictual our expedition, and find fresh means of transport."

"And the DUNCAN?" asked Ayrton. "Don't you think it advisable to send for her to come to the bay?"

"What do you think, John?" said Glenarvan.

"I don't think your lordship should be in any hurry about it," replied the young captain, after brief reflection. "There will be time enough to give orders to Tom Austin, and summon him to the coast."

"That's quite certain," added Paganel.

"You see," said John, "in four or five days we shall reach Eden."

"Four or five days!" repeated Ayrton, shaking his head;
"say fifteen or twenty, Captain, if you don't want to repent
your mistake when it is too late."

"Fifteen or twenty days to go seventy-five miles?" cried Glenarvan.

"At the least, my Lord. You are going to traverse the most difficult
portion of Victoria, a desert, where everything is wanting,
the squatters say; plains covered with scrub, where is no beaten
track and no stations. You will have to walk hatchet or torch
in hand, and, believe me, that's not quick work."

Ayrton had spoken in a firm tone, and Paganel, at whom all the others
looked inquiringly, nodded his head in token of his agreement in opinion
with the quartermaster.

But John Mangles said, "Well, admitting these difficulties, in fifteen
days at most your Lordship can send orders to the DUNCAN."

"I have to add," said Ayrton, "that the principal difficulties are
not the obstacles in the road, but the Snowy River has to be crossed,
and most probably we must wait till the water goes down."

"Wait!" cried John. "Is there no ford?"

"I think not," replied Ayrton. "This morning I was looking
for some practical crossing, but could not find any.
It is unusual to meet with such a tumultuous river at this time
of the year, and it is a fatality against which I am powerless."

"Is this Snowy River wide?" asked Lady Helena.

"Wide and deep, Madam," replied Ayrton; "a mile wide,
with an impetuous current. A good swimmer could not go
over without danger."

"Let us build a boat then," said Robert, who never stuck at anything.
"We have only to cut down a tree and hollow it out, and get
in and be off."

"He's going ahead, this boy of Captain Grant's!" said Paganel.

"And he's right," returned John Mangles. "We shall be forced
to come to that, and I think it is useless to waste our time
in idle discussion."

"What do you think of it, Ayrton?" asked Glenarvan seriously.

"I think, my Lord, that a month hence, unless some help arrives,
we shall find ourselves still on the banks of the Snowy."

"Well, then, have you any better plan to propose?"
said John Mangles, somewhat impatiently.

"Yes, that the DUNCAN should leave Melbourne, and go to the east coast."

"Oh, always the same story! And how could her presence at the bay

facilitate our means of getting there?"

Ayrton waited an instant before answering, and then said, rather evasively: "I have no wish to obtrude my opinions. What I do is for our common good, and I am ready to start the moment his honor gives the signal." And he crossed his arms and was silent.

"That is no reply, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "Tell us your plan, and we will discuss it. What is it you propose?"

Ayrton replied in a calm tone of assurance: "I propose that we should not venture beyond the Snowy in our present condition. It is here we must wait till help comes, and this help can only come from the DUNCAN. Let us camp here, where we have provisions, and let one of us take your orders to Tom Austin to go on to Twofold Bay."

This unexpected proposition was greeted with astonishment, and by John Mangles with openly-expressed opposition.

"Meantime," continued Ayrton, "either the river will get lower, and allow us to ford it, or we shall have time to make a canoe. This is the plan I submit for your Lordship's approval."

"Well, Ayrton," replied Glenarvan, "your plan is worthy of serious consideration. The worst thing about it is the delay it would cause; but it would save us great fatigue, and perhaps danger. What do you think of it, friends?"

"Speak your mind, McNabbs," said Lady Helena. "Since the beginning of the discussion you have been only a listener, and very sparing of your words."

"Since you ask my advice," said the Major, "I will give it you frankly. I think Ayrton has spoken wisely and well, and I side with him."

Such a reply was hardly looked for, as hitherto the Major had been strongly opposed to Ayrton's project. Ayrton himself was surprised, and gave a hasty glance at the Major. However, Paganel, Lady Helena, and the sailors were all of the same way of thinking; and since McNabbs had come over to his opinion, Glenarvan decided that the quartermaster's plan should be adopted in principle.

"And now, John," he added, "don't you think yourself it would be prudent to encamp here, on the banks of the river Snowy, till we can get some means of conveyance."

"Yes," replied John Mangles, "if our messenger can get across the Snowy when we cannot."

All eyes were turned on the quartermaster, who said, with the air of a man who knew what he was about: "The messenger will not cross the river."

"Indeed!" said John Mangles.

"He will simply go back to the Lucknow Road which leads straight to Melbourne."

"Go two hundred and fifty miles on foot!" cried the young Captain.

"On horseback," replied Ayrton. "There is one horse sound enough at present. It will only be an affair of four days. Allow the DUNCAN two days more to get to the bay and twenty hours to get back to the camp, and in a week the messenger can be back with the entire crew of the vessel."

The Major nodded approvingly as Ayrton spoke, to the profound astonishment of John Mangles; but as every one was in favor of the plan all there was to do was to carry it out as quickly as possible.

"Now, then, friends," said Glenarvan, "we must settle who is to be our messenger. It will be a fatiguing, perilous mission. I would not conceal the fact from you. Who is disposed, then, to sacrifice himself for his companions and carry our instructions to Melbourne?"

Wilson and Mulrady, and also Paganel, John Mangles and Robert instantly offered their services. John particularly insisted that he should be intrusted with the business; but Ayrton, who had been silent till that moment, now said: "With your Honor's permission I will go myself. I am accustomed to all the country round. Many a time I have been across worse parts. I can go through where another would stick. I ask then, for the good of all, that I may be sent to Melbourne. A word from you will accredit me with your chief officer, and in six days I guarantee the DUNCAN shall be in Twofold Bay."

"That's well spoken," replied Glenarvan. "You are a clever, daring fellow, and you will succeed."

It was quite evident the quartermaster was the fittest man for the mission. All the rest withdrew from the competition. John Mangles made this one last objection, that the presence of Ayrton was necessary to discover traces of the BRITANNIA or Harry Grant. But the Major justly observed that the expedition would remain on the banks of the Snowy till the return of Ayrton, that they had no idea of resuming their search without him, and that consequently his absence would not in the least prejudice the Captain's interests.

"Well, go, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "Be as quick as you can, and come back by Eden to our camp."

A gleam of satisfaction shot across the quartermaster's face. He turned away his head, but not before John Mangles caught the look and instinctively felt his old distrust of Ayrton revive.

The quartermaster made immediate preparations for departure, assisted by the two sailors, one of whom saw to the horse and the other to the provisions. Glenarvan, meantime, wrote his letter for Tom Austin. He ordered his chief officer to repair without delay to Twofold Bay. He introduced the quartermaster to him as a man worthy of all confidence. On arriving at the coast, Tom was to dispatch a detachment of sailors from the yacht under his orders.

Glenarvan was just at this part of his letter, when McNabbs,

who was following him with his eyes, asked him in a singular tone,
how he wrote Ayrton's name.

"Why, as it is pronounced, of course," replied Glenarvan.

"It is a mistake," replied the Major quietly. "He pronounces it AYRTON,
but he writes it _Ben Joyce!_"

CHAPTER XVII THE PLOT UNVEILED

THE revelation of Tom Ayrton's name was like a clap of thunder.
Ayrton had started up quickly and grasped his revolver.
A report was heard, and Glenarvan fell wounded by a ball.
Gunshots resounded at the same time outside.

John Mangles and the sailors, after their first surprise,
would have seized Ben Joyce; but the bold convict had already
disappeared and rejoined his gang scattered among the gum-trees.

The tent was no shelter against the balls. It was necessary to beat
a retreat. Glenarvan was slightly wounded, but could stand up.

"To the wagon--to the wagon!" cried John Mangles, dragging Lady Helena
and Mary Grant along, who were soon in safety behind the thick curtains.

John and the Major, and Paganel and the sailors seized
their carbines in readiness to repulse the convicts.
Glenarvan and Robert went in beside the ladies, while Olbinett
rushed to the common defense.

These events occurred with the rapidity of lightning.
John Mangles watched the skirts of the wood attentively.
The reports had ceased suddenly on the arrival of Ben Joyce;
profound silence had succeeded the noisy fusillade.
A few wreaths of white smoke were still curling over the tops
of the gum trees. The tall tufts of gastrolobium were motionless.
All signs of attack had disappeared.

The Major and John Mangles examined the wood closely as far as
the great trees; the place was abandoned. Numerous footmarks were
there and several half-burned caps were lying smoking on the ground.
The Major, like a prudent man, extinguished these carefully,
for a spark would be enough to kindle a tremendous conflagration
in this forest of dry trees.

"The convicts have disappeared!" said John Mangles.

"Yes," replied the Major; "and the disappearance of them
makes me uneasy. I prefer seeing them face to face.
Better to meet a tiger on the plain than a serpent in the grass.
Let us beat the bushes all round the wagon."

The Major and John hunted all round the country, but there was not a
convict to be seen from the edge of the wood right down to the river.
Ben Joyce and his gang seemed to have flown away like a flock of
marauding birds. It was too sudden a disappearance to let the travelers
feel perfectly safe; consequently they resolved to keep a sharp lookout.

The wagon, a regular fortress buried in mud, was made the center of the camp, and two men mounted guard round it, who were relieved hour by hour.

The first care of Lady Helena and Mary was to dress Glenarvan's wound. Lady Helena rushed toward him in terror, as he fell down struck by Ben Joyce's ball. Controlling her agony, the courageous woman helped her husband into the wagon. Then his shoulder was bared, and the Major found, on examination, that the ball had only gone into the flesh, and there was no internal lesion. Neither bone nor muscle appeared to be injured. The wound bled profusely, but Glenarvan could use his fingers and forearm; and consequently there was no occasion for any uneasiness about the issue. As soon as his shoulder was dressed, he would not allow any more fuss to be made about himself, but at once entered on the business in hand.

All the party, except Mulrady and Wilson, who were on guard, were brought into the wagon, and the Major was asked to explain how this DENOUEMENT had come about.

Before commencing his recital, he told Lady Helena about the escape of the convicts at Perth, and their appearance in Victoria; as also their complicity in the railway catastrophe. He handed her the _Australian and New Zealand Gazette_ they had bought in Seymour, and added that a reward had been offered by the police for the apprehension of Ben Joyce, a redoubtable bandit, who had become a noted character during the last eighteen months, for doing deeds of villainy and crime.

But how had McNabbs found out that Ayrton and Ben Joyce were one and the same individual? This was the mystery to be unraveled, and the Major soon explained it.

Ever since their first meeting, McNabbs had felt an instinctive distrust of the quartermaster. Two or three insignificant facts, a hasty glance exchanged between him and the blacksmith at the Wimerra River, his unwillingness to cross towns and villages, his persistence about getting the DUNCAN summoned to the coast, the strange death of the animals entrusted to his care, and, lastly, a want of frankness in all his behavior--all these details combined had awakened the Major's suspicions.

However, he could not have brought any direct accusation against him till the events of the preceding evening had occurred. He then told of his experience.

McNabbs, slipping between the tall shrubs, got within reach of the suspicious shadows he had noticed about half a mile away from the encampment. The phosphorescent furze emitted a faint light, by which he could discern three men examining marks on the ground, and one of the three was the blacksmith of Black Point.

"'It is them!' said one of the men. 'Yes,' replied another, 'there is the trefoil on the mark of the horseshoe. It has been like that since the Wimerra.' 'All the horses are dead.' 'The poison is not far off.' 'There is enough to kill a regiment of cavalry.' 'A useful plant this gastrolobium.'

"I heard them say this to each other, and then they
were quite silent; but I did not know enough yet,
so I followed them. Soon the conversation began again.
'He is a clever fellow, this Ben Joyce,' said the blacksmith.
'A capital quartermaster, with his invention of shipwreck.'
'If his project succeeds, it will be a stroke of fortune.'
'He is a very devil, is this Ayrton.' 'Call him Ben Joyce,
for he has well earned his name.' And then the scoundrels
left the forest.

"I had all the information I wanted now, and came back to the camp
quite convinced, begging Paganel's pardon, that Australia does
not reform criminals."

This was all the Major's story, and his companions sat silently
thinking over it.

"Then Ayrton has dragged us here," said Glenarvan, pale with anger,
"on purpose to rob and assassinate us."

"For nothing else," replied the Major; "and ever since we left
the Wimerra, his gang has been on our track and spying on us,
waiting for a favorable opportunity."

"Yes."

"Then the wretch was never one of the sailors on the BRITANNIA;
he had stolen the name of Ayrton and the shipping papers."

They were all looking at McNabbs for an answer, for he must have put
the question to himself already.

"There is no great certainty about the matter," he replied,
in his usual calm voice; "but in my opinion the man's name
is really Ayrton. Ben Joyce is his _nom de guerre_.
It is an incontestible fact that he knew Harry Grant, and also that
he was quartermaster on the BRITANNIA. These facts were proved
by the minute details given us by Ayrton, and are corroborated
by the conversation between the convicts, which I repeated to you.
We need not lose ourselves in vain conjectures, but consider it
as certain that Ben Joyce is Ayrton, and that Ayrton is Ben Joyce;
that is to say, one of the crew of the BRITANNIA has turned
leader of the convict gang."

The explanations of McNabbs were accepted without discussion.

"Now, then," said Glenarvan, "will you tell us how and why
Harry Grant's quartermaster comes to be in Australia?"

"How, I don't know," replied McNabbs; "and the police declare they are
as ignorant on the subject as myself. Why, it is impossible to say;
that is a mystery which the future may explain."

"The police are not even aware of Ayrton's identity with Ben Joyce,"
said John Mangles.

"You are right, John," replied the Major, "and this circumstance
would throw light on their search."

"Then, I suppose," said Lady Helena, "the wicked wretch had got work on Paddy O'Moore's farm with a criminal intent?"

"There is not the least doubt of it. He was planning some evil design against the Irishman, when a better chance presented itself. Chance led us into his presence. He heard Paganel's story and all about the shipwreck, and the audacious fellow determined to act his part immediately. The expedition was decided on. At the Wimerra he found means of communicating with one of his gang, the blacksmith of Black Point, and left traces of our journey which might be easily recognized. The gang followed us. A poisonous plant enabled them gradually to kill our bullocks and horses. At the right moment he sunk us in the marshes of the Snowy, and gave us into the hands of his gang."

Such was the history of Ben Joyce. The Major had shown him up in his character--a bold and formidable criminal. His manifestly evil designs called for the utmost vigilance on the part of Glenarvan. Happily the unmasked bandit was less to be feared than the traitor.

But one serious consequence must come out of this revelation; no one had thought of it yet except Mary Grant. John Mangles was the first to notice her pale, despairing face; he understood what was passing in her mind at a glance.

"Miss Mary! Miss Mary!" he cried; "you are crying!"

"Crying, my child!" said Lady Helena.

"My father, madam, my father!" replied the poor girl.

She could say no more, but the truth flashed on every mind. They all knew the cause of her grief, and why tears fell from her eyes and her father's name came to her lips.

The discovery of Ayrton's treachery had destroyed all hope; the convict had invented a shipwreck to entrap Glenarvan. In the conversation overheard by McNabbs, the convicts had plainly said that the BRITANNIA had never been wrecked on the rocks in Twofold Bay. Harry Grant had never set foot on the Australian continent!

A second time they had been sent on the wrong track by an erroneous interpretation of the document. Gloomy silence fell on the whole party at the sight of the children's sorrow, and no one could find a cheering word to say. Robert was crying in his sister's arms. Paganel muttered in a tone of vexation: "That unlucky document! It may boast of having half-crazed a dozen peoples' wits!" The worthy geographer was in such a rage with himself, that he struck his forehead as if he would smash it in.

Glenarvan went out to Mulrady and Wilson, who were keeping watch. Profound silence reigned over the plain between the wood and the river. Ben Joyce and his band must be at considerable distance, for the atmosphere was in such a state of complete torpor that the slightest sound would have been heard. It was evident, from the flocks of birds on the lower branches of the trees, and the kangaroos feeding quietly on the young shoots, and a couple of emus whose confiding heads passed between the great clumps of bushes,

that those peaceful solitudes were untroubled by the presence of human beings.

"You have neither seen nor heard anything for the last hour?" said Glenarvan to the two sailors.

"Nothing whatever, your honor," replied Wilson. "The convicts must be miles away from here."

"They were not in numbers enough to attack us, I suppose," added Mulrady. "Ben Joyce will have gone to recruit his party, with some bandits like himself, among the bush-rangers who may be lurking about the foot of the Alps."

"That is probably the case, Mulrady," replied Glenarvan. "The rascals are cowards; they know we are armed, and well armed too. Perhaps they are waiting for nightfall to commence the attack. We must redouble our watchfulness. Oh, if we could only get out of this bog, and down the coast; but this swollen river bars our passage. I would pay its weight in gold for a raft which would carry us over to the other side."

"Why does not your honor give orders for a raft to be constructed? We have plenty of wood."

"No, Wilson," replied Glenarvan; "this Snowy is not a river, it is an impassable torrent."

John Mangles, the Major, and Paganel just then came out of the wagon on purpose to examine the state of the river. They found it still so swollen by the heavy rain that the water was a foot above the level. It formed an impetuous current, like the American rapids. To venture over that foaming current and that rushing flood, broken into a thousand eddies and hollows and gulfs, was impossible.

John Mangles declared the passage impracticable. "But we must not stay here," he added, "without attempting anything. What we were going to do before Ayrton's treachery is still more necessary now."

"What do you mean, John?" asked Glenarvan.

"I mean that our need is urgent, and that since we cannot go to Twofold Bay, we must go to Melbourne. We have still one horse. Give it to me, my Lord, and I will go to Melbourne."

"But that will be a dangerous venture, John," said Glenarvan. "Not to speak of the perils of a journey of two hundred miles over an unknown country, the road and the by-ways will be guarded by the accomplices of Ben Joyce."

"I know it, my Lord, but I know also that things can't stay long as they are; Ayrton only asked a week's absence to fetch the crew of the DUNCAN, and I will be back to the Snowy River in six days. Well, my Lord, what are your commands?"

"Before Glenarvan decides," said Paganel, "I must make an observation. That some one must go to Melbourne is evident, but that John Mangles should be the one to expose himself to the risk, cannot be.

He is the captain of the DUNCAN, and must be careful of his life.
I will go instead."

"That is all very well, Paganel," said the Major; "but why should you
be the one to go?"

"Are we not here?" said Mulrady and Wilson.

"And do you think," replied McNabbs, "that a journey of two hundred
miles on horseback frightens me."

"Friends," said Glenarvan, "one of us must go, so let it be decided
by drawing lots. Write all our names, Paganel."

"Not yours, my Lord," said John Mangles.

"And why not?"

"What! separate you from Lady Helena, and before your wound
is healed, too!"

"Glenarvan," said Paganel, "you cannot leave the expedition."

"No," added the Major. "Your place is here, Edward, you ought
not to go."

"Danger is involved in it," said Glenarvan, "and I will take my share
along with the rest. Write the names, Paganel, and put mine among them,
and I hope the lot may fall on me."

His will was obeyed. The names were written, and the lots drawn.
Fate fixed on Mulrady. The brave sailor shouted hurrah! and said:
"My Lord, I am ready to start." Glenarvan pressed his hand, and then
went back to the wagon, leaving John Mangles and the Major on watch.

Lady Helena was informed of the determination to send a message
to Melbourne, and that they had drawn lots who should go,
and Mulrady had been chosen. Lady Helena said a few kind
words to the brave sailor, which went straight to his heart.
Fate could hardly have chosen a better man, for he was not only
brave and intelligent, but robust and superior to all fatigue.

Mulrady's departure was fixed for eight o'clock, immediately after
the short twilight. Wilson undertook to get the horse ready.
He had a project in his head of changing the horse's left shoe,
for one off the horses that had died in the night. This would
prevent the convicts from tracking Mulrady, or following him,
as they were not mounted.

While Wilson was arranging this, Glenarvan got his letter ready
for Tom Austin, but his wounded arm troubled him, and he asked
Paganel to write it for him. The SAVANT was so absorbed in one
fixed idea that he seemed hardly to know what he was about.
In all this succession of vexations, it must be said
the document was always uppermost in Paganel's mind.
He was always worrying himself about each word, trying to discover
some new meaning, and losing the wrong interpretation of it,
and going over and over himself in perplexities.

He did not hear Glenarvan when he first spoke, but on the request being made a second time, he said: "Ah, very well. I'm ready."

While he spoke he was mechanically getting paper from his note-book. He tore a blank page off, and sat down pencil in hand to write.

Glenarvan began to dictate as follows: "Order to Tom Austin, Chief Officer, to get to sea without delay, and bring the DUNCAN to--"

Paganel was just finishing the last word, when his eye chanced to fall on the _Australian and New Zealand Gazette_ lying on the ground. The paper was so folded that only the last two syllables of the title were visible. Paganel's pencil stopped, and he seemed to become oblivious of Glenarvan and the letter entirely, till his friends called out: "Come, Paganel!"

"Ah!" said the geographer, with a loud exclamation.

"What is the matter?" asked the Major.

"Nothing, nothing," replied Paganel. Then he muttered to himself, "_Aland! aland! aland!_"

He had got up and seized the newspaper. He shook it in his efforts to keep back the words that involuntarily rose to his lips.

Lady Helena, Mary, Robert, and Glenarvan gazed at him in astonishment, at a loss to understand this unaccountable agitation. Paganel looked as if a sudden fit of insanity had come over him. But his excitement did not last. He became by degrees calmer. The gleam of joy that shone in his eyes died away. He sat down again, and said quietly:

"When you please, my Lord, I am ready." Glenarvan resumed his dictation at once, and the letter was soon completed. It read as follows: "Order to Tom Austin to go to sea without delay; and take the DUNCAN to Melbourne by the 37th degree of latitude to the eastern coast of Australia."

"Of Australia?" said Paganel. "Ah yes! of Australia."

Then he finished the letter, and gave it to Glenarvan to sign, who went through the necessary formality as well as he could, and closed and sealed the letter. Paganel, whose hand still trembled with emotion, directed it thus: "Tom Austin, Chief Officer on board the Yacht DUNCAN, Melbourne."

Then he got up and went out of the wagon, gesticulating and repeating the incomprehensible words:

"Aland aland! aland!"

CHAPTER XVIII FOUR DAYS OF ANGUISH

THE rest of the day passed on without any further incident. All the preparations for Mulrady's journey were completed,

and the brave sailor rejoiced in being able to give his Lordship
this proof of devotion.

Paganel had recovered his usual _sang-froid_ and manners. His look,
indeed, betrayed his preoccupation, but he seemed resolved to keep
it secret. No doubt he had strong reasons for this course of action,
for the Major heard him repeating, like a man struggling with himself:
"No, no, they would not believe it; and, besides, what good would it be?
It is too late!"

Having taken this resolution, he busied himself with giving
Mulrady the necessary directions for getting to Melbourne,
and showed him his way on the map. All the TRACKS, that is to say,
paths through the prairie, came out on the road to Lucknow. This road,
after running right down to the coast took a sudden bend in the direction
of Melbourne. This was the route that must be followed steadily,
for it would not do to attempt a short cut across an almost
unknown country. Nothing, consequently, could be more simple.
Mulrady could not lose his way.

As to dangers, there were none after he had gone a few miles beyond
the encampment, out of the reach of Ben Joyce and his gang.
Once past their hiding place, Mulrady was certain of soon
being able to outdistance the convicts, and execute his
important mission successfully.

At six o'clock they all dined together. The rain was
falling in torrents. The tent was not protection enough,
and the whole party had to take refuge in the wagon.
This was a sure refuge. The clay kept it firmly imbedded
in the soil, like a fortress resting on sure foundations.
The arsenal was composed of seven carbines and seven revolvers,
and could stand a pretty long siege, for they had plenty
of ammunition and provisions. But before six days were over,
the DUNCAN would anchor in Twofold Bay, and twenty-four hours
after her crew would reach the other shore of the Snowy River;
and should the passage still remain impracticable, the convicts at
any rate would be forced to retire before the increased strength.
But all depended on Mulrady's success in his perilous enterprise.

At eight o'clock it got very dark; now was the time to start.
The horse prepared for Mulrady was brought out. His feet,
by way of extra precaution, were wrapped round with cloths,
so that they could not make the least noise on the ground.
The animal seemed tired, and yet the safety of all depended
on his strength and surefootedness. The Major advised Mulrady
to let him go gently as soon as he got past the convicts.
Better delay half-a-day than not arrive safely.

John Mangles gave his sailor a revolver, which he had loaded
with the utmost care. This is a formidable weapon in the hand
of a man who does not tremble, for six shots fired in a few
seconds would easily clear a road infested with criminals.
Mulrady seated himself in the saddle ready to start.

"Here is the letter you are to give to Tom Austin,"
said Glenarvan. "Don't let him lose an hour. He is to sail
for Twofold Bay at once; and if he does not find us there,
if we have not managed to cross the Snowy, let him come on to us

without delay. Now go, my brave sailor, and God be with you."

He shook hands with him, and bade him good-by; and so did Lady Helena and Mary Grant. A more timorous man than the sailor would have shrunk back a little from setting out on such a dark, raining night on an errand so full of danger, across vast unknown wilds. But his farewells were calmly spoken, and he speedily disappeared down a path which skirted the wood.

At the same moment the gusts of wind redoubled their violence. The high branches of the eucalyptus clattered together noisily, and bough after bough fell on the wet ground. More than one great tree, with no living sap, but still standing hitherto, fell with a crash during this storm. The wind howled amid the cracking wood, and mingled its moans with the ominous roaring of the rain. The heavy clouds, driving along toward the east, hung on the ground like rays of vapor, and deep, cheerless gloom intensified the horrors of the night.

The travelers went back into the wagon immediately Mulrady had gone. Lady Helena, Mary Grant, Glenarvan and Paganel occupied the first compartment, which had been hermetically closed. The second was occupied by Olbinett, Wilson and Robert. The Major and John Mangles were on duty outside. This precaution was necessary, for an attack on the part of the convicts would be easy enough, and therefore probable enough.

The two faithful guardians kept close watch, bearing philosophically the rain and wind that beat on their faces. They tried to pierce through the darkness so favorable to ambushes, for nothing could be heard but the noise of the tempest, the sough of the wind, the rattling branches, falling trees, and roaring of the unchained waters.

At times the wind would cease for a few moments, as if to take breath. Nothing was audible but the moan of the Snowy River, as it flowed between the motionless reeds and the dark curtain of gum trees. The silence seemed deeper in these momentary lulls, and the Major and John Mangles listened attentively.

During one of these calms a sharp whistle reached them. John Mangles went hurriedly up to the Major. "You heard that?" he asked.

"Yes," said McNabbs. "Is it man or beast?"

"A man," replied John Mangles.

And then both listened. The mysterious whistle was repeated, and answered by a kind of report, but almost indistinguishable, for the storm was raging with renewed violence. McNabbs and John Mangles could not hear themselves speak. They went for comfort under the shelter of the wagon.

At this moment the leather curtains were raised and Glenarvan rejoined his two companions. He too had heard this ill-boding whistle, and the report which echoed under the tilt. "Which way was it?" asked he.

"There," said John, pointing to the dark track in the direction taken by Mulrady.

"How far?"

"The wind brought it; I should think, three or four miles, at least."

"Come," said Glenarvan, putting his gun on his shoulder.

"No," said the Major. "It is a decoy to get us away from the wagon."

"But if Mulrady has even now fallen beneath the blows of these rascals?" exclaimed Glenarvan, seizing McNabbs by the hand.

"We shall know by to-morrow," said the Major, coolly, determined to prevent Glenarvan from taking a step which was equally rash and futile.

"You cannot leave the camp, my Lord," said John. "I will go alone."

"You will do nothing of the kind!" cried McNabbs, energetically. "Do you want to have us killed one by one to diminish our force, and put us at the mercy of these wretches? If Mulrady has fallen a victim to them, it is a misfortune that must not be repeated. Mulrady was sent, chosen by chance. If the lot had fallen to me, I should have gone as he did; but I should neither have asked nor expected assistance."

In restraining Glenarvan and John Mangles, the Major was right in every aspect of the case. To attempt to follow the sailor, to run in the darkness of night among the convicts in their leafy ambush was madness, and more than that--it was useless. Glenarvan's party was not so numerous that it could afford to sacrifice another member of it.

Still Glenarvan seemed as if he could not yield; his hand was always on his carbine. He wandered about the wagon, and bent a listening ear to the faintest sound. The thought that one of his men was perhaps mortally wounded, abandoned to his fate, calling in vain on those for whose sake he had gone forth, was a torture to him. McNabbs was not sure that he should be able to restrain him, or if Glenarvan, carried away by his feelings, would not run into the arms of Ben Joyce.

"Edward," said he, "be calm. Listen to me as a friend. Think of Lady Helena, of Mary Grant, of all who are left. And, besides, where would you go? Where would you find Mulrady? He must have been attacked two miles off. In what direction? Which track would you follow?"

At that very moment, as if to answer the Major, a cry of distress was heard.

"Listen!" said Glenarvan.

This cry came from the same quarter as the report, but less than a quarter of a mile off.

Glenarvan, repulsing McNabbs, was already on the track, when at three hundred paces from the wagon they heard the exclamation:

"Help! help!"

The voice was plaintive and despairing. John Mangles and the Major sprang toward the spot. A few seconds after they perceived among the scrub a human form dragging itself along the ground and uttering mournful groans. It was Mulrady, wounded, apparently dying; and when his companions raised him they felt their hands bathed in blood.

The rain came down with redoubled violence, and the wind raged among the branches of the dead trees. In the pelting storm, Glenarvan, the Major and John Mangles transported the body of Mulrady.

On their arrival everyone got up. Paganel, Robert, Wilson and Olbinett left the wagon, and Lady Helena gave up her compartment to poor Mulrady. The Major removed the poor fellow's flannel shirt, which was dripping with blood and rain. He soon found the wound; it was a stab in the right side.

McNabbs dressed it with great skill. He could not tell whether the weapon had touched any vital part. An intermittent jet of scarlet blood flowed from it; the patient's paleness and weakness showed that he was seriously injured. The Major washed the wound first with fresh water and then closed the orifice; after this he put on a thick pad of lint, and then folds of scraped linen held firmly in place with a bandage. He succeeded in stopping the hemorrhage. Mulrady was laid on his side, with his head and chest well raised, and Lady Helena succeeded in making him swallow a few drops of water.

After about a quarter of an hour, the wounded man, who till then had lain motionless, made a slight movement. His eyes unclosed, his lips muttered incoherent words, and the Major, bending toward him, heard him repeating: "My Lord--the letter--Ben Joyce."

The Major repeated these words, and looked at his companions. What did Mulrady mean? Ben Joyce had been the attacking party, of course; but why? Surely for the express purpose of intercepting him, and preventing his arrival at the DUNCAN. This letter--

Glenarvan searched Mulrady's pockets. The letter addressed to Tom Austin was gone!

The night wore away amid anxiety and distress; every moment, they feared, would be poor Mulrady's last. He suffered from acute fever. The Sisters of Charity, Lady Helena and Mary Grant, never left him. Never was patient so well tended, nor by such sympathetic hands.

Day came, and the rain had ceased. Great clouds filled the sky still; the ground was strewn with broken branches; the marly soil, soaked by the torrents of rain, had yielded still more; the approaches to the wagon became difficult, but it could not sink any deeper.

John Mangles, Paganel, and Glenarvan went, as soon as it was light enough, to reconnoiter in the neighborhood of the encampment. They revisited the track, which was still stained with blood. They saw no vestige of Ben Joyce, nor of his band. They penetrated as far as the scene of the attack. Here two

corpses lay on the ground, struck down by Mulrady's bullets. One was the blacksmith of Blackpoint. His face, already changed by death, was a dreadful spectacle. Glenarvan searched no further. Prudence forbade him to wander from the camp. He returned to the wagon, deeply absorbed by the critical position of affairs.

"We must not think of sending another messenger to Melbourne," said he.

"But we must," said John Mangles; "and I must try to pass where my sailor could not succeed."

"No, John! it is out of the question. You have not even a horse for the journey, which is full two hundred miles!"

This was true, for Mulrady's horse, the only one that remained, had not returned. Had he fallen during the attack on his rider, or was he straying in the bush, or had the convicts carried him off?

"Come what will," replied Glenarvan, "we will not separate again. Let us wait a week, or a fortnight, till the Snowy falls to its normal level. We can then reach Twofold Bay by short stages, and from there we can send on to the DUNCAN, by a safer channel, the order to meet us."

"That seems the only plan," said Paganel.

"Therefore, my friends," rejoined Glenarvan, "no more parting. It is too great a risk for one man to venture alone into a robber-haunted waste. And now, may God save our poor sailor, and protect the rest of us!"

Glenarvan was right in both points; first in prohibiting all isolated attempts, and second, in deciding to wait till the passage of the Snowy River was practicable. He was scarcely thirty miles from Delegete, the first frontier village of New South Wales, where he would easily find the means of transport to Twofold Bay, and from there he could telegraph to Melbourne his orders about the DUNCAN.

These measures were wise, but how late! If Glenarvan had not sent Mulrady to Lucknow what misfortunes would have been averted, not to speak of the assassination of the sailor!

When he reached the camp he found his companions in better spirits. They seemed more hopeful than before. "He is better! he is better!" cried Robert, running out to meet Lord Glenarvan.

"Mulrady?--"

"Yes, Edward," answered Lady Helena. "A reaction has set in. The Major is more confident. Our sailor will live."

"Where is McNabbs?" asked Glenarvan.

"With him. Mulrady wanted to speak to him, and they must not be disturbed."

He then learned that about an hour since, the wounded man

had awakened from his lethargy, and the fever had abated.
But the first thing he did on recovering his memory and speech was to ask for Lord Glenarvan, or, failing him, the Major. McNabbs seeing him so weak, would have forbidden any conversation; but Mulrady insisted with such energy that the Major had to give in.
The interview had already lasted some minutes when Glenarvan returned.
There was nothing for it but to await the return of McNabbs.

Presently the leather curtains of the wagon moved, and the Major appeared. He rejoined his friends at the foot of a gum-tree, where the tent was placed. His face, usually so stolid, showed that something disturbed him. When his eyes fell on Lady Helena and the young girl, his glance was full of sorrow.

Glenarvan questioned him, and extracted the following information: When he left the camp Mulrady followed one of the paths indicated by Paganel. He made as good speed as the darkness of the night would allow. He reckoned that he had gone about two miles when several men--five, he thought--sprang to his horse's head. The animal reared; Mulrady seized his revolver and fired. He thought he saw two of his assailants fall. By the flash he recognized Ben Joyce. But that was all. He had not time to fire all the barrels. He felt a violent blow on his side and was thrown to the ground.

Still he did not lose consciousness. The murderers thought he was dead. He felt them search his pockets, and then heard one of them say: "I have the letter."

"Give it to me," returned Ben Joyce, "and now the DUNCAN is ours."

At this point of the story, Glenarvan could not help uttering a cry.

McNabbs continued: "'Now you fellows,' added Ben Joyce, 'catch the horse. In two days I shall be on board the DUNCAN, and in six I shall reach Twofold Bay. This is to be the rendezvous. My Lord and his party will be still stuck in the marshes of the Snowy River. Cross the river at the bridge of Kemple Pier, proceed to the coast, and wait for me. I will easily manage to get you on board. Once at sea in a craft like the DUNCAN, we shall be masters of the Indian Ocean.' 'Hurrah for Ben Joyce!' cried the convicts. Mulrady's horse was brought, and Ben Joyce disappeared, galloping on the Lucknow Road, while the band took the road southeast of the Snowy River. Mulrady, though severely wounded, had the strength to drag himself to within three hundred paces from the camp, whence we found him almost dead. There," said McNabbs, "is the history of Mulrady; and now you can understand why the brave fellow was so determined to speak."

This revelation terrified Glenarvan and the rest of the party.

"Pirates! pirates!" cried Glenarvan. "My crew massacred! my DUNCAN in the hands of these bandits!"

"Yes, for Ben Joyce will surprise the ship," said the Major, "and then--"

"Well, we must get to the coast first," said Paganel.

"But how are we to cross the Snowy River?" said Wilson.

"As they will," replied Glenarvan. "They are to cross at Kemple Pier Bridge, and so will we."

"But about Mulrady?" asked Lady Helena.

"We will carry him; we will have relays. Can I leave my crew to the mercy of Ben Joyce and his gang?"

To cross the Snowy River at Kemple Pier was practicable, but dangerous. The convicts might entrench themselves at that point, and defend it. They were at least thirty against seven! But there are moments when people do not deliberate, or when they have no choice but to go on.

"My Lord," said John Mangles, "before we throw away our chance, before venturing to this bridge, we ought to reconnoiter, and I will undertake it."

"I will go with you, John," said Paganel.

This proposal was agreed to, and John Mangles and Paganel prepared to start immediately. They were to follow the course of the Snowy River, follow its banks till they reached the place indicated by Ben Joyce, and especially they were to keep out of sight of the convicts, who were probably scouring the bush.

So the two brave comrades started, well provisioned and well armed, and were soon out of sight as they threaded their way among the tall reeds by the river. The rest anxiously awaited their return all day. Evening came, and still the scouts did not return. They began to be seriously alarmed. At last, toward eleven o'clock, Wilson announced their arrival. Paganel and John Mangles were worn out with the fatigues of a ten-mile walk.

"Well, what about the bridge? Did you find it?" asked Glenarvan, with impetuous eagerness.

"Yes, a bridge of supple-jacks," said John Mangles. "The convicts passed over, but--"

"But what?" said Glenarvan, who foreboded some new misfortune.

"They burned it after they passed!" said Paganel.

CHAPTER XIX HELPLESS AND HOPELESS

IT was not a time for despair, but action. The bridge at Kemple Pier was destroyed, but the Snowy River must be crossed, come what might, and they must reach Twofold Bay before Ben Joyce and his gang, so, instead of wasting time in empty words, the next day (the 16th of January) John Mangles and Glenarvan went down to examine the river, and arrange for the passage over.

The swollen and tumultuous waters had not gone down the least. They rushed on with indescribable fury. It would be risking

life to battle with them. Glenarvan stood gazing with folded arms and downcast face.

"Would you like me to try and swim across?" said John Mangles.

"No, John, no!" said Lord Glenarvan, holding back the bold, daring young fellow, "let us wait."

And they both returned to the camp. The day passed in the most intense anxiety. Ten times Lord Glenarvan went to look at the river, trying to invent some bold way of getting over; but in vain. Had a torrent of lava rushed between the shores, it could not have been more impassable.

During these long wasted hours, Lady Helena, under the Major's advice, was nursing Mulrady with the utmost skill. The sailor felt a throb of returning life. McNabbs ventured to affirm that no vital part was injured. Loss of blood accounted for the patient's extreme exhaustion. The wound once closed and the hemorrhage stopped, time and rest would be all that was needed to complete his cure. Lady Helena had insisted on giving up the first compartment of the wagon to him, which greatly tried his modesty. The poor fellow's greatest trouble was the delay his condition might cause Glenarvan, and he made him promise that they should leave him in the camp under Wilson's care, should the passage of the river become practicable.

But, unfortunately, no passage was practicable, either that day or the next (January 17); Glenarvan was in despair. Lady Helena and the Major vainly tried to calm him, and preached patience.

Patience, indeed, when perhaps at this very moment Ben Joyce was boarding the yacht; when the DUNCAN, loosing from her moorings, was getting up steam to reach the fatal coast, and each hour was bringing her nearer.

John Mangles felt in his own breast all that Glenarvan was suffering. He determined to conquer the difficulty at any price, and constructed a canoe in the Australian manner, with large sheets of bark of the gum-trees. These sheets were kept together by bars of wood, and formed a very fragile boat. The captain and the sailor made a trial trip in it during the day. All that skill, and strength, and tact, and courage could do they did; but they were scarcely in the current before they were upside down, and nearly paid with their lives for the dangerous experiment. The boat disappeared, dragged down by the eddy. John Mangles and Wilson had not gone ten fathoms, and the river was a mile broad, and swollen by the heavy rains and melted snows.

Thus passed the 19th and 20th of January. The Major and Glenarvan went five miles up the river in search of a favorable passage, but everywhere they found the same roaring, rushing, impetuous torrent. The whole southern slope of the Australian Alps poured its liquid masses into this single bed.

All hope of saving the DUNCAN was now at an end. Five days had elapsed since the departure of Ben Joyce. The yacht must be at this moment

at the coast, and in the hands of the convicts.

However, it was impossible that this state of things could last.
The temporary influx would soon be exhausted, and the violence also.
Indeed, on the morning of the 21st, Paganel announced that
the water was already lower. "What does it matter now?"
said Glenarvan. "It is too late!"

"That is no reason for our staying longer here," said the Major.

"Certainly not," replied John Mangles. "Perhaps tomorrow the river
may be practicable."

"And will that save my unhappy men?" cried Glenarvan.

"Will your Lordship listen to me?" returned John Mangles. "I know
Tom Austin. He would execute your orders, and set out as soon as
departure was possible. But who knows whether the DUNCAN was ready
and her injury repaired on the arrival of Ben Joyce. And suppose the

V. IV Verne yacht could not go to sea; suppose there was a delay of a day,
or two days."

"You are right, John," replied Glenarvan. "We must get to Twofold Bay;
we are only thirty-five miles from Delegete."

"Yes," added Paganel, "and that's a town where we shall find
rapid means of conveyance. Who knows whether we shan't arrive
in time to prevent a catastrophe."

"Let us start," cried Glenarvan.

John Mangles and Wilson instantly set to work to construct a canoe
of larger dimensions. Experience had proved that the bark was powerless
against the violence of the torrent, and John accordingly felled some
of the gum-trees, and made a rude but solid raft with the trunks.
It was a long task, and the day had gone before the work was ended.
It was completed next morning.

By this time the waters had visibly diminished; the torrent had
once more become a river, though a very rapid one, it is true.
However, by pursuing a zigzag course, and overcoming it
to a certain extent, John hoped to reach the opposite shore.
At half-past twelve, they embarked provisions enough for a couple
of days. The remainder was left with the wagon and the tent.
Mulrady was doing well enough to be carried over;
his convalescence was rapid.

At one o'clock, they all seated themselves on the raft, still moored
to the shore. John Mangles had installed himself at the starboard,
and entrusted to Wilson a sort of oar to steady the raft against
the current, and lessen the leeway. He took his own stand at the back,
to steer by means of a large scull; but, notwithstanding their efforts,
Wilson and John Mangles soon found themselves in an inverse position,
which made the action of the oars impossible.

There was no help for it; they could do nothing to arrest the gyratory
movement of the raft; it turned round with dizzying rapidity, and drifted
out of its course. John Mangles stood with pale face and set teeth,

gazing at the whirling current.

However, the raft had reached the middle of the river, about half a mile from the starting point. Here the current was extremely strong, and this broke the whirling eddy, and gave the raft some stability. John and Wilson seized their oars again, and managed to push it in an oblique direction. This brought them nearer to the left shore. They were not more than fifty fathoms from it, when Wilson's oar snapped short off, and the raft, no longer supported, was dragged away. John tried to resist at the risk of breaking his own oar, too, and Wilson, with bleeding hands, seconded his efforts with all his might.

At last they succeeded, and the raft, after a passage of more than half an hour, struck against the steep bank of the opposite shore. The shock was so violent that the logs became disunited, the cords broke, and the water bubbled up between. The travelers had barely time to catch hold of the steep bank. They dragged out Mulrady and the two dripping ladies. Everyone was safe; but the provisions and firearms, except the carbine of the Major, went drifting down with the DEBRIS of the raft.

The river was crossed. The little company found themselves almost without provisions, thirty-five miles from Delegete, in the midst of the unknown deserts of the Victoria frontier. Neither settlers nor squatters were to be met with; it was entirely uninhabited, unless by ferocious bushrangers and bandits.

They resolved to set off without delay. Mulrady saw clearly that he would be a great drag on them, and he begged to be allowed to remain, and even to remain alone, till assistance could be sent from Delegete.

Glenarvan refused. It would be three days before he could reach Delegete, and five the shore--that is to say, the 26th of January. Now, as the DUNCAN had left Melbourne on the 16th, what difference would a few days' delay make?

"No, my friend," he said, "I will not leave anyone behind. We will make a litter and carry you in turn."

The litter was made of boughs of eucalyptus covered with branches; and, whether he would or not, Mulrady was obliged to take his place on it. Glenarvan would be the first to carry his sailor. He took hold of one end and Wilson of the other, and all set off.

What a sad spectacle, and how lamentably was this expedition to end which had commenced so well. They were no longer in search of Harry Grant. This continent, where he was not, and never had been, threatened to prove fatal to those who sought him. And when these intrepid countrymen of his should reach the shore, they would find the DUNCAN waiting to take them home again. The first day passed silently and painfully. Every ten minutes the litter changed bearers. All the sailor's comrades took their share in this task without murmuring, though the fatigue was augmented by the great heat.

In the evening, after a journey of only five miles, they camped under the gum-trees. The small store of provisions saved from the raft composed the evening meal. But all they had to depend upon now was the Major's carbine.

It was a dark, rainy night, and morning seemed as if it would never dawn.
They set off again, but the Major could not find a chance of firing
a shot. This fatal region was only a desert, unfrequented even
by animals. Fortunately, Robert discovered a bustard's nest with a
dozen of large eggs in it, which Olbinett cooked on hot cinders.
These, with a few roots of purslain which were growing at the bottom
of a ravine, were all the breakfast of the 22d.

The route now became extremely difficult. The sandy plains were
bristling with SPINIFEX, a prickly plant, which is called in Melbourne
the porcupine. It tears the clothing to rags, and makes the legs bleed.
The courageous ladies never complained, but footed it bravely,
setting an example, and encouraging one and another by word or look.

They stopped in the evening at Mount Bulla Bulla, on the edge
of the Jungalla Creek. The supper would have been very scant,
if McNabbs had not killed a large rat, the _mus conditor_,
which is highly spoken of as an article of diet.
Olbinett roasted it, and it would have been pronounced even
superior to its reputation had it equaled the sheep in size.
They were obliged to be content with it, however, and it was
devoured to the bones.

On the 23d the weary but still energetic travelers started off again.
After having gone round the foot of the mountain, they crossed
the long prairies where the grass seemed made of whalebone.
It was a tangle of darts, a medley of sharp little sticks,
and a path had to be cut through either with the hatchet or fire.

That morning there was not even a question of breakfast. Nothing could
be more barren than this region strewn with pieces of quartz.
Not only hunger, but thirst began to assail the travelers.
A burning atmosphere heightened their discomfort.
Glenarvan and his friends could only go half a mile an hour.
Should this lack of food and water continue till evening,
they would all sink on the road, never to rise again.

But when everything fails a man, and he finds himself without
resources, at the very moment when he feels he must give up,
then Providence steps in. Water presented itself in the CEPHALOTES,
a species of cup-shaped flower, filled with refreshing liquid,
which hung from the branches of coralliform-shaped bushes.
They all quenched their thirst with these, and felt new life returning.

The only food they could find was the same as the natives were forced
to subsist upon, when they could find neither game, nor serpents,
nor insects. Paganel discovered in the dry bed of a creek,
a plant whose excellent properties had been frequently described
by one of his colleagues in the Geographical Society.

It was the NARDOU, a cryptogamous plant of the family Marsilacea,
and the same which kept Burke and King alive in the deserts of
the interior. Under its leaves, which resembled those of the trefoil,
there were dried sporules as large as a lentil, and these sporules,
when crushed between two stones, made a sort of flour. This was
converted into coarse bread, which stilled the pangs of hunger at least.
There was a great abundance of this plant growing in the district,
and Olbinett gathered a large supply, so that they were sure of food

for several days.

The next day, the 24th, Mulrady was able to walk part of the way.
His wound was entirely cicatrized. The town of Delegete was not more than
ten miles off, and that evening they camped in longitude 140 degrees,
on the very frontier of New South Wales.

For some hours, a fine but penetrating rain had been falling.
There would have been no shelter from this, if by chance John Mangles
had not discovered a sawyer's hut, deserted and dilapidated to a degree.
But with this miserable cabin they were obliged to be content.
Wilson wanted to kindle a fire to prepare the NARDOU bread,
and he went out to pick up the dead wood scattered all over
the ground. But he found it would not light, the great quantity
of albuminous matter which it contained prevented all combustion.
This is the incombustible wood put down by Paganel in his list
of Australian products.

They had to dispense with fire, and consequently with food too,
and sleep in their wet clothes, while the laughing jackasses,
concealed in the high branches, seemed to ridicule the poor unfortunates.
However, Glenarvan was nearly at the end of his sufferings.
It was time. The two young ladies were making heroic efforts,
but their strength was hourly decreasing. They dragged themselves along,
almost unable to walk.

Next morning they started at daybreak. At 11 A. M. Delegete
came in sight in the county of Wellesley, and fifty miles
from Twofold Bay.

Means of conveyance were quickly procured here.
Hope returned to Glenarvan as they approached the coast.
Perhaps there might have been some slight delay, and after all they
might get there before the arrival of the DUNCAN. In twenty-four
hours they would reach the bay.

At noon, after a comfortable meal, all the travelers installed in a
mail-coach, drawn by five strong horses, left Delegete at a gallop.
The postilions, stimulated by a promise of a princely DOUCEUR,
drove rapidly along over a well-kept road. They did not lose
a minute in changing horses, which took place every ten miles.
It seemed as if they were infected with Glenarvan's zeal.
All that day, and night, too, they traveled on at the rate of six
miles an hour.

In the morning at sunrise, a dull murmur fell on their ears,
and announced their approach to the Indian Ocean. They required
to go round the bay to gain the coast at the 37th parallel,
the exact point where Tom Austin was to wait their arrival.

When the sea appeared, all eyes anxiously gazed at the offing.
Was the DUNCAN, by a miracle of Providence, there running
close to the shore, as a month ago, when they crossed
Cape Corrientes, they had found her on the Argentine coast?
They saw nothing. Sky and earth mingled in the same horizon.
Not a sail enlivened the vast stretch of ocean.

One hope still remained. Perhaps Tom Austin had thought it
his duty to cast anchor in Twofold Bay, for the sea was heavy,

and a ship would not dare to venture near the shore. "To Eden!" cried Glenarvan. Immediately the mail-coach resumed the route round the bay, toward the little town of Eden, five miles distant. The postilions stopped not far from the lighthouse, which marks the entrance of the port. Several vessels were moored in the roadstead, but none of them bore the flag of Malcolm.

Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Paganel got out of the coach, and rushed to the custom-house, to inquire about the arrival of vessels within the last few days.

No ship had touched the bay for a week.

"Perhaps the yacht has not started," Glenarvan said, a sudden revulsion of feeling lifting him from despair. "Perhaps we have arrived first."

John Mangles shook his head. He knew Tom Austin. His first mate would not delay the execution of an order for ten days.

"I must know at all events how they stand," said Glenarvan. "Better certainty than doubt."

A quarter of an hour afterward a telegram was sent to the syndicate of shipbrokers in Melbourne. The whole party then repaired to the Victoria Hotel.

At 2 P.M. the following telegraphic reply was received:
"LORD GLENARVAN, Eden.

"Twofold Bay.

"The DUNCAN left on the 16th current. Destination unknown.
J. ANDREWS, S. B."

The telegram dropped from Glenarvan's hands.

There was no doubt now. The good, honest Scotch yacht was now a pirate ship in the hands of Ben Joyce!

So ended this journey across Australia, which had commenced under circumstances so favorable. All trace of Captain Grant and his shipwrecked men seemed to be irrevocably lost. This ill success had cost the loss of a ship's crew. Lord Glenarvan had been vanquished in the strife; and the courageous searchers, whom the unfriendly elements of the Pampas had been unable to check, had been conquered on the Australian shore by the perversity of man.

END OF BOOK TWO

In Search of the Castaways or The Children of Captain Grant

New Zealand

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In Search of the Castaways

New Zealand

CHAPTER I A ROUGH CAPTAIN

IF ever the searchers after Captain Grant were tempted to despair, surely it was at this moment when all their hopes were destroyed at a blow. Toward what quarter of the world should they direct their endeavors? How were they to explore new countries? The DUNCAN was no longer available, and even an immediate return to their own land was out of the question. Thus the enterprise of these generous Scots had failed! Failed! a despairing word that finds no echo in a brave soul; and yet under the repeated blows of adverse fate, Glenarvan himself was compelled to acknowledge his inability to prosecute his devoted efforts.

Mary Grant at this crisis nerved herself to the resolution never to utter the name of her father. She suppressed her own anguish, when she thought of the unfortunate crew who had perished. The daughter was merged in the friend, and she now took upon her to console Lady Glenarvan, who till now had been her faithful comforter. She was the first to speak of returning to Scotland. John Mangles was filled with admiration at seeing her so courageous and so resigned. He wanted to say a word further in the Captain's interest, but Mary stopped him with a glance, and afterward said to him: "No, Mr. John, we must think of those who ventured their lives. Lord Glenarvan must return to Europe!"

"You are right, Miss Mary," answered John Mangles; "he must. Beside, the English authorities must be informed of the fate of the DUNCAN. But do not despair. Rather than abandon our search I will resume it alone! I will either find Captain Grant or perish in the attempt!"

It was a serious undertaking to which John Mangles bound himself; Mary accepted, and gave her hand to the young captain, as if to ratify the treaty. On John Mangles' side it was a life's devotion; on Mary's undying gratitude.

During that day, their departure was finally arranged; they resolved to reach Melbourne without delay. Next day John went to inquire about the ships ready to sail. He expected to find frequent communication between Eden and Victoria.

He was disappointed; ships were scarce. Three or four vessels, anchored in Twofold Bay, constituted the mercantile fleet of the place; none of them were bound for Melbourne, nor Sydney, nor Point de Galle, at any of which ports Glenarvan would have found ships loading for England. In fact, the Peninsular and Oriental Company has a regular line of packets between these points and England.

Under these circumstances, what was to be done? Waiting for a ship

might be a tedious affair, for Twofold Bay is not much frequented. Numbers of ships pass by without touching. After due reflection and discussion, Glenarvan had nearly decided to follow the coast road to Sydney, when Paganel made an unexpected proposition.

The geographer had visited Twofold Bay on his own account, and was aware that there were no means of transport for Sydney or Melbourne. But of the three vessels anchored in the roadstead one was loading for Auckland, the capital of the northern island of New Zealand. Paganel's proposal was to take the ship in question, and get to Auckland, whence it would be easy to return to Europe by the boats of the Peninsular and Oriental Company.

This proposition was taken into serious consideration. Paganel on this occasion dispensed with the volley of arguments he generally indulged in. He confined himself to the bare proposition, adding that the voyage to New Zealand was only five or six days--the distance, in fact, being only about a thousand miles.

By a singular coincidence Auckland is situated on the self-same parallel--the thirty-seventh--which the explorers had perseveringly followed since they left the coast of Araucania. Paganel might fairly have used this as an argument in favor of his scheme; in fact, it was a natural opportunity of visiting the shores of New Zealand.

But Paganel did not lay stress on this argument. After two mistakes, he probably hesitated to attempt a third interpretation of the document. Besides, what could he make of it? It said positively that a "continent" had served as a refuge for Captain Grant, not an island. Now, New Zealand was nothing but an island. This seemed decisive. Whether, for this reason, or for some other, Paganel did not connect any idea of further search with this proposition of reaching Auckland. He merely observed that regular communication existed between that point and Great Britain, and that it was easy to take advantage of it.

John Mangles supported Paganel's proposal. He advised its adoption, as it was hopeless to await the problematical arrival of a vessel in Twofold Bay. But before coming to any decision, he thought it best to visit the ship mentioned by the geographer. Glenarvan, the Major, Paganel, Robert, and Mangles himself, took a boat, and a few strokes brought them alongside the ship anchored two cables' length from the quay.

It was a brig of 150 tons, named the MACQUARIE. It was engaged in the coasting trade between the various ports of Australia and New Zealand. The captain, or rather the "master," received his visitors gruffly enough. They perceived that they had to do with a man of no education, and whose manners were in no degree superior to those of the five sailors of his crew. With a coarse, red face, thick hands, and a broken nose, blind of an eye, and his lips stained with the pipe, Will Halley was a sadly brutal looking person. But they had no choice, and for so short a voyage it was not necessary to be very particular.

"What do you want?" asked Will Halley, when the strangers stepped on the poop of his ship.

"The captain," answered John Mangles.

"I am the captain," said Halley. "What else do you want?"

"The MACQUARIE is loading for Auckland, I believe?"

"Yes. What else?"

"What does she carry?"

"Everything salable and purchasable. What else?"

"When does she sail?"

"To-morrow at the mid-day tide. What else?"

"Does she take passengers?"

"That depends on who the passengers are, and whether they are satisfied with the ship's mess."

"They would bring their own provisions."

"What else?"

"What else?"

"Yes. How many are there?"

"Nine; two of them are ladies."

"I have no cabins."

"We will manage with such space as may be left at their disposal."

"What else?"

"Do you agree?" said John Mangles, who was not in the least put out by the captain's peculiarities.

"We'll see," said the master of the MACQUARIE.

Will Halley took two or three turns on the poop, making it resound with iron-heeled boots, and then he turned abruptly to John Mangles.

"What would you pay?" said he.

"What do you ask?" replied John.

"Fifty pounds."

Glenarvan looked consent.

"Very good! Fifty pounds," replied John Mangles.

"But passage only," added Halley.

"Yes, passage only."

"Food extra."

"Extra."

"Agreed. And now," said Will, putting out his hand, "what about the deposit money?"

"Here is half of the passage-money, twenty-five pounds," said Mangles, counting out the sum to the master.

"All aboard to-morrow," said he, "before noon. Whether or no, I weigh anchor."

"We will be punctual."

This said, Glenarvan, the Major, Robert, Paganel, and John Mangles left the ship, Halley not so much as touching the oilskin that adorned his red locks.

"What a brute," exclaimed John.

"He will do," answered Paganel. "He is a regular sea-wolf."

"A downright bear!" added the Major.

"I fancy," said John Mangles, "that the said bear has dealt in human flesh in his time."

"What matter?" answered Glenarvan, "as long as he commands the MACQUARIE, and the MACQUARIE goes to New Zealand. From Twofold Bay to Auckland we shall not see much of him; after Auckland we shall see him no more."

Lady Helena and Mary Grant were delighted to hear that their departure was arranged for to-morrow. Glenarvan warned them that the MACQUARIE was inferior in comfort to the DUNCAN. But after what they had gone through, they were indifferent to trifling annoyances. Wilson was told off to arrange the accommodation on board the MACQUARIE. Under his busy brush and broom things soon changed their aspect.

Will Halley shrugged his shoulders, and let the sailor have his way. Glenarvan and his party gave him no concern. He neither knew, nor cared to know, their names. His new freight represented fifty pounds, and he rated it far below the two hundred tons of cured hides which were stowed away in his hold. Skins first, men after. He was a merchant. As to his sailor qualification, he was said to be skillful enough in navigating these seas, whose reefs make them very dangerous.

As the day drew to a close, Glenarvan had a desire to go again to the point on the coast cut by the 37th parallel. Two motives prompted him. He wanted to examine once more the presumed scene of the wreck. Ayrton had certainly been quartermaster on the BRITANNIA, and the BRITANNIA might have been lost on this part of the Australian coast; on the east coast if not on the west. It would not do to leave without thorough investigation, a locality which they were never to revisit.

And then, failing the BRITANNIA, the DUNCAN certainly had fallen into the hands of the convicts. Perhaps there had been a fight?

There might yet be found on the coast traces of a struggle,
a last resistance. If the crew had perished among the waves,
the waves probably had thrown some bodies on the shore.

Glenarvan, accompanied by his faithful John, went to carry out the
final search. The landlord of the Victoria Hotel lent them two horses,
and they set out on the northern road that skirts Twofold Bay.

It was a melancholy journey. Glenarvan and Captain John trotted
along without speaking, but they understood each other.
The same thoughts, the same anguish harrowed both their hearts.
They looked at the sea-worn rocks; they needed no words of question
or answer. John's well-tried zeal and intelligence were a guarantee
that every point was scrupulously examined, the least likely places,
as well as the sloping beaches and sandy plains where even the slight
tides of the Pacific might have thrown some fragments of wreck.
But no indication was seen that could suggest further search
in that quarter--all trace of the wreck escaped them still.

As to the DUNCAN, no trace either. All that part of Australia,
bordering the ocean, was desert.

Still John Mangles discovered on the skirts of the shore evident
traces of camping, remains of fires recently kindled under solitary
Myall-trees. Had a tribe of wandering blacks passed that way lately?
No, for Glenarvan saw a token which furnished incontestable proof
that the convicts had frequented that part of the coast.

This token was a grey and yellow garment worn and patched,
an ill-omened rag thrown down at the foot of a tree. It bore
the convict's original number at the Perth Penitentiary. The felon
was not there, but his filthy garments betrayed his passage.
This livery of crime, after having clothed some miscreant,
was now decaying on this desert shore.

"You see, John," said Glenarvan, "the convicts got as far as here!
and our poor comrades of the DUNCAN--"

"Yes," said John, in a low voice, "they never landed, they perished!"

"Those wretches!" cried Glenarvan. "If ever they fall into my hands
I will avenge my crew--"

Grief had hardened Glenarvan's features. For some minutes
he gazed at the expanse before him, as if taking a last look at
some ship disappearing in the distance. Then his eyes became dim;
he recovered himself in a moment, and without a word or look,
set off at a gallop toward Eden.

The wanderers passed their last evening sadly enough. Their thoughts
recalled all the misfortunes they had encountered in this country.
They remembered how full of well-warranted hope they had been at
Cape Bernouilli, and how cruelly disappointed at Twofold Bay!

Paganel was full of feverish agitation. John Mangles,
who had watched him since the affair at Snowy River, felt that
the geographer was hesitating whether to speak or not to speak.
A thousand times he had pressed him with questions, and failed
in obtaining an answer.

But that evening, John, in lighting him to his room, asked him why he was so nervous.

"Friend John," said Paganel, evasively, "I am not more nervous to-night than I always am."

"Mr. Paganel," answered John, "you have a secret that chokes you."

"Well!" cried the geographer, gesticulating, "what can I do? It is stronger than I!"

"What is stronger?"

"My joy on the one hand, my despair on the other."

"You rejoice and despair at the same time!"

"Yes; at the idea of visiting New Zealand."

"Why! have you any trace?" asked John, eagerly. "Have you recovered the lost tracks?"

"No, friend John. No one returns from New Zealand; but still-- you know human nature. All we want to nourish hope is breath. My device is '_Spiro spero_,' and it is the best motto in the world!"

CHAPTER II NAVIGATORS AND THEIR DISCOVERIES

NEXT day, the 27th of January, the passengers of the MACQUARIE were installed on board the brig. Will Halley had not offered his cabin to his lady passengers. This omission was the less to be deplored, for the den was worthy of the bear.

At half past twelve the anchor was weighed, having been loosed from its holding-ground with some difficulty. A moderate breeze was blowing from the southwest. The sails were gradually unfurled; the five hands made slow work. Wilson offered to assist the crew; but Halley begged him to be quiet and not to interfere with what did not concern him. He was accustomed to manage his own affairs, and required neither assistance nor advice.

This was aimed at John Mangles, who had smiled at the clumsiness of some maneuver. John took the hint, but mentally resolved that he would nevertheless hold himself in readiness in case the incapacity of the crew should endanger the safety of the vessel.

However, in time, the sails were adjusted by the five sailors, aided by the stimulus of the captain's oaths. The MACQUARIE stood out to sea on the larboard tack, under all her lower sails, topsails, topgallants, cross-jack, and jib. By and by, the other sails were hoisted. But in spite of this additional canvas the brig made very little way. Her rounded bow, the width of her hold, and her heavy stern, made her a bad sailor, the perfect type of a wooden shoe.

They had to make the best of it. Happily, five days, or, at most, six, would take them to Auckland, no matter how bad a sailor the MACQUARIE was.

At seven o'clock in the evening the Australian coast and the lighthouse of the port of Eden had faded out of sight. The ship labored on the lumpy sea, and rolled heavily in the trough of the waves. The passengers below suffered a good deal from this motion. But it was impossible to stay on deck, as it rained violently. Thus they were condemned to close imprisonment.

Each one of them was lost in his own reflections. Words were few. Now and then Lady Helena and Miss Grant exchanged a few syllables. Glenarvan was restless; he went in and out, while the Major was impassive. John Mangles, followed by Robert, went on the poop from time to time, to look at the weather. Paganel sat in his corner, muttering vague and incoherent words.

What was the worthy geographer thinking of? Of New Zealand, the country to which destiny was leading him. He went mentally over all his history; he called to mind the scenes of the past in that ill-omened country.

But in all that history was there a fact, was there a solitary incident that could justify the discoverers of these islands in considering them as "a continent." Could a modern geographer or a sailor concede to them such a designation. Paganel was always revolving the meaning of the document. He was possessed with the idea; it became his ruling thought. After Patagonia, after Australia, his imagination, allured by a name, flew to New Zealand. But in that direction, one point, and only one, stood in his way.

"_Contin--contin_," he repeated, "that must mean continent!"

And then he resumed his mental retrospect of the navigators who made known to us these two great islands of the Southern Sea.

It was on the 13th of December, 1642, that the Dutch navigator Tasman, after discovering Van Diemen's Land, sighted the unknown shores of New Zealand. He coasted along for several days, and on the 17th of December his ships penetrated into a large bay, which, terminating in a narrow strait, separated the two islands.

The northern island was called by the natives Ikana-Mani, a word which signifies the fish of Mani. The southern island was called Tavai-Pouna-Mou, "the whale that yields the green-stones."

Abel Tasman sent his boats on shore, and they returned accompanied by two canoes and a noisy company of natives. These savages were middle height, of brown or yellow complexion, angular bones, harsh voices, and black hair, which was dressed in the Japanese manner, and surmounted by a tall white feather.

This first interview between Europeans and aborigines seemed to promise amicable and lasting intercourse. But the next day, when one of Tasman's boats was looking for an anchorage nearer to the land, seven canoes, manned by a great number of natives, attacked them fiercely. The boat capsized and filled. The quartermaster in command was instantly struck with a badly-sharpened spear,

and fell into the sea. Of his six companions four were killed;
the other two and the quartermaster were able to swim to the ships,
and were picked up and recovered.

After this sad occurrence Tasman set sail, confining his revenge to giving
the natives a few musket-shots, which probably did not reach them.
He left this bay--which still bears the name of Massacre Bay--
followed the western coast, and on the 5th of January, anchored near
the northern-most point. Here the violence of the surf, as well as
the unfriendly attitude of the natives, prevented his obtaining water,
and he finally quitted these shores, giving them the name Staten-land
or the Land of the States, in honor of the States-General.

The Dutch navigator concluded that these islands were
adjacent to the islands of the same name on the east of Terra
del Fuego, at the southern point of the American continent.
He thought he had found "the Great Southern Continent."

"But," said Paganel to himself, "what a seventeenth century
sailor might call a 'continent' would never stand for one with
a nineteenth century man. No such mistake can be supposed!
No! there is something here that baffles me."

CHAPTER III THE MARTYR-ROLL OF NAVIGATORS

ON the 31st of January, four days after starting, the MACQUARIE
had not done two-thirds of the distance between Australia
and New Zealand. Will Halley took very little heed to
the working of the ship; he let things take their chance.
He seldom showed himself, for which no one was sorry.
No one would have complained if he had passed all his time
in his cabin, but for the fact that the brutal captain
was every day under the influence of gin or brandy.
His sailors willingly followed his example, and no ship ever
sailed more entirely depending on Providence than the MACQUARIE
did from Twofold Bay.

This unpardonable carelessness obliged John Mangles to keep
a watchful eye ever open. Mulrady and Wilson more than once
brought round the helm when some careless steering threatened
to throw the ship on her beam-ends. Often Will Halley would
interfere and abuse the two sailors with a volley of oaths.
The latter, in their impatience, would have liked nothing better
than to bind this drunken captain, and lower him into the hold,
for the rest of the voyage. But John Mangles succeeded,
after some persuasion, in calming their well-grounded indignation.

Still, the position of things filled him with anxiety;
but, for fear of alarming Glenarvan, he spoke only to Paganel
or the Major. McNabbs recommended the same course as
Mulrady and Wilson.

"If you think it would be for the general good, John," said McNabbs,
"you should not hesitate to take the command of the vessel.
When we get to Auckland the drunken imbecile can resume his command,
and then he is at liberty to wreck himself, if that is his fancy."

"All that is very true, Mr. McNabbs, and if it is absolutely necessary I will do it. As long as we are on open sea, a careful lookout is enough; my sailors and I are watching on the poop; but when we get near the coast, I confess I shall be uneasy if Halley does not come to his senses."

"Could not you direct the course?" asked Paganel.

"That would be difficult," replied John. "Would you believe it that there is not a chart on board?"

"Is that so?"

"It is indeed. The MACQUARIE only does a coasting trade between Eden and Auckland, and Halley is so at home in these waters that he takes no observations."

"I suppose he thinks the ship knows the way, and steers herself."
"Ha! ha!" laughed John Mangles; "I do not believe in ships that steer themselves; and if Halley is drunk when we get among soundings, he will get us all into trouble."

"Let us hope," said Paganel, "that the neighborhood of land will bring him to his senses."

"Well, then," said McNabbs, "if needs were, you could not sail the MACQUARIE into Auckland?"

"Without a chart of the coast, certainly not.
The coast is very dangerous. It is a series of shallow fiords as irregular and capricious as the fiords of Norway. There are many reefs, and it requires great experience to avoid them.
The strongest ship would be lost if her keel struck one of those rocks that are submerged but a few feet below the water."

"In that case those on board would have to take refuge on the coast."

"If there was time."

"A terrible extremity," said Paganel, "for they are not hospitable shores, and the dangers of the land are not less appalling than the dangers of the sea."

"You refer to the Maories, Monsieur Paganel?" asked John Mangles.

"Yes, my friend. They have a bad name in these waters.
It is not a matter of timid or brutish Australians, but of an intelligent and sanguinary race, cannibals greedy of human flesh, man-eaters to whom we should look in vain for pity."

"Well, then," exclaimed the Major, "if Captain Grant had been wrecked on the coast of New Zealand, you would dissuade us from looking for him."

"Oh, you might search on the coasts," replied the geographer, "because you might find traces of the BRITANNIA, but not in the interior, for it would be perfectly useless. Every European who ventures into these fatal districts falls into the hands of the Maories, and a prisoner in the hands of the Maories is a lost man. I have urged my friends to cross the Pampas, to toil over the plains of Australia,

but I will never lure them into the mazes of the New Zealand forest. May heaven be our guide, and keep us from ever being thrown within the power of those fierce natives!"

CHAPTER IV THE WRECK OF THE "MACQUARIE"

STILL this wearisome voyage dragged on. On the 2d of February, six days from starting, the MACQUARIE had not yet made a nearer acquaintance with the shores of Auckland. The wind was fair, nevertheless, and blew steadily from the southwest; but the currents were against the ship's course, and she scarcely made any way. The heavy, lumpy sea strained her cordage, her timbers creaked, and she labored painfully in the trough of the sea. Her standing rigging was so out of order that it allowed play to the masts, which were violently shaken at every roll of the sea.

Fortunately, Will Halley was not a man in a hurry, and did not use a press of canvas, or his masts would inevitably have come down. John Mangles therefore hoped that the wretched hull would reach port without accident; but it grieved him that his companions should have to suffer so much discomfort from the defective arrangements of the brig.

But neither Lady Helena nor Mary Grant uttered a word of complaint, though the continuous rain obliged them to stay below, where the want of air and the violence of the motion were painfully felt. They often braved the weather, and went on the poop till driven down again by the force of a sudden squall. Then they returned to the narrow space, fitter for stowing cargo than accommodating passengers, especially ladies.

Their friends did their best to amuse them. Paganel tried to beguile the time with his stories, but it was a hopeless case. Their minds were so distracted at this change of route as to be quite unhinged. Much as they had been interested in his dissertation on the Pampas, or Australia, his lectures on New Zealand fell on cold and indifferent ears. Besides, they were going to this new and ill-reputed country without enthusiasm, without conviction, not even of their own free will, but solely at the bidding of destiny.

Of all the passengers on board the MACQUARIE, the most to be pitied was Lord Glenarvan. He was rarely to be seen below. He could not stay in one place. His nervous organization, highly excited, could not submit to confinement between four narrow bulkheads. All day long, even all night, regardless of the torrents of rain and the dashing waves, he stayed on the poop, sometimes leaning on the rail, sometimes walking to and fro in feverish agitation. His eyes wandered ceaselessly over the blank horizon. He scanned it eagerly during every short interval of clear weather. It seemed as if he sought to question the voiceless waters; he longed to tear away the veil of fog and vapor that obscured his view. He could not be resigned, and his features expressed the bitterness of his grief. He was a man of energy, till now happy and powerful, and deprived in a moment of power and happiness. John Mangles bore him company, and endured with him the inclemency of the weather. On this day Glenarvan looked more anxiously than ever at each point where a break in the mist enabled him to do so. John came up to him

and said, "Your Lordship is looking out for land?"

Glenarvan shook his head in dissent.

"And yet," said the young captain, "you must be longing to quit
this vessel. We ought to have seen the lights of Auckland
thirty-six hours ago."

Glenarvan made no reply. He still looked, and for a moment his glass
was pointed toward the horizon to windward.

"The land is not on that side, my Lord," said John Mangles.
"Look more to starboard."

"Why, John?" replied Glenarvan. "I am not looking for the land."

"What then, my Lord?"

"My yacht! the DUNCAN," said Glenarvan, hotly. "It must be here
on these coasts, skimming these very waves, playing the vile
part of a pirate! It is here, John; I am certain of it,
on the track of vessels between Australia and New Zealand;
and I have a presentiment that we shall fall in with her."

"God keep us from such a meeting!"

"Why, John?"

"Your Lordship forgets our position. What could we do in this ship
if the DUNCAN gave chase. We could not even fly!"

"Fly, John?"

"Yes, my Lord; we should try in vain! We should be taken,
delivered up to the mercy of those wretches, and Ben Joyce has shown us
that he does not stop at a crime! Our lives would be worth little.
We would fight to the death, of course, but after that!
Think of Lady Glenarvan; think of Mary Grant!"

"Poor girls!" murmured Glenarvan. "John, my heart is broken;
and sometimes despair nearly masters me. I feel as if fresh
misfortunes awaited us, and that Heaven itself is against us.
It terrifies me!"

"You, my Lord?"

"Not for myself, John, but for those I love--whom you love, also."

"Keep up your heart, my Lord," said the young captain.
"We must not look out for troubles. The MACQUARIE
sails badly, but she makes some way nevertheless. Will Halley
is a brute, but I am keeping my eyes open, and if the coast
looks dangerous, I will put the ship's head to sea again.
So that, on that score, there is little or no danger.
But as to getting alongside the DUNCAN! God forbid!
And if your Lordship is bent on looking out for her, let it
be in order to give her a wide berth."

John Mangles was right. An encounter with the DUNCAN

would have been fatal to the MACQUARIE. There was every
reason to fear such an engagement in these narrow seas,
in which pirates could ply their trade without risk.
However, for that day at least, the yacht did not appear,
and the sixth night from their departure from Twofold Bay came,
without the fears of John Mangles being realized.

But that night was to be a night of terrors. Darkness came on almost
suddenly at seven o'clock in the evening;

[illustration omitted] [page intentionally blank] the sky
was very threatening. The sailor instinct rose above the
stupefaction of the drunkard and roused Will Halley. He left
his cabin, rubbed his eyes, and shook his great red head.
Then he drew a great deep breath of air, as other people swallow
a draught of water to revive themselves. He examined the masts.
The wind freshened, and veering a point more to the westward,
blew right for the New Zealand coast.

Will Halley, with many an oath, called his men, tightened his
topmast cordage, and made all snug for the night.
John Mangles approved in silence. He had ceased to hold any
conversation with the coarse seaman; but neither Glenarvan nor
he left the poop. Two hours after a stiff breeze came on.
Will Halley took in the lower reef of his topsails.
The maneuver would have been a difficult job for five men if
the MACQUARIE had not carried a double yard, on the American plan.
In fact, they had only to lower the upper yard to bring the sail
to its smallest size.

Two hours passed; the sea was rising. The MACQUARIE was struck so
violently that it seemed as if her keel had touched the rocks. There was
no real danger, but the heavy vessel did not rise easily to the waves.
By and by the returning waves would break over the deck in great masses.
The boat was washed out of the davits by the force of the water.

John Mangles never released his watch. Any other ship would
have made no account of a sea like this; but with this heavy
craft there was a danger of sinking by the bow, for the deck
was filled at every lurch, and the sheet of water not being able
to escape quickly by the scuppers, might submerge the ship.
It would have been the wisest plan to prepare for emergency by
knocking out the bulwarks with an ax to facilitate their escape,
but Halley refused to take this precaution.

But a greater danger was at hand, and one that it was too late
to prevent. About half-past eleven, John Mangles and Wilson, who stayed
on deck throughout the gale, were suddenly struck by an unusual noise.
Their nautical instincts awoke. John seized the sailor's hand.
"The reef!" said he.

"Yes," said Wilson; "the waves breaking on the bank."

"Not more than two cables' length off?"

"At farthest? The land is there!"

John leaned over the side, gazed into the dark water, and called out, "Wilson, the lead!"

The master, posted forward, seemed to have no idea of his position. Wilson seized the lead-line, sprang to the fore-chains, and threw the lead; the rope ran out between his fingers, at the third knot the lead stopped.

"Three fathoms," cried Wilson.

"Captain," said John, running to Will Halley, "we are on the breakers."

Whether or not he saw Halley shrug his shoulders is of very little importance. But he hurried to the helm, put it hard down, while Wilson, leaving the line, hauled at the main-topsail brace to bring the ship to the wind. The man who was steering received a smart blow, and could not comprehend the sudden attack.

"Let her go! Let her go!" said the young captain, working her to get away from the reefs.

For half a minute the starboard side of the vessel was turned toward them, and, in spite of the darkness, John could discern a line of foam which moaned and gleamed four fathoms away.

At this moment, Will Halley, comprehending the danger, lost his head. His sailors, hardly sobered, could not understand his orders. His incoherent words, his contradictory orders showed that this stupid sot had quite lost his self-control. He was taken by surprise at the proximity of the land, which was eight miles off, when he thought it was thirty or forty miles off. The currents had thrown him out of his habitual track, and this miserable slave of routine was left quite helpless.

Still the prompt maneuver of John Mangles succeeded in keeping the MACQUARIE off the breakers. But John did not know the position. For anything he could tell he was girdled in by reefs. The wind blew them strongly toward the east, and at every lurch they might strike.

In fact, the sound of the reef soon redoubled on the starboard side of the bow. They must luff again. John put the helm down again and brought her up. The breakers increased under the bow of the vessel, and it was necessary to put her about to regain the open sea. Whether she would be able to go about under shortened sail, and badly trimmed as she was, remained to be seen, but there was nothing else to be done.

"Helm hard down!" cried Mangles to Wilson.

The MACQUARIE began to near the new line of reefs: in another moment the waves were seen dashing on submerged rocks. It was a moment of inexpressible anxiety. The spray was luminous, just as if lit up by sudden phosphorescence. The roaring of the sea was like the voice of those ancient Tritons whom poetic mythology endowed with life. Wilson and Mulrady hung to the wheel with all their weight. Some cordage gave way, which endangered the foremast.

It seemed doubtful whether she would go about without further damage.

Suddenly the wind fell and the vessel fell back, and turning her became hopeless. A high wave caught her below, carried her up on the reefs, where she struck with great violence. The foremast came down with all the fore-rigging. The brig rose twice, and then lay motionless, heeled over on her port side at an angle of 30 degrees.

The glass of the skylight had been smashed to powder. The passengers rushed out. But the waves were sweeping the deck from one side to the other, and they dared not stay there. John Mangles, knowing the ship to be safely lodged in the sand, begged them to return to their own quarters.

"Tell me the truth, John," said Glenarvan, calmly.

"The truth, my Lord, is that we are at a standstill. Whether the sea will devour us is another question; but we have time to consider."

"It is midnight?"

"Yes, my Lord, and we must wait for the day."

"Can we not lower the boat?"

"In such a sea, and in the dark, it is impossible. And, besides, where could we land?"

"Well, then, John, let us wait for the daylight."

Will Halley, however, ran up and down the deck like a maniac. His crew had recovered their senses, and now broached a cask of brandy, and began to drink. John foresaw that if they became drunk, terrible scenes would ensue.

The captain could not be relied on to restrain them; the wretched man tore his hair and wrung his hands. His whole thought was his uninsured cargo. "I am ruined! I am lost!" he would cry, as he ran from side to side.

John Mangles did not waste time on him. He armed his two companions, and they all held themselves in readiness to resist the sailors who were filling themselves with brandy, seasoned with fearful blasphemies.

"The first of these wretches that comes near the ladies, I will shoot like a dog," said the Major, quietly.

The sailors doubtless saw that the passengers were determined to hold their own, for after some attempts at pillage, they disappeared to their own quarters. John Mangles thought no more of these drunken rascals, and waited impatiently for the dawn. The ship was now quite motionless. The sea became gradually calmer. The wind fell. The hull would be safe for some hours yet. At daybreak John examined the landing-place; the yawl, which was now their only boat, would carry the crew and the passengers. It would have to make three trips at least, as it could only hold four.

As he was leaning on the skylight, thinking over the situation
of affairs, John Mangles could hear the roaring of the surf.
He tried to pierce the darkness. He wondered how far it
was to the land they longed for no less than dreaded.
A reef sometimes extends for miles along the coast.
Could their fragile boat hold out on a long trip?

While John was thus ruminating and longing for a little light from
the murky sky, the ladies, relying on him, slept in their little berths.
The stationary attitude of the brig insured them some hours of repose.
Glenarvan, John, and their companions, no longer disturbed by the noise
of the crew who were now wrapped in a drunken sleep, also refreshed
themselves by a short nap, and a profound silence reigned on board
the ship, herself slumbering peacefully on her bed of sand.

Toward four o'clock the first peep of dawn appeared in the east.
The clouds were dimly defined by the pale light of the dawn.
John returned to the deck. The horizon was veiled with a curtain
of fog. Some faint outlines were shadowed in the mist, but at
a considerable height. A slight swell still agitated the sea,
but the more distant waves were undistinguishable in a motionless
bank of clouds.

John waited. The light gradually increased, and the horizon acquired
a rosy hue. The curtain slowly rose over the vast watery stage.
Black reefs rose out of the waters. Then a line became defined
on the belt of foam, and there gleamed a luminous beacon-light
point behind a low hill which concealed the scarcely risen sun.
There was the land, less than nine miles off.

"Land ho!" cried John Mangles.

His companions, aroused by his voice, rushed to the poop,
and gazed in silence at the coast whose outline lay on the horizon.
Whether they were received as friends or enemies, that coast must
be their refuge.

"Where is Halley?" asked Glenarvan.

"I do not know, my Lord," replied John Mangles.

"Where are the sailors?"

"Invisible, like himself."

"Probably dead drunk, like himself," added McNabbs.

"Let them be called," said Glenarvan, "we cannot leave them
on the ship."

Mulrady and Wilson went down to the forecastle, and two
minutes after they returned. The place was empty!
They then searched between decks, and then the hold.
But found no trace of Will Halley nor his sailors.

"What! no one?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Could they have fallen into the sea?" asked Paganel.

"Everything is possible," replied John Mangles, who was getting uneasy. Then turning toward the stern: "To the boat!" said he.

Wilson and Mulrady followed to launch the yawl. The yawl was gone.

CHAPTER V CANNIBALS

WILL HALLEY and his crew, taking advantage of the darkness of night and the sleep of the passengers, had fled with the only boat. There could be no doubt about it. The captain, whose duty would have kept him on board to the last, had been the first to quit the ship.

"The cowards are off!" said John Mangles. "Well, my Lord, so much the better. They have spared us some trying scenes."

"No doubt," said Glenarvan; "besides we have a captain of our own, and courageous, if unskillful sailors, your companions, John. Say the word, and we are ready to obey."

The Major, Paganel, Robert, Wilson, Mulrady, Olbinett himself, applauded Glenarvan's speech, and ranged themselves on the deck, ready to execute their captain's orders.

"What is to be done?" asked Glenarvan.

It was evident that raising the MACQUARIE was out of the question, and no less evident that she must be abandoned. Waiting on board for succor that might never come, would have been imprudence and folly. Before the arrival of a chance vessel on the scene, the MACQUARIE would have broken up. The next storm, or even a high tide raised by the winds from seaward, would roll it on the sands, break it up into splinters, and scatter them on the shore. John was anxious to reach the land before this inevitable consummation.

He proposed to construct a raft strong enough to carry the passengers, and a sufficient quantity of provisions, to the coast of New Zealand.

There was no time for discussion, the work was to be set about at once, and they had made considerable progress when night came and interrupted them.

Toward eight o'clock in the evening, after supper, while Lady Helena and Mary Grant slept in their berths, Paganel and his friends conversed on serious matters as they walked up and down the deck. Robert had chosen to stay with them. The brave boy listened with all his ears, ready to be of use, and willing to enlist in any perilous adventure.

Paganel asked John Mangles whether the raft could not follow the coast as far as Auckland, instead of landing its freight on the coast.

John replied that the voyage was impossible with such an unmanageable craft.

"And what we cannot do on a raft could have been done in the ship's boat?"

"Yes, if necessary," answered John; "but we should have had to sail by day and anchor at night."

"Then those wretches who abandoned us--"

"Oh, as for them," said John, "they were drunk, and in the darkness I have no doubt they paid for their cowardice with their lives."

"So much the worse for them and for us," replied Paganel; "for the boat would have been very useful to us."

"What would you have, Paganel? The raft will bring us to the shore," said Glenarvan.

"The very thing I would fain avoid," exclaimed the geographer.

"What! do you think another twenty miles after crossing the Pampas and Australia, can have any terrors for us, hardened as we are to fatigue?"

"My friend," replied Paganel, "I do not call in question our courage nor the bravery of our friends. Twenty miles would be nothing in any other country than New Zealand. You cannot suspect me of faint-heartedness. I was the first to persuade you to cross America and Australia. But here the case is different. I repeat, anything is better than to venture into this treacherous country."

"Anything is better, in my judgment," said John Mangles, "than braving certain destruction on a stranded vessel."

"What is there so formidable in New Zealand?" asked Glenarvan.

"The savages," said Paganel.

"The savages!" repeated Glenarvan. "Can we not avoid them by keeping to the shore? But in any case what have we to fear? Surely, two resolute and well-armed Europeans need not give a thought to an attack by a handful of miserable beings."

Paganel shook his head. "In this case there are no miserable beings to contend with. The New Zealanders are a powerful race, who are rebelling against English rule, who fight the invaders, and often beat them, and who always eat them!"

"Cannibals!" exclaimed Robert, "cannibals?" Then they heard him whisper, "My sister! Lady Helena."

"Don't frighten yourself, my boy," said Glenarvan; "our friend Paganel exaggerates."

"Far from it," rejoined Paganel. "Robert has shown himself a man, and I treat him as such, in not concealing the truth from him."

Paganel was right. Cannibalism has become a fixed fact in New Zealand, as it is in the Fijis and in Torres Strait. Superstition is no doubt partly to blame, but cannibalism is certainly owing to the fact that there are moments when game is scarce and hunger great. The savages began by eating human flesh to appease the demands of an appetite rarely satiated; subsequently the priests regulated and satisfied the monstrous custom.

What was a meal, was raised to the dignity of a ceremony, that is all.

Besides, in the eyes of the Maories, nothing is more natural
than to eat one another. The missionaries often questioned
them about cannibalism. They asked them why they devoured
their brothers; to which the chiefs made answer that fish
eat fish, dogs eat men, men eat dogs, and dogs eat one another.
Even the Maori mythology has a legend of a god who ate another god;
and with such a precedent, who could resist eating his neighbor?

Another strange notion is, that in eating a dead enemy they consume
his spiritual being, and so inherit his soul, his strength and
his bravery, which they hold are specially lodged in the brain.
This accounts for the fact that the brain figures in their feasts
as the choicest delicacy, and is offered to the most honored guest.

But while he acknowledged all this, Paganel maintained, not without
a show of reason, that sensuality, and especially hunger,
was the first cause of cannibalism among the New Zealanders,
and not only among the Polynesian races, but also among
the savages of Europe.

"For," said he, "cannibalism was long prevalent among
the ancestors of the most civilized people, and especially
(if the Major will not think me personal) among the Scotch."

"Really," said McNabbs.

"Yes, Major," replied Paganel. "If you read certain passages
of Saint Jerome, on the Atticoli of Scotland, you will see
what he thought of your forefathers. And without going
so far back as historic times, under the reign of Elizabeth,
when Shakespeare was dreaming out his Shy-lock, a Scotch bandit,
Sawney Bean, was executed for the crime of cannibalism.
Was it religion that prompted him to cannibalism?
No! it was hunger."

"Hunger?" said John Mangles.

"Hunger!" repeated Paganel; "but, above all, the necessity
of the carnivorous appetite of replacing the bodily waste,
by the azote contained in animal tissues. The lungs are
satisfied with a provision of vegetable and farinaceous food.
But to be strong and active the body must be supplied
with those plastic elements that renew the muscles.
Until the Maories become members of the Vegetarian Association
they will eat meat, and human flesh as meat."

"Why not animal flesh?" asked Glenarvan.

"Because they have no animals," replied Paganel; "and that ought
to be taken into account, not to extenuate, but to explain,
their cannibal habits. Quadrupeds, and even birds, are rare
on these inhospitable shores, so that the Maories have always
eaten human flesh. There are even 'man-eating seasons,'
as there are in civilized countries hunting seasons.
Then begin the great wars, and whole tribes are served up
on the tables of the conquerors."

"Well, then," said Glenarvan, "according to your mode of reasoning,
Paganel, cannibalism will not cease in New Zealand until her pastures
teem with sheep and oxen."

"Evidently, my dear Lord; and even then it will take years to wean them
from Maori flesh, which they prefer to all others; for the children
will still have a relish for what their fathers so highly appreciated.
According to them it tastes like pork, with even more flavor.
As to white men's flesh, they do not like it so well, because the
whites eat salt with their food, which gives a peculiar flavor,
not to the taste of connoisseurs."

"They are dainty," said the Major. "But, black or white,
do they eat it raw, or cook it?"

"Why, what is that to you, Mr. McNabbs?" cried Robert.

"What is that to me!" exclaimed the Major, earnestly. "If I am
to make a meal for a cannibal, I should prefer being cooked."

"Why?"

"Because then I should be sure of not being eaten alive!"

"Very good. Major," said Paganel; "but suppose they cooked you alive?"

"The fact is," answered the Major, "I would not give half-a-crown
for the choice!"

"Well, McNabbs, if it will comfort you--you may as well be told--
the New Zealanders do not eat flesh without cooking or smoking it.
They are very clever and experienced in cookery.
For my part, I very much dislike the idea of being eaten!
The idea of ending one's life in the maw of a savage! bah!"

"The conclusion of all," said John Mangles, "is that we must not fall
into their hands. Let us hope that one day Christianity will abolish
all these monstrous customs."

"Yes, we must hope so," replied Paganel; "but, believe me, a savage
who has tasted human flesh, is not easily persuaded to forego it.
I will relate two facts which prove it."

"By all means let us have the facts, Paganel," said Glenarvan.

"The first is narrated in the chronicles of the Jesuit Society
in Brazil. A Portuguese missionary was one day visiting
an old Brazilian woman who was very ill. She had only a few
days to live. The Jesuit inculcated the truths of religion,
which the dying woman accepted, without objection.
Then having attended to her spiritual wants, he bethought himself
of her bodily needs, and offered her some European delicacies.
'Alas,' said she, 'my digestion is too weak to bear any kind of food.
There is only one thing I could fancy, and nobody here could
get it for me.' 'What is it?' asked the Jesuit. 'Ah! my son,'
said she, 'it is the hand of a little boy! I feel as if I
should enjoy munching the little bones!'"

"Horrid! but I wonder is it so very nice?" said Robert.

"My second tale will answer you, my boy," said Paganel: "One day
a missionary was reproving a cannibal for the horrible custom,
so abhorrent to God's laws, of eating human flesh! 'And beside,'
said he, 'it must be so nasty!' 'Oh, father,' said the savage,
looking greedily at the missionary, 'say that God forbids it!
That is a reason for what you tell us. But don't say it is nasty!
If you had only tasted it!'"

CHAPTER VI A DREADED COUNTRY

PAGANEL'S facts were indisputable. The cruelty of the New Zealanders
was beyond a doubt, therefore it was dangerous to land.
But had the danger been a hundredfold greater, it had to be faced.
John Mangles felt the necessity of leaving without delay
a vessel doomed to certain and speedy destruction.
There were two dangers, one certain and the other probable,
but no one could hesitate between them.

As to their chance of being picked up by a passing vessel,
they could not reasonably hope for it. The MACQUARIE was
not in the track of ships bound to New Zealand. They keep
further north for Auckland, further south for New Plymouth,
and the ship had struck just between these two points,
on the desert region of the shores of Ika-na-Mani, a dangerous,
difficult coast, and infested by desperate characters.

"When shall we get away?" asked Glenarvan.

"To-morrow morning at ten o'clock," replied John Mangles. "The tide
will then turn and carry us to land."

Next day, February 5, at eight o'clock, the raft was finished.
John had given all his attention to the building of this structure.
The foreyard, which did very well for mooring the anchors,
was quite inadequate to the transport of passengers and provisions.
What was needed was a strong, manageable raft, that would
resist the force of the waves during a passage of nine miles.
Nothing but the masts could supply suitable materials.

Wilson and Mulrady set to work; the rigging was cut clear,
and the mainmast, chopped away at the base, fell over
the starboard rail, which crashed under its weight.
The MACQUARIE was thus razed like a pontoon.

When the lower mast, the topmasts, and the royals were sawn and split,
the principal pieces of the raft were ready. They were then joined to the
fragments of the foremast and the whole was fastened securely together.
John took the precaution to place in the interstices half a dozen empty
barrels, which would raise the structure above the level of the water.
On this strong foundation, Wilson laid a kind of floor in open work,
made of the gratings off the hatches. The spray could then dash on
the raft without staying there, and the passengers would be kept dry.
In addition to this, the hose-pipes firmly lashed together formed a kind
of circular barrier which protected the deck from the waves.

That morning, John seeing that the wind was in their favor,
rigged up the royal-yard in the middle of the raft as a mast.

It was stayed with shrouds, and carried a makeshift sail.
A large broad-bladed oar was fixed behind to act as a rudder
in case the wind was sufficient to require it. The greatest
pains had been expended on strengthening the raft to resist
the force of the waves, but the question remained whether,
in the event of a change of wind, they could steer, or indeed,
whether they could hope ever to reach the land.

At nine o'clock they began to load. First came the provisions,
in quantity sufficient to last till they should reach Auckland,
for they could not count on the productions of this barren region.

Olbinett's stores furnished some preserved meat which remained of
the purchase made for their voyage in the MACQUARIE. This was but a
scanty resource. They had to fall back on the coarse viands of the ship;
sea biscuits of inferior quality, and two casks of salt fish.
The steward was quite crestfallen.

These provisions were put in hermetically sealed cases, staunch and safe
from sea water, and then lowered on to the raft and strongly lashed to the
foot of the mast. The arms and ammunition were piled in a dry corner.
Fortunately the travelers were well armed with carbines and revolvers.

A holding anchor was also put on board in case John should be unable
to make the land in one tide, and would have to seek moorings.

At ten o'clock the tide turned. The breeze blew gently from
the northwest, and a slight swell rocked the frail craft.

"Are we ready?" asked John.

"All ready, captain," answered Wilson.

"All aboard!" cried John.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant descended by a rope ladder,
and took their station at the foot of the mast on the cases
of provisions, their companions near them. Wilson took the helm.
John stood by the tackle, and Mulrady cut the line which held
the raft to the ship's side.

The sail was spread, and the frail structure commenced its progress
toward the land, aided by wind and tide. The coast was about
nine miles off, a distance that a boat with good oars would have
accomplished in three hours. But with a raft allowance must be made.
If the wind held, they might reach the land in one tide.
But if the breeze died away, the ebb would carry them away
from the shore, and they would be compelled to anchor and wait
for the next tide, a serious consideration, and one that filled
John Mangles with anxiety.

Still he hoped to succeed. The wind freshened. The tide had
turned at ten o'clock, and by three they must either make the land
or anchor to save themselves from being carried out to sea.
They made a good start. Little by little the black line of the reefs
and the yellow banks of sand disappeared under the swelling tide.
Extreme watchfulness and perfect skill were necessary to avoid
these submerged rocks, and steer a bark that did not readily answer
to the helm, and that constantly broke off.

At noon they were still five miles from shore. A tolerably clear sky allowed them to make out the principal features of the land. In the northeast rose a mountain about 2,300 feet high, whose sharply defined outline was exactly like the grinning face of a monkey turned toward the sky. It was Pirongia, which the map gave as exactly on the 38th parallel.

At half-past twelve, Paganel remarked that all the rocks had disappeared under the rising tide.

"All but one," answered Lady Helena.

"Which, Madam?" asked Paganel.

"There," replied she, pointing to a black speck a mile off.

"Yes, indeed," said Paganel. "Let us try to ascertain its position, so as not to get too near it, for the sea will soon conceal it."

"It is exactly in a line with the northern slope of the mountain," said John Mangles. "Wilson, mind you give it a wide berth."

"Yes, captain," answered the sailor, throwing his whole weight on the great oar that steered the raft.

In half an hour they had made half a mile. But, strange to say, the black point still rose above the waves.

John looked attentively, and in order to make it out, borrowed Paganel's telescope.

"That is no reef," said he, after a moment; "it is something floating, which rises and falls with the swell."

"Is it part of the mast of the MACQUARIE?" asked Lady Helena.

"No," said Glenarvan, "none of her timbers could have come so far."

"Stay!" said John Mangles; "I know it! It is the boat."

"The ship's boat?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, my lord. The ship's boat, keel up."

"The unfortunate creatures," cried Lady Helena, "they have perished!"

"Yes, Madam," replied John Mangles, "they must have perished, for in the midst of these breakers in a heavy swell on that pitchy night, they ran to certain death."

For a few minutes the passengers were silent.
They gazed at the frail craft as they drew near it.
It must evidently have capsized about four miles from the shore, and not one of the crew could have escaped.

"But this boat may be of use to us," said Glenarvan.

"That is true," answered John Mangles. "Keep her up, Wilson."

The direction was slightly changed, but the breeze fell gradually,
and it was two hours before they reached the boat.

Mulrady, stationed forward, fended off the blow, and the yawl
was drawn alongside.

"Empty?" asked John Mangles.

"Yes, captain," answered the sailor, "the boat is empty.
and all its seams are open. It is of no use to us."

"No use at all?" said McNabbs.

"None at all," said John Mangles.

"It is good for nothing but to burn."

"I regret it," said Paganel, "for the yawl might have taken
us to Auckland."

"We must bear our fate, Monsieur Paganel," replied John Mangles.
"But, for my part, in such a stormy sea I prefer our raft to that
crazy boat. A very slight shock would be enough to break her up.
Therefore, my lord, we have nothing to detain us further."

"As you think best, John."

"On then, Wilson," said John, "and bear straight for the land."

There was still an hour before the turn of the tide.
In that time they might make two miles. But the wind soon fell
almost entirely, and the raft became nearly motionless, and soon
began to drift to seaward under the influence of the ebb-tide.

John did not hesitate a moment.

"Let go the anchor," said he.

Mulrady, who stood to execute this order, let go the anchor in five
fathoms water. The raft backed about two fathoms on the line,
which was then at full stretch. The sail was taken in,
and everything made snug for a tedious period of inaction.

The returning tide would not occur till nine o'clock in the evening;
and as John Mangles did not care to go on in the dark, the anchorage
was for the night, or at least till five o'clock in the morning,
land being in sight at a distance of less than three miles.

A considerable swell raised the waves, and seemed to set in continuously
toward the coast, and perceiving this, Glenarvan asked John why he did
not take advantage of this swell to get nearer to the land.

"Your Lordship is deceived by an optical illusion,"
said the young captain. "Although the swell seems to carry
the waves landward, it does not really move at all.
It is mere undulating molecular motion, nothing more.
Throw a piece of wood overboard and you will see that it
will remain quite stationary except as the tide affects it.

There is nothing for it but patience."

"And dinner," said the Major.

Olbinett unpacked some dried meat and a dozen biscuits.
The steward blushed as he proffered the meager bill of fare.
But it was received with a good grace, even by the ladies,
who, however, had not much appetite, owing to the violent motion.

This motion, produced by the jerking of the raft on the cable,
while she lay head on to the sea, was very severe and fatiguing.
The blows of the short, tumbling seas were as severe as if she
had been striking on a submerged rock. Sometimes it was hard
to believe that she was not aground. The cable strained violently,
and every half hour John had to take in a fathom to ease it.
Without this precaution it would certainly have given way,
and the raft must have drifted to destruction.

John's anxiety may easily be understood. His cable might break,
or his anchor lose its hold, and in either case the danger was imminent.

Night drew on; the sun's disc, enlarged by refraction,
was dipping blood-red below the horizon. The distant waves
glittered in the west, and sparkled like sheets of liquid silver.
Nothing was to be seen in that direction but sky and water,
except one sharply-defined object, the hull of the MACQUARIE
motionless on her rocky bed.

The short twilight postponed the darkness only by a few minutes,
and soon the coast outline, which bounded the view on the east and north,
was lost in darkness.

The shipwrecked party were in an agonizing situation on their narrow raft,
and overtaken by the shades of night.

Some of the party fell into a troubled sleep, a prey to evil dreams;
others could not close an eye. When the day dawned, the whole party
were worn out with fatigue.

With the rising tide the wind blew again toward the land.
It was six o'clock in the morning, and there was no time to lose.
John arranged everything for resuming their voyage, and then
he ordered the anchor to be weighed. But the anchor flukes had
been so imbedded in the sand by the repeated jerks of the cable,
that without a windlass it was impossible to detach it,
even with the tackle which Wilson had improvised.

Half an hour was lost in vain efforts. John, impatient of delay,
cut the rope, thus sacrificing his anchor, and also the possibility
of anchoring again if this tide failed to carry them to land.
But he decided that further delay was not to be thought of,
and an ax-blow committed the raft to the mercy of the wind,
assisted by a current of two knots an hour.

The sail was spread. They drifted slowly toward the land,
which rose in gray, hazy masses, on a background of sky illumined
by the rising sun. The reef was dexterously avoided and doubled,
but with the fitful breeze the raft could not get near the shore.
What toil and pain to reach a coast so full of danger when attained.

At nine o'clock, the land was less than a mile off.
It was a steeply-shelving shore, fringed with breakers;
a practicable landing-place had to be discovered.

Gradually the breeze grew fainter, and then ceased en-

V. IV Verne tirely. The sail flapped idly against the mast,
and John had it furled. The tide alone carried the raft to the shore,
but steering had become impossible, and its passage was impeded
by immense bands of FUCUS.

At ten o'clock John found himself almost at a stand-still, not
three cables' lengths from the shore. Having lost their anchor,
they were at the mercy of the ebb-tide.

John clenched his hands; he was racked with anxiety, and cast
frenzied glances toward this inaccessible shore.

In the midst of his perplexities, a shock was felt.
The raft stood still. It had landed on a sand-bank, twenty-five
fathoms from the coast.

Glenarvan, Robert, Wilson, and Mulrady, jumped into the water.
The raft was firmly moored to the nearest rocks. The ladies
were carried to land without wetting a fold of their dresses,
and soon the whole party, with their arms and provisions,
were finally landed on these much dreaded New Zealand shores.

CHAPTER VII THE MAORI WAR

GLENARVAN would have liked to start without an hour's delay,
and follow the coast to Auckland. But since the morning heavy
clouds had been gathering, and toward eleven o'clock, after
the landing was effected, the vapors condensed into violent rain,
so that instead of starting they had to look for shelter.

Wilson was fortunate enough to discover what just suited their wants:
a grotto hollowed out by the sea in the basaltic rocks.
Here the travelers took shelter with their arms and provisions.
In the cave they found a ready-garnered store of dried sea-weed,
which formed a convenient couch; for fire, they lighted some
wood near the mouth of the cavern, and dried themselves as well
as they could.

John hoped that the duration of this deluge of rain would be in an
inverse ratio to its violence, but he was doomed to disappointment.
Hours passed without any abatement of its fury. Toward noon
the wind freshened, and increased the force of the storm.
The most patient of men would have rebelled at such an untoward incident;
but what could be done; without any vehicle, they could not brave
such a tempest; and, after all, unless the natives appeared on
the scene, a delay of twelve hours was not so much consequence,
as the journey to Auckland was only a matter of a few days.
During this involuntary halt, the conversation turned on the incidents
of the New Zealand war. But to understand and appreciate the critical
position into which these MACQUARIE passengers were thrown,

something ought to be known of the history of the struggle which had deluged the island of Ika-na-Mani with blood.

Since the arrival of Abel Tasman in Cook's Strait, on the 16th of December, 1642, though the New Zealanders had often been visited by European vessels, they had maintained their liberty in their several islands. No European power had thought of taking possession of this archipelago, which commands the whole Pacific Ocean. The missionaries stationed at various points were the sole channels of Christian civilization. Some of them, especially the Anglicans, prepared the minds of the New Zealand chiefs for submitting to the English yoke. It was cleverly managed, and these chiefs were influenced to sign a letter addressed to Queen Victoria to ask her protection. But the most clearsighted of them saw the folly of this step; and one of them, after having affixed his tattoo-mark to the letter by way of signature, uttered these prophetic words: "We have lost our country! henceforth it is not ours; soon the stranger will come and take it, and we shall be his slaves."

And so it was; on January 29, 1840, the English corvette HERALD arrived to claim possession.

From the year 1840, till the day the DUNCAN left the Clyde, nothing had happened here that Paganel did not know and he was ready to impart his information to his companions.

"Madam," said he, in answer to Lady Helena's questions, "I must repeat what I had occasion to remark before, that the New Zealanders are a courageous people, who yielded for a moment, but afterward fought foot to foot against the English invaders. The Maori tribes are organized like the old clans of Scotland. They are so many great families owning a chief, who is very jealous of his prerogative. The men of this race are proud and brave, one tribe tall, with straight hair, like the Maltese, or the Jews of Bagdad; the other smaller, thickset like mulattoes, but robust, haughty, and warlike. They had a famous chief, named Hihi, a real Vercingetorix, so that you need not be astonished that the war with the English has become chronic in the Northern Island, for in it is the famous tribe of the Waikatos, who defend their lands under the leadership of William Thompson."

"But," said John Mangles, "are not the English in possession of the principal points in New Zealand?"

"Certainly, dear John," replied Paganel. "After Captain Hobson took formal possession, and became governor, nine colonies were founded at various times between 1840 and 1862, in the most favorable situations. These formed the nucleus of nine provinces, four in the North Island and five in the southern island, with a total population of 184,346 inhabitants on the 30th of June, 1864."

"But what about this interminable war?" asked John Mangles.

"Well," said Paganel, "six long months have gone by since we left Europe, and I cannot say what may have happened during that time, with the exception of a few facts which I gathered from the newspapers

of Maryborough and Seymour during our Australian journey.
At that time the fighting was very lively in the Northern Island."

"And when did the war commence?" asked Mary Grant.

"Recommence, you mean, my dear young lady," replied Paganel;
"for there was an insurrection so far back as 1845. The present
war began toward the close of 1863; but long before that date
the Maories were occupied in making preparations to shake off
the English yoke. The national party among the natives carried
on an active propaganda for the election of a Maori ruler.
The object was to make old Potatau king, and to fix as the capital
of the new kingdom his village, which lay between the Waikato
and Waipa Rivers. Potatau was an old man, remarkable rather
for cunning than bravery; but he had a Prime Minister who was
both intelligent and energetic, a descendant of the Ngatihahuas,
who occupied the isthmus before the arrival of the strangers.
This minister, William Thompson, became the soul of the War
of Independence, and organized the Maori troops, with great skill.
Under this guidance a Taranaki chief gathered the scattered tribes
around the same flag; a Waikato chief formed a 'Land League,'
intended to prevent the natives from selling their land
to the English Government, and warlike feasts were held
just as in civilized countries on the verge of revolution.
The English newspapers began to notice these alarming symptoms,
and the government became seriously disturbed at these
'Land League' proceedings. In short, the train was laid,
and the mine was ready to explode. Nothing was wanted but the spark,
or rather the shock of rival interests to produce the spark.

"This shock took place in 1860, in the Taranaki province on the southwest
coast of Ika-na-Mani. A native had six hundred acres of land in the
neighborhood of New Plymouth. He sold them to the English Government;
but when the surveyor came to measure the purchased land, the chief
Kingi protested, and by the month of March he had made the six hundred
acres in question into a fortified camp, surrounded with high palisades.
Some days after Colonel Gold carried this fortress at the head of
his troops, and that day heard the first shot fired of the native war."

"Have the rebels been successful up to this time?"

"Yes, Madam, and the English themselves have often been
compelled to admire the courage and bravery of the
New Zealanders. Their mode of warfare is of the guerilla type;
they form skirmishing parties, come down in small detachments,
and pillage the colonists' homes. General Cameron had no
easy time in the campaigns, during which every bush had to
be searched. In 1863, after a long and sanguinary struggle,
the Maories were entrenched in strong and fortified position
on the Upper Waikato, at the end of a chain of steep hills,
and covered by three miles of forts. The native prophets
called on all the Maori population to defend the soil,
and promised the extermination of the pakekas, or white men.
General Cameron had three thousand volunteers at his disposal,
and they gave no quarter to the Maories after the barbarous
murder of Captain Sprent. Several bloody engagements
took place; in some instances the fighting lasted twelve
hours before the Maories yielded to the English cannonade.
The heart of the army was the fierce Waikato tribe under

William Thompson. This native general commanded at the outset 2,500 warriors, afterward increased to 8,000. The men of Shongi and Heki, two powerful chiefs, came to his assistance. The women took their part in the most trying labors of this patriotic war. But right has not always might. After severe struggles General Cameron succeeded in subduing the Waikato district, but empty and depopulated, for the Maories escaped in all directions. Some wonderful exploits were related. Four hundred Maories who were shut up in the fortress of Orakau, besieged by 1,000 English, under Brigadier-General Carey, without water or provisions, refused to surrender, but one day at noon cut their way through the then decimated 40th Regiment, and escaped to the marshes."

"But," asked John Mangles, "did the submission of the Waikato district put an end to this sanguinary war?"

"No, my friend," replied Paganel. "The English resolved to march on Taranaki province and besiege Mataitawa, William Thompson's fortress. But they did not carry it without great loss. Just as I was leaving Paris, I heard that the Governor and the General had accepted the submission of the Tauranga tribes, and left them in possession of three-fourths of their lands. It was also rumored that the principal chief of the rebellion, William Thompson, was inclined to surrender, but the Australian papers have not confirmed this, but rather the contrary, and I should not be surprised to find that at this moment the war is going on with renewed vigor."

"Then, according to you, Paganel," said Glenarvan, "this struggle is still going on in the provinces of Auckland and Taranaki?"

"I think so."

"This very province where the MACQUARIE'S wreck has deposited us."

"Exactly. We have landed a few miles above Kawhia harbor, where the Maori flag is probably still floating."

"Then our most prudent course would be to keep toward the north," remarked Glenarvan.

"By far the most prudent," said Paganel. "The New Zealanders are incensed against Europeans, and especially against the English. Therefore let us avoid falling into their hands."

"We might have the good fortune to fall in with a detachment of European troops," said Lady Helena.

"We may, Madam," replied the geographer; "but I do not expect it. Detached parties do not like to go far into the country, where the smallest tussock, the thinnest brushwood, may conceal an accomplished marksman. I don't fancy we shall pick up an escort of the 40th Regiment. But there are mission-stations on this west coast, and we shall be able to make them our halting-places till we get to Auckland."

CHAPTER VIII ON THE ROAD TO AUCKLAND

ON the 7th of February, at six o'clock in the morning, the signal for departure was given by Glenarvan. During the night the rain had ceased. The sky was veiled with light gray clouds, which moderated the heat of the sun, and allowed the travelers to venture on a journey by day.

Paganel had measured on the map a distance of eighty miles between Point Kawhia and Auckland; it was an eight days' journey if they made ten miles a day. But instead of following the windings of the coast, he thought it better to make for a point thirty miles off, at the confluence of the Waikato and the Waipa, at the village of Ngarnavahia. The "overland track" passes that point, and is rather a path than a road, practicable for the vehicles which go almost across the island, from Napier, in Hawke's Bay, to Auckland. From this village it would be easy to reach Drury, and there they could rest in an excellent hotel, highly recommended by Dr. Hochstetter.

The travelers, each carrying a share of the provisions, commenced to follow the shore of Aotea Bay. From prudential motives they did not allow themselves to straggle, and by instinct they kept a look-out over the undulating plains to the eastward, ready with their loaded carbines. Paganel, map in hand, took a professional pleasure in verifying the minutest details.

The country looked like an immense prairie which faded into distance, and promised an easy walk. But the travelers were undeceived when they came to the edge of this verdant plain. The grass gave way to a low scrub of small bushes bearing little white flowers, mixed with those innumerable tall ferns with which the lands of New Zealand abound. They had to cut a path across the plain, through these woody stems, and this was a matter of some difficulty, but at eight o'clock in the evening the first slopes of the Hakarihoata Ranges were turned, and the party camped immediately. After a fourteen miles' march, they might well think of resting.

Neither wagon or tent being available, they sought repose beneath some magnificent Norfolk Island pines. They had plenty of rugs which make good beds. Glenarvan took every possible precaution for the night. His companions and he, well armed, were to watch in turns, two and two, till daybreak. No fires were lighted. Barriers of fire are a potent preservation from wild beasts, but New Zealand has neither tiger, nor lion, nor bear, nor any wild animal, but the Maori adequately fills their place, and a fire would only have served to attract this two-footed jaguar.

The night passed pleasantly with the exception of the attack of the sand-flies, called by the natives, "ngamu," and the visit of the audacious family of rats, who exercised their teeth on the provisions.

Next day, on the 8th of February, Paganel rose more sanguine, and almost reconciled to the country. The Maories, whom he particularly dreaded, had not yet appeared, and these ferocious cannibals had not molested him even in his dreams.
"I begin to think that our little journey will end favorably. This evening we shall reach the confluence of the Waipa and Waikato, and after that there is not much chance of meeting natives

on the way to Auckland."

"How far is it now," said Glenarvan, "to the confluence of the Waipa and Waikato?"

"Fifteen miles; just about what we did yesterday."

"But we shall be terribly delayed if this interminable scrub continues to obstruct our path."

"No," said Paganel, "we shall follow the banks of the Waipa, and then we shall have no obstacle, but on the contrary, a very easy road."

"Well, then," said Glenarvan, seeing the ladies ready, "let us make a start."

During the early part of the day, the thick brushwood seriously impeded their progress. Neither wagon nor horses could have passed where travelers passed, so that their Australian vehicle was but slightly regretted. Until practicable wagon roads are cut through these forests of scrub, New Zealand will only be accessible to foot passengers. The ferns, whose name is legion, concur with the Maories in keeping strangers off the lands.

The little party overcame many obstacles in crossing the plains in which the Hakarihoata Ranges rise. But before noon they reached the banks of the Waipa, and followed the northward course of the river.

The Major and Robert, without leaving their companions, shot some snipe and partridge under the low shrubs of the plain. Olbinett, to save time, plucked the birds as he went along.

Paganel was less absorbed by the culinary importance of the game than by the desire of obtaining some bird peculiar to New Zealand. His curiosity as a naturalist overcame his hunger as a traveler. He called to mind the peculiarities of the "tui" of the natives, sometimes called the mocking-bird from its incessant chuckle, and sometimes "the parson," in allusion to the white cravat it wears over its black, cassock-like plumage.

"The tui," said Paganel to the Major, "grows so fat during the Winter that it makes him ill, and prevents him from flying. Then he tears his breast with his beak, to relieve himself of his fat, and so becomes lighter. Does not that seem to you singular, McNabbs?"

"So singular that I don't believe a word of it," replied the Major.

Paganel, to his great regret, could not find a single specimen, or he might have shown the incredulous Major the bloody scars on the breast. But he was more fortunate with a strange animal which, hunted by men, cats and dogs, has fled toward the unoccupied country, and is fast disappearing from the fauna of New Zealand. Robert, searching like a ferret, came upon a nest made of interwoven roots, and in it a pair of birds destitute of wings and tail, with four toes, a long snipe-like beak, and a covering of white feathers over the whole body, singular creatures, which seemed to connect the oviparous tribes with the mam-mifers.

It was the New Zealand "kiwi," the _Apteryx australis_ of naturalists, which lives with equal satisfaction on larvae, insects, worms or seeds. This bird is peculiar to the country. It has been introduced into very few of the zoological collections of Europe. Its graceless shape and comical motions have always attracted the notice of travelers, and during the great exploration of the Astrolabe and the Zelee, Dumont d'Urville was principally charged by the Academy of Sciences to bring back a specimen of these singular birds. But in spite of rewards offered to the natives, he could not obtain a single specimen.

Paganel, who was elated at such a piece of luck, tied the two birds together, and carried them along with the intention of presenting them to the Jardin des Plantes, in Paris. "Presented by M. Jacques Paganel." He mentally saw the flattering inscription on the handsomest cage in the gardens. Sanguine geographer!

The party pursued their way without fatigue along the banks of the Waipa. The country was quite deserted; not a trace of natives, nor any track that could betray the existence of man. The stream was fringed with tall bushes, or glided along sloping banks, so that nothing obstructed the view of the low range of hills which closed the eastern end of the valley. With their grotesque shapes, and their outlines lost in a deceptive haze, they brought to mind giant animals, worthy of antediluvian times. They might have been a herd of enormous whales, suddenly turned to stone. These disrupted masses proclaimed their essentially volcanic character. New Zealand is, in fact, a formation of recent plutonic origin. Its emergence from the sea is constantly increasing. Some points are known to have risen six feet in twenty years. Fire still runs across its center, shakes it, convulses it, and finds an outlet in many places by the mouths of geysers and the craters of volcanoes.

At four in the afternoon, nine miles had been easily accomplished. According to the map which Paganel constantly referred to, the confluence of the Waipa and Waikato ought to be reached about five miles further on, and there the night halt could be made. Two or three days would then suffice for the fifty miles which lay between them and the capital; and if Glenarvan happened to fall in with the mail coach that plies between Hawkes' Bay and Auckland twice a month, eight hours would be sufficient.

"Therefore," said Glenarvan, "we shall be obliged to camp during the night once more."

"Yes," said Paganel, "but I hope for the last time."

"I am very glad to think so, for it is very trying for Lady Helena and Mary Grant."

"And they never utter a murmur," added John Mangles. "But I think I heard you mention a village at the confluence of these rivers."

"Yes," said the geographer, "here it is, marked on Johnston's map. It is Ngarnavahia, two miles below the junction."

"Well, could we not stay there for the night? Lady Helena and Miss Grant would not grudge two miles more to find a hotel even of a humble character."

"A hotel!" cried Paganel, "a hotel in a Maori village! you would not find an inn, not a tavern! This village will be a mere cluster of huts, and so far from seeking rest there, my advice is that you give it a wide berth."

"Your old fears, Paganel!" retorted Glenarvan.

"My dear Lord, where Maories are concerned, distrust is safer than confidence. I do not know on what terms they are with the English, whether the insurrection is suppressed or successful, or whether indeed the war may not be going on with full vigor. Modesty apart, people like us would be a prize, and I must say, I would rather forego a taste of Maori hospitality. I think it certainly more prudent to avoid this village of Ngarnavahia, to skirt it at a distance, so as to avoid all encounters with the natives. When we reach Drury it will be another thing, and there our brave ladies will be able to recruit their strength at their leisure."

This advice prevailed. Lady Helena preferred to pass another night in the open air, and not to expose her companions to danger. Neither Mary Grant or she wished to halt, and they continued their march along the river.

Two hours later, the first shades of evening began to fall. The sun, before disappearing below the western horizon, darted some bright rays through an opening in the clouds. The distant eastern summits were empurpled with the parting glories of the day. It was like a flying salute addressed to the way-worn travelers.

Glenarvan and his friends hastened their steps, they knew how short the twilight is in this high latitude, and how quickly the night follows it. They were very anxious to reach the confluence of the two rivers before the darkness overtook them. But a thick fog rose from the ground, and made it very difficult to see the way.

Fortunately hearing stood them in the stead of sight; shortly a nearer sound of water indicated that the confluence was at hand. At eight o'clock the little troop arrived at the point where the Waipa loses itself in the Waikato, with a moaning sound of meeting waves.

"There is the Waikato!" cried Paganel, "and the road to Auckland is along its right bank."

"We shall see that to-morrow," said the Major, "Let us camp here. It seems to me that that dark shadow is that of a little clump of trees grown expressly to shelter us. Let us have supper and then get some sleep."

"Supper by all means," said Paganel, "but no fire; nothing but biscuit and dried meat. We have reached this spot incognito, let us try and get away in the same manner. By good luck, the fog is in our favor."

The clump of trees was reached and all concurred in the wish of the geographer. The cold supper was eaten without a sound, and presently a profound sleep overcame the travelers, who were tolerably fatigued with their fifteen miles' march.

CHAPTER IX INTRODUCTION TO THE CANNIBALS

THE next morning at daybreak a thick fog was clinging to the surface of the river. A portion of the vapors that saturated the air were condensed by the cold, and lay as a dense cloud on the water. But the rays of the sun soon broke through the watery mass and melted it away.

A tongue of land, sharply pointed and bristling with bushes, projected into the uniting streams. The swifter waters of the Waipa rushed against the current of the Waikato for a quarter of a mile before they mingled with it; but the calm and majestic river soon quieted the noisy stream and carried it off quietly in its course to the Pacific Ocean.

When the vapor disappeared, a boat was seen ascending the current of the Waikato. It was a canoe seventy feet long, five broad, and three deep; the prow raised like that of a Venetian gondola, and the whole hollowed out of a trunk of a kahikatea. A bed of dry fern was laid at the bottom. It was swiftly rowed by eight oars, and steered with a paddle by a man seated in the stern.

This man was a tall Maori, about forty-five years of age, broad-chested, muscular, with powerfully developed hands and feet. His prominent and deeply-furrowed brow, his fierce look, and sinister expression, gave him a formidable aspect.

Tattooing, or "moko," as the New Zealanders call it, is a mark of great distinction. None is worthy of these honorary lines, who has not distinguished himself in repeated fights. The slaves and the lower class can not obtain this decoration. Chiefs of high position may be known by the finish and precision and truth of the design, which sometimes covers their whole bodies with the figures of animals. Some are found to undergo the painful operation of "moko" five times. The more illustrious, the more illustrated, is the rule of New Zealand.

Dumont D'Urville has given some curious details as to this custom. He justly observes that "moko" is the counterpart of the armorial bearings of which many families in Europe are so vain. But he remarks that there is this difference: the armorial bearings of Europe are frequently a proof only of the merits of the first who bore them, and are no certificate of the merits of his descendants; while the individual coat-of-arms of the Maori is an irrefragible proof that it was earned by the display of extraordinary personal courage.

The practice of tattooing, independently of the consideration it procures, has also a useful aspect. It gives the cu-taneous system an increased thickness, enabling it to resist the inclemency of the season and the incessant attacks of the mosquito.

As to the chief who was steering the canoe, there could be no mistake. The sharpened albatross bone used by the Maori tattooer, had five times scored his countenance. He was in his fifth edition, and betrayed it in his haughty bearing.

His figure, draped in a large mat woven of "phormium" trimmed with dogskins, was clothed with a pair of cotton drawers, blood-stained from recent combats. From the pendant lobe of his ears hung earrings of green jade, and round his neck a quivering necklace of "pounamous," a kind of jade stone sacred among the New Zealanders. At his side lay an English rifle, and a "patou-patou," a kind of two-headed ax of an emerald color, and eighteen inches long. Beside him sat nine armed warriors of inferior rank, ferocious-looking fellows, some of them suffering from recent wounds. They sat quite motionless, wrapped in their flax mantles. Three savage-looking dogs lay at their feet. The eight rowers in the prow seemed to be servants or slaves of the chief. They rowed vigorously, and propelled the boat against the not very rapid current of the Waikato, with extraordinary velocity.

In the center of this long canoe, with their feet tied together, sat ten European prisoners closely packed together.

It was Glenarvan and Lady Helena, Mary Grant, Robert, Paganel, the Major, John Mangles, the steward, and the two sailors.

The night before, the little band had unwittingly, owing to the mist, encamped in the midst of a numerous party of natives. Toward the middle of the night they were surprised in their sleep, were made prisoners, and carried on board the canoe. They had not been ill-treated, so far, but all attempts at resistance had been vain. Their arms and ammunition were in the hands of the savages, and they would soon have been targets for their own balls.

They were soon aware, from a few English words used by the natives, that they were a retreating party of the tribe who had been beaten and decimated by the English troops, and were on their way back to the Upper Waikato. The Maori chief, whose principal warriors had been picked off by the soldiers of the 42nd Regiment, was returning to make a final appeal to the tribes of the Waikato district, so that he might go to the aid of the indomitable William Thompson, who was still holding his own against the conquerors. The chief's name was "Kai-Koumou," a name of evil boding in the native language, meaning "He who eats the limbs of his enemy." He was bold and brave, but his cruelty was equally remarkable. No pity was to be expected at his hands. His name was well known to the English soldiers, and a price had been set on his head by the governor of New Zealand.

This terrible blow befell Glenarvan at the very moment when he was about to reach the long-desired haven of Auckland, and so regain his own country; but no one who looked at his cool, calm features, could have guessed the anguish he endured. Glenarvan always rose to his misfortunes. He felt that his part was to be the strength and the example of his wife and companions; that he was the head and chief; ready to die for the rest if circumstances required it. He was of a deeply religious turn of mind, and never lost his trust in Providence nor his belief in the sacred character of his enterprise.

In the midst of this crowning peril he did not give way to any feeling of regret at having been induced to venture into this country of savages.

His companions were worthy of him; they entered into his lofty views; and judging by their haughty demeanor, it would scarcely have been supposed that they were hurrying to the final catastrophe. With one accord, and by Glenarvan's advice, they resolved to affect utter indifference before the natives. It was the only way to impress these ferocious natures. Savages in general, and particularly the Maories, have a notion of dignity from which they never derogate. They respect, above all things, coolness and courage. Glenarvan was aware that by this mode of procedure, he and his companions would spare themselves needless humiliation.

From the moment of embarking, the natives, who were very taciturn, like all savages, had scarcely exchanged a word, but from the few sentences they did utter, Glenarvan felt certain that the English language was familiar to them. He therefore made up his mind to question the chief on the fate that awaited them. Addressing himself to Kai-Koumou, he said in a perfectly unconcerned voice:

"Where are we going, chief?"

Kai-Koumou looked coolly at him and made no answer.

"What are you going to do with us?" pursued Glenarvan.

A sudden gleam flashed into the eyes of Kai-Koumou, and he said in a deep voice:

"Exchange you, if your own people care to have you; eat you if they don't."

Glenarvan asked no further questions; but hope revived in his heart. He concluded that some Maori chiefs had fallen into the hands of the English, and that the natives would try to get them exchanged. So they had a chance of salvation, and the case was not quite so desperate.

The canoe was speeding rapidly up the river. Paganel, whose excitable temperament always rebounded from one extreme to the other, had quite regained his spirits. He consoled himself that the natives were saving them the trouble of the journey to the English outposts, and that was so much gain. So he took it quite quietly and followed on the map the course of the Waikato across the plains and valleys of the province. Lady Helena and Mary Grant, concealing their alarm, conversed in a low voice with Glenarvan, and the keenest physiognomists would have failed to see any anxiety in their faces.

The Waikato is the national river in New Zealand. It is to the Maories what the Rhine is to the Germans, and the Danube to the Slavs. In its course of 200 miles it waters the finest lands of the North Island, from the province of Wellington to the province of Auckland. It gave its name to all those indomitable tribes of the river district, which rose _en masse_ against the invaders.

The waters of this river are still almost strangers to any craft but the native canoe. The most audacious tourist will scarcely venture to invade these sacred shores; in fact, the Upper Waikato is sealed against profane Europeans.

Paganel was aware of the feelings of veneration with which the natives regard this great arterial stream. He knew that the English and German naturalists had never penetrated further than its junction with the Waipa. He wondered how far the good pleasure of Kai-Koumou would carry his captives? He could not have guessed, but for hearing the word "Taupo" repeatedly uttered between the chief and his warriors. He consulted his map and saw that "Taupo" was the name of a lake celebrated in geographical annals, and lying in the most mountainous part of the island, at the southern extremity of Auckland province. The Waikato passes through this lake and then flows on for 120 miles.

CHAPTER X A MOMENTOUS INTERVIEW

AN unfathomable gulf twenty-five miles long, and twenty miles broad was produced, but long before historic times, by the falling in of caverns among the trachytic lavas of the center of the island. And these waters falling from the surrounding heights have taken possession of this vast basin. The gulf has become a lake, but it is also an abyss, and no lead-line has yet sounded its depths.

Such is the wondrous lake of Taupo, lying 1,250 feet above the level of the sea, and in view of an amphitheater of mountains 2,400 feet high. On the west are rocky peaks of great size; on the north lofty summits clothed with low trees; on the east a broad beach with a road track, and covered with pumice stones, which shimmer through the leafy screen of the bushes; on the southern side rise volcanic cones behind a forest flat. Such is the majestic frame that incloses this vast sheet of water whose roaring tempests rival the cyclones of Ocean.

The whole region boils like an immense cauldron hung over subterranean fires. The ground vibrates from the agitation of the central furnace. Hot springs filter out everywhere. The crust of the earth cracks in great rifts like a cake, too quickly baked.

About a quarter of a mile off, on a craggy spur of the mountain stood a "pah," or Maori fortress. The prisoners, whose feet and hands were liberated, were landed one by one, and conducted into it by the warriors. The path which led up to the intrenchment, lay across fields of "phormium" and a grove of beautiful trees, the "kai-kateas" with persistent leaves and red berries; "dracaenas australis," the "ti-trees" of the natives, whose crown is a graceful counterpart of the cabbage-palm, and "huious," which are used to give a black dye to cloth. Large doves with metallic sheen on their plumage, and a world of starlings with reddish carmeles, flew away at the approach of the natives.

After a rather circuitous walk, Glenarvan and his party arrived at the "pah."

The fortress was defended by an outer inclosure of strong palisades,
fifteen feet high; a second line of stakes; then a fence composed
of osiers, with loop-holes, inclosed

V. IV. Verne the inner space, that is the plateau of the "pah,"
on which were erected the Maori buildings, and about forty
huts arranged symmetrically.

When the captives approached they were horror-struck at the sight
of the heads which adorned the posts of the inner circle.
Lady Helena and Mary Grant turned away their eyes more with disgust
than with terror. These heads were those of hostile chiefs who had
fallen in battle, and whose bodies had served to feed the conquerors.
The geographer recognized that it was so, from their eye sockets
being hollow and deprived of eye-balls.

Glenarvan and his companions had taken in all this scene at a glance.
They stood near an empty house, waiting the pleasure of the chief,
and exposed to the abuse of a crowd of old crones. This troop of harpies
surrounded them, shaking their fists, howling and vociferating.
Some English words that escaped their coarse mouths left no doubt
that they were clamoring for immediate vengeance.

In the midst of all these cries and threats, Lady Helena,
tranquil to all outward seeming, affected an indifference she
was far from feeling. This courageous woman made heroic efforts
to restrain herself, lest she should disturb Glenarvan's coolness.
Poor Mary Grant felt her heart sink within her, and John Mangles
stood by ready to die in her behalf. His companions bore
the deluge of invectives each according to his disposition;
the Major with utter indifference, Paganel with exasperation
that increased every moment.

Glenarvan, to spare Lady Helena the attacks of these witches,
walked straight up to Kai-Koumou, and pointing to the hideous group:

"Send them away," said he.

The Maori chief stared fixedly at his prisoner without speaking;
and then, with a nod, he silenced the noisy horde. Glenarvan bowed,
as a sign of thanks, and went slowly back to his place.

At this moment a hundred Maories were assembled in the "pah,"
old men, full grown men, youths; the former were calm, but gloomy,
awaiting the orders of Kai-Koumou; the others gave themselves up
to the most violent sorrow, bewailing their parents and friends
who had fallen in the late engagements.

Kai-Koumou was the only one of all the chiefs that obeyed the call
of William Thompson, who had returned to the lake district,
and he was the first to announce to his tribe the defeat of the national
insurrection, beaten on the plains of the lower Waikato. Of the two
hundred warriors who, under his orders, hastened to the defence
of the soil, one hundred and fifty were missing on his return.
Allowing for a number being made prisoners by the invaders,
how many must be lying on the field of battle, never to return
to the country of their ancestors!

This was the secret of the outburst of grief with which the tribe saluted the arrival of Kai-Koumou. Up to that moment nothing had been known of the last defeat, and the fatal news fell on them like a thunder clap.

Among the savages, sorrow is always manifested by physical signs; the parents and friends of deceased warriors, the women especially, lacerated their faces and shoulders with sharpened shells. The blood spurted out and blended with their tears. Deep wounds denoted great despair. The unhappy Maories, bleeding and excited, were hideous to look upon.

There was another serious element in their grief. Not only had they lost the relative or friend they mourned, but his bones would be missing in the family mausoleum. In the Maori religion the possession of these relics is regarded as indispensable to the destinies of the future life; not the perishable flesh, but the bones, which are collected with the greatest care, cleaned, scraped, polished, even varnished, and then deposited in the "oudoupa," that is the "house of glory." These tombs are adorned with wooden statues, representing with perfect exactness the tattoo of the deceased. But now their tombs would be left empty, the religious rites would be unsolemnized, and the bones that escaped the teeth of the wild dog would whiten without burial on the field of battle.

Then the sorrowful chorus redoubled. The menaces of the women were intensified by the imprecations of the men against the Europeans. Abusive epithets were lavished, the accompanying gestures became more violent. The howl was about to end in brutal action.

Kai-Koumou, fearing that he might be overpowered by the fanatics of his tribe, conducted his prisoners to a sacred place, on an abruptly raised plateau at the other end of the "pah." This hut rested against a mound elevated a hundred feet above it, which formed the steep outer buttress of the entrenchment. In this "Ware-Atoua," sacred house, the priests or arikis taught the Maories about a Triune God, father, son, and bird, or spirit. The large, well constructed hut, contained the sacred and choice food which Maoui-Ranga-Rangui eats by the mouths of his priests.

In this place, and safe for the moment from the frenzied natives, the captives lay down on the flax mats. Lady Helena was quite exhausted, her moral energies prostrate, and she fell helpless into her husband's arms.

Glenarvan pressed her to his bosom and said:

"Courage, my dear Helena; Heaven will not forsake us!"

Robert was scarcely in when he jumped on Wilson's shoulders, and squeezed his head through a crevice left between the roof and the walls, from which chaplets of amulets were hung. From that elevation he could see the whole extent of the "pah," and as far as Kai-Koumou's house.

"They are all crowding round the chief," said he softly. "They are throwing their arms about. . . . They are howling. . . .

. Kai-Koumou is trying to speak."

Then he was silent for a few minutes.

"Kai-Koumou is speaking. . . . The savages are quieter.
. . . . They are listening. . . . ."

"Evidently," said the Major, "this chief has a personal interest in protecting us. He wants to exchange his prisoners for some chiefs of his tribe! But will his warriors consent?"

"Yes! . . . They are listening. . . . . They have dispersed, some are gone into their huts. . . . The others have left the intrenchment."

"Are you sure?" said the Major.

"Yes, Mr. McNabbs," replied Robert, "Kai-Koumou is left alone with the warriors of his canoe. . . . . Oh! one of them is coming up here. . . . ."

"Come down, Robert," said Glenarvan.

At this moment, Lady Helena who had risen, seized her husband's arm.

"Edward," she said in a resolute tone, "neither Mary Grant nor I must fall into the hands of these savages alive!"

And so saying, she handed Glenarvan a loaded revolver.

"Fire-arm!" exclaimed Glenarvan, with flashing eyes.

"Yes! the Maories do not search their prisoners. But, Edward, this is for us, not for them."

Glenarvan slipped the revolver under his coat; at the same moment the mat at the entrance was raised, and a native entered.

He motioned to the prisoners to follow him. Glenarvan and the rest walked across the "pah" and stopped before Kai-Koumou. He was surrounded by the principal warriors of his tribe, and among them the Maori whose canoe joined that of the Kai-Koumou at the confluence of Pohain-henna, on the Waikato. He was a man about forty years of age, powerfully built and of fierce and cruel aspect. His name was Kara-Tete, meaning "the irascible" in the native tongue. Kai-Koumou treated him with a certain tone of respect, and by the fineness of his tattoo, it was easy to perceive that Kara-Tete held a lofty position in the tribe, but a keen observer would have guessed the feeling of rivalry that existed between these two chiefs. The Major observed that the influence of Kara-Tete gave umbrage to Kai-Koumou. They both ruled the Waikato tribes, and were equal in authority. During this interview Kai-Koumou smiled, but his eyes betrayed a deep-seated enmity.

Kai-Koumou interrogated Glenarvan.

"You are English?" said he.

"Yes," replied Glenarvan, unhesitatingly, as his nationality would facilitate the exchange.

"And your companions?" said Kai-Koumou.

"My companions are English like myself. We are shipwrecked travelers, but it may be important to state that we have taken no part in the war."

"That matters little!" was the brutal answer of Kara-Tete. "Every Englishman is an enemy. Your people invaded our island! They robbed our fields! they burned our villages!"

"They were wrong!" said Glenarvan, quietly. "I say so, because I think it, not because I am in your power."

"Listen," said Kai-Koumou, "the Tohonga, the chief priest of Noui-Atoua has fallen into the hands of your brethren; he is a prisoner among the Pakekas. Our deity has commanded us to ransom him. For my own part, I would rather have torn out your heart, I would have stuck your head, and those of your companions, on the posts of that palisade. But Noui-Atoua has spoken."

As he uttered these words, Kai-Koumou, who till now had been quite unmoved, trembled with rage, and his features expressed intense ferocity.

Then after a few minutes' interval he proceeded more calmly.

"Do you think the English will exchange you for our Tohonga?"

Glenarvan hesitated, all the while watching the Maori chief.

"I do not know," said he, after a moment of silence.

"Speak," returned Kai-Koumou, "is your life worth that of our Tohonga?"

"No," replied Glenarvan. "I am neither a chief nor a priest among my own people."

Paganel, petrified at this reply, looked at Glenarvan in amazement. Kai-Koumou appeared equally astonished.

"You doubt it then?" said he.

"I do not know," replied Glenarvan.

"Your people will not accept you as an exchange for Tohonga?"

"Me alone? no," repeated Glenarvan. "All of us perhaps they might."

"Our Maori custom," replied Kai-Koumou, "is head for head."

"Offer first these ladies in exchange for your priest," said Glenarvan, pointing to Lady Helena and Mary Grant.

Lady Helena was about to interrupt him. But the Major held her back.

"Those two ladies," continued Glenarvan, bowing respectfully toward Lady Helena and Mary Grant, "are personages of rank in their own country."

The warrior gazed coldly at his prisoner. An evil smile relaxed his lips for a moment; then he controlled himself, and in a voice of ill-concealed anger:

"Do you hope to deceive Kai-Koumou with lying words, accursed Pakeka? Can not the eyes of Kai-Koumou read hearts?"

And pointing to Lady Helena: "That is your wife?" he said.

"No! mine!" exclaimed Kara-Tete.

And then pushing his prisoners aside, he laid his hand on the shoulder of Lady Helena, who turned pale at his touch.

"Edward!" cried the unfortunate woman in terror.

Glenarvan, without a word, raised his arm, a shot! and Kara-Tete fell at his feet.

The sound brought a crowd of natives to the spot. A hundred arms were ready, and Glenarvan's revolver was snatched from him.

Kai-Koumou glanced at Glenarvan with a curious expression: then with one hand protecting Glenarvan, with the other he waved off the crowd who were rushing on the party.

At last his voice was heard above the tumult.

"Taboo! Taboo!" he shouted.

At that word the crowd stood still before Glenarvan and his companions, who for the time were preserved by a supernatural influence.

A few minutes after they were re-conducted to Ware-Atoua, which was their prison. But Robert Grant and Paganel were not with them.

CHAPTER XI THE CHIEF'S FUNERAL

KAI-KOUMOU, as frequently happens among the Maories, joined the title of ariki to that of tribal chief. He was invested with the dignity of priest, and, as such, he had the power to throw over persons or things the superstitious protection of the "taboo."

The "taboo," which is common to all the Polynesian races, has the primary effect of isolating the "tabooed" person and preventing the use of "tabooed" things. According to the Maori doctrine, anyone who laid sacrilegious hands on what had been declared "taboo," would be punished with death by the insulted deity, and even if the god delayed the vindication of his power, the priests took care to accelerate his vengeance.

By the chiefs, the "taboo" is made a political engine, except in some cases, for domestic reasons. For instance, a native is tabooed for several days when his hair is cut; when he is tattooed; when he is building a canoe, or a house; when he is seriously ill, and when he is dead.

If excessive consumption threatens to exterminate the fish
of a river, or ruin the early crop of sweet potatoes,
these things are put under the protection of the taboo.
If a chief wishes to clear his house of hangers-on, he taboos it;
if an English trader displeases him he is tabooed.
His interdict has the effect of the old royal "veto."

If an object is tabooed, no one can touch it with impunity.
When a native is under the interdict, certain aliments
are denied him for a prescribed period. If he is relieved,
as regards the severe diet, his slaves feed him with the viands
he is forbidden to touch with his hands; if he is poor
and has no slaves, he has to take up the food with his mouth,
like an animal.

In short, the most trifling acts of the Maories are directed and modified
by this singular custom, the deity is brought into constant contact
with their daily life. The taboo has the same weight as a law;
or rather, the code of the Maories, indisputable and undisputed,
is comprised in the frequent applications of the taboo.

As to the prisoners confined in the Ware-Atoua, it was an
arbitrary taboo which had saved them from the fury of the tribe.
Some of the natives, friends and partisans of Kai-Koumou,
desisted at once on hearing their chief's voice, and protected
the captives from the rest.

Glenarvan cherished no illusive hopes as to his own fate;
nothing but his death could atone for the murder of a chief,
and among these people death was only the concluding act of a
martyrdom of torture. Glenarvan, therefore, was fully prepared
to pay the penalty of the righteous indignation that nerved
his arm, but he hoped that the wrath of Kai-Koumou would not
extend beyond himself.

What a night he and his companions passed! Who could picture
their agonies or measure their sufferings? Robert and Paganel had
not been restored to them, but their fate was no doubtful matter.
They were too surely the first victims of the frenzied natives.
Even McNabbs, who was always sanguine, had abandoned hope.
John Mangles was nearly frantic at the sight of Mary Grant's
despair at being separated from her brother. Glenarvan pondered
over the terrible request of Lady Helena, who preferred
dying by his hand to submitting to torture and slavery.
How was he to summon the terrible courage!

"And Mary? who has a right to strike her dead?" thought John,
whose heart was broken.

Escape was clearly impossible. Ten warriors, armed to the teeth,
kept watch at the door of Ware-Atoua.

The morning of February 13th arrived. No communication had
taken place between the natives and the "tabooed" prisoners.
A limited supply of provisions was in the house, which the unhappy
inmates scarcely touched. Misery deadened the pangs of hunger.
The day passed without change, and without hope; the funeral
ceremonies of the dead chief would doubtless be the signal
for their execution.

Although Glenarvan did not conceal from himself the probability that Kai-Koumou had given up all idea of exchange, the Major still cherished a spark of hope.

"Who knows," said he, as he reminded Glenarvan of the effect produced on the chief by the death of Kara-Tete--"who knows but that Kai-Koumou, in his heart, is very much obliged to you?"

But even McNabbs' remarks failed to awaken hope in Glenarvan's mind. The next day passed without any appearance of preparation for their punishment; and this was the reason of the delay.

The Maories believe that for three days after death the soul inhabits the body, and therefore, for three times twenty-four hours, the corpse remains unburied. This custom was rigorously observed. Till February 15th the "pah" was deserted.

John Mangles, hoisted on Wilson's shoulders, frequently reconnoitered the outer defences. Not a single native was visible; only the watchful sentinels relieving guard at the door of the Ware-Atoua.

But on the third day the huts opened; all the savages, men, women, and children, in all several hundred Maories, assembled in the "pah," silent and calm.

Kai-Koumou came out of his house, and surrounded by the principal chiefs of his tribe, he took his stand on a mound some feet above the level, in the center of the enclosure. The crowd of natives formed in a half circle some distance off, in dead silence.

At a sign from Kai-Koumou, a warrior bent his steps toward Ware-Atoua.

"Remember," said Lady Helena to her husband. Glenarvan pressed her to his heart, and Mary Grant went closer to John Mangles, and said hurriedly:

"Lord and Lady Glenarvan cannot but think if a wife may claim death at her husband's hands, to escape a shameful life, a betrothed wife may claim death at the hands of her betrothed husband, to escape the same fate. John! at this last moment I ask you, have we not long been betrothed to each other in our secret hearts? May I rely on you, as Lady Helena relies on Lord Glenarvan?"

"Mary!" cried the young captain in his despair. "Ah! dear Mary--"

The mat was lifted, and the captives led to Kai-Koumou; the two women were resigned to their fate; the men dissembled their sufferings with superhuman effort.

They arrived in the presence of the Maori chief.

"You killed Kara-Tete," said he to Glenarvan.

"I did," answered Glenarvan.

"You die to-morrow at sunrise."

"Alone?" asked Glenarvan, with a beating heart.

"Oh! if our Tohonga's life was not more precious than yours!" exclaimed Kai-Koumou, with a ferocious expression of regret.

At this moment there was a commotion among the natives. Glenarvan looked quickly around; the crowd made way, and a warrior appeared heated by running, and sinking with fatigue.

Kai-Koumou, as soon as he saw him, said in English, evidently for the benefit of the captives:

"You come from the camp of the Pakekas?"

"Yes," answered the Maori.

"You have seen the prisoner, our Tohonga?"

"I have seen him."

"Alive?"

"Dead! English have shot him."

It was all over with Glenarvan and his companions.

"All!" cried Kai-Koumou; "you all die to-morrow at daybreak."

Punishment fell on all indiscriminately. Lady Helena and Mary Grant were grateful to Heaven for the boon.

The captives were not taken back to Ware-Atoua. They were destined to attend the obsequies of the chief and the bloody rites that accompanied them. A guard of natives conducted them to the foot of an immense kauri, and then stood on guard without taking their eyes off the prisoners.

The three prescribed days had elapsed since the death of Kara-Tete, and the soul of the dead warrior had finally departed; so the ceremonies commenced.

The body was laid on a small mound in the central enclosure. It was clothed in a rich dress, and wrapped in a magnificent flax mat. His head, adorned with feathers, was encircled with a crown of green leaves. His face, arms, and chest had been rubbed with oil, and did not show any sign of decay.

The parents and friends arrived at the foot of the mound, and at a certain moment, as if the leader of an orchestra were leading a funeral chant, there arose a great wail of tears, sighs, and sobs. They lamented the deceased with a plaintive rhythm and doleful cadence. The kinsmen beat their heads; the kinswomen tore their faces with their nails and lavished more blood than tears. But these demonstrations were not sufficient to propitiate the soul of the deceased, whose wrath might strike the survivors of his tribe; and his warriors, as they could not recall him to life, were anxious that he should have nothing to wish for in the other world. The wife of Kara-Tete was not to be parted from him; indeed, she would have refused to survive him. It was a custom, as well as a duty,

and Maori history has no lack of such sacrifices.

This woman came on the scene; she was still young. Her disheveled hair flowed over her shoulders. Her sobs and cries filled the air. Incoherent words, regrets, sobs, broken phrases in which she extolled the virtues of the dead, alternated with her moans, and in a crowning paroxysm of sorrow, she threw herself at the foot of the mound and beat her head on the earth.

The Kai-Koumou drew near; suddenly the wretched victim rose; but a violent blow from a "MERE," a kind of club brandished by the chief, struck her to the ground; she fell senseless.

Horrible yells followed; a hundred arms threatened the terror-stricken captives. But no one moved, for the funeral ceremonies were not yet over.

The wife of Kara-Tete had joined her husband. The two bodies lay stretched side by side. But in the future life, even the presence of his faithful companion was not enough. Who would attend on them in the realm of Noui-Atoua, if their slaves did not follow them into the other world.

Six unfortunate fellows were brought to the mound. They were attendants whom the pitiless usages of war had reduced to slavery. During the chief's lifetime they had borne the severest privations, and been subjected to all kinds of ill-usage; they had been scantily fed, and incessantly occupied like beasts of burden, and now, according to Maori ideas, they were to resume to all eternity this life of bondage.

These poor creatures appeared quite resigned to their destiny. They were not taken by surprise. Their unbound hands showed that they met their fate without resistance.

Their death was speedy and not aggravated by tedious suffering; torture was reserved for the authors of the murder, who, only twenty paces off, averted their eyes from the horrible scene which was to grow yet more horrible.

Six blows of the MERE, delivered by the hands of six powerful warriors, felled the victims in the midst of a sea of blood.

This was the signal for a fearful scene of cannibalism. The bodies of slaves are not protected by taboo like those of their masters. They belong to the tribe; they were a sort of small change thrown among the mourners, and the moment the sacrifice was over, the whole crowd, chiefs, warriors, old men, women, children, without distinction of age, or sex, fell upon the senseless remains with brutal appetite. Faster than a rapid pen could describe it, the bodies, still reeking, were dismembered, divided, cut up, not into morsels, but into crumbs. Of the two hundred Maories present everyone obtained a share. They fought, they struggled, they quarreled over the smallest fragment. The drops of hot blood splashed over these festive monsters, and the whole of this detestable crew groveled under a rain of blood. It was like the delirious fury of tigers fighting over their prey, or like a circus where the wild beasts devour the deer. This scene ended, a score of fires were lit at various points of the "pah"; the smell of charred flesh polluted the air;

and but for the fearful tumult of the festival, but for the cries
that emanated from these flesh-sated throats, the captives might
have heard the bones crunching under the teeth of the cannibals.

Glenarvan and his companions, breathless with horror, tried to
conceal this fearful scene from the eyes of the two poor ladies.
They understood then what fate awaited them next day at dawn,
and also with what cruel torture this death would be preceded.
They were dumb with horror.

The funeral dances commenced. Strong liquors distilled from
the "piper excelsum" animated the intoxication of the natives.
They had nothing human left. It seemed possible that the "taboo"
might be forgotten, and they might rush upon the prisoners,
who were already terrified at their delirious gestures.

But Kai-Koumou had kept his own senses amidst the general delirium.
He allowed an hour for this orgy of blood to attain its maximum
and then cease, and the final scene of the obsequies was performed
with the accustomed ceremonial.

The corpses of Kara-Tete and his wife were raised, the limbs were bent,
and laid against the stomach according to the Maori usage;
then came the funeral, not the final interment, but a burial until
the moment when the earth had destroyed the flesh and nothing
remained but the skeleton.

The place of "oudoupa," or the tomb, had been chosen
outside the fortress, about two miles off at the top
of a low hill called Maunganamu, situated on the right bank
of the lake, and to this spot the body was to be taken.
Two palanquins of a very primitive kind, hand-barrows, in fact,
were brought to the foot of the mound, and the corpses doubled
up so that they were sitting rather than lying, and their
garments kept in place by a band of hanes, were placed on them.
Four warriors took up the litters on their shoulders,
and the whole tribe, repeating their funeral chant, followed in
procession to the place of sepulture.

The captives, still strictly guarded, saw the funeral cortege leave
the inner inclosure of the "pah"; then the chants and cries grew fainter.
For about half an hour the funeral procession remained out of sight,
in the hollow valley, and then came in sight again winding up the
mountain side; the distance gave a fantastic effect to the undulating
movement of this long serpentine column.

The tribe stopped at an elevation of about 800 feet, on the summit
of Maunganamu, where the burial place of Kara-Tete had been prepared.
An ordinary Maori would have had nothing but a hole and a heap of earth.
But a powerful and formidable chief destined to speedy deification,
was honored with a tomb worthy of his exploits.

The "oudoupa" had been fenced round, and posts, surmounted with faces
painted in red ochre, stood near the grave where the bodies were to lie.
The relatives had not forgotten that the "Waidoua," the spirit
of the dead, lives on mortal food, as the body did in this life.
Therefore, food was deposited in the inclosure as well as the arms
and clothing of the deceased. Nothing was omitted for comfort.
The husband and wife were laid side by side, then covered with earth

and grass, after another series of laments.

Then the procession wound slowly down the mountain, and henceforth none dare ascend the slope of Maunganamu on pain of death, for it was "tabooed," like Tongariro, where lie the ashes of a chief killed by an earthquake in 1846.

CHAPTER XII STRANGELY LIBERATED

JUST as the sun was sinking beyond Lake Taupo, behind the peaks of Tuhahua and Pukepapu, the captives were conducted back to their prison. They were not to leave it again till the tops of the Wahiti Ranges were lit with the first fires of day.

They had one night in which to prepare for death. Overcome as they were with horror and fatigue, they took their last meal together.

"We shall need all our strength," Glenarvan had said, "to look death in the face. We must show these savages how Europeans can die."

The meal ended. Lady Helena repeated the evening prayer aloud, her companions, bare-headed, repeated it after her. Who does not turn his thoughts toward God in the hour of death? This done, the prisoners embraced each other. Mary Grant and Helena, in a corner of the hut, lay down on a mat. Sleep, which keeps all sorrow in abeyance, soon weighed down their eyelids; they slept in each other's arms, overcome by exhaustion and prolonged watching.

Then Glenarvan, taking his friends aside, said: "My dear friends, our lives and the lives of these poor women are in God's hands. If it is decreed that we die to-morrow, let us die bravely, like Christian men, ready to appear without terror before the Supreme Judge. God, who reads our hearts, knows that we had a noble end in view. If death awaits us instead of success, it is by His will. Stern as the decree may seem, I will not repine. But death here, means not death only, it means torture, insult, perhaps, and here are two ladies--"

Glenarvan's voice, firm till now, faltered. He was silent a moment, and having overcome his emotion, he said, addressing the young captain:

"John, you have promised Mary what I promised Lady Helena. What is your plan?"

"I believe," said John, "that in the sight of God I have a right to fulfill that promise."

"Yes, John; but we are unarmed."

"No!" replied John, showing him a dagger. "I snatched it from Kara-Tete when he fell at your feet. My Lord, whichever of us survives the other will fulfill the wish of Lady Helena and Mary Grant."

After these words were said, a profound silence ensued. At last the Major said: "My friends, keep that to the last moment.

I am not an advocate of irremediable measures."

"I did not speak for ourselves," said Glenarvan. "Be it as it may,
we can face death! Had we been alone, I should ere now have cried,
'My friends, let us make an effort. Let us attack these wretches!'
But with these poor girls--"

At this moment John raised the mat, and counted twenty-five natives
keeping guard on the Ware-Atoua. A great fire had been lighted,
and its lurid glow threw into strong relief the irregular outlines
of the "pah." Some of the savages were sitting round the brazier;
the others standing motionless, their black outlines relieved
against the clear background of flame. But they all kept watchful
guard on the hut confided to their care.

It has been said that between a vigilant jailer and a prisoner
who wishes to escape, the chances are in favor of the prisoner;
the fact is, the interest of the one is keener than that of the other.
The jailer may forget that he is on guard; the prisoner never forgets
that he is guarded. The captive thinks oftener of escaping than
the jailer of preventing his flight, and hence we hear of frequent
and wonderful escapes.

But in the present instance hatred and revenge were the jailers--
not an indifferent warder; the prisoners were not bound,
but it was because bonds were useless when five-and-twenty men
were watching the only egress from the Ware-Atoua.

This house, with its back to the rock which closed the fortress,
was only accessible by a long, narrow promontory which joined
it in front to the plateau on which the "pah" was erected.
On its two other sides rose pointed rocks, which jutted out over
an abyss a hundred feet deep. On that side descent was impossible,
and had it been possible, the bottom was shut in by the enormous rock.
The only outlet was the regular door of the Ware-Atoua, and the Maories
guarded the promontory which united it to the "pah" like a drawbridge.
All escape was thus hopeless, and Glenarvan having tried the walls
for the twentieth time, was compelled to acknowledge that it was so.

The hours of this night, wretched as they were, slipped away.
Thick darkness had settled on the mountain. Neither moon
nor stars pierced the gloom. Some gusts of wind whistled
by the sides of the "pah," and the posts of the house creaked:
the fire outside revived with the puffs of wind, and the flames
sent fitful gleams into the interior of Ware-Atoua. The group
of prisoners was lit up for a moment; they were absorbed in their
last thoughts, and a deathlike silence reigned in the hut.

It might have been about four o'clock in the morning when the Major's
attention was called to a slight noise which seemed to come from the
foundation of the posts in the wall of the hut which abutted on the rock.
McNabbs was at first indifferent, but finding the noise continue,
he listened; then his curiosity was aroused, and he put his ear
to the ground; it sounded as if someone was scraping or hollowing
out the ground outside.

As soon as he was sure of it, he crept over to Glenarvan and John Mangles,
and startling them from their melancholy thoughts, led them to the end

of the hut.

"Listen," said he, motioning them to stoop.

The scratching became more and more audible; they could hear the little stones grate on a hard body and roll away.

"Some animal in his burrow," said John Mangles.

Glenarvan struck his forehead.

"Who knows?" said he, "it might be a man."

"Animal or man," answered the Major, "I will soon find out!"

Wilson and Olbinett joined their companions, and all united to dig through the wall--John with his dagger, the others with stones taken from the ground, or with their nails, while Mulrady, stretched along the ground, watched the native guard through a crevice of the matting.

These savages sitting motionless around the fire, suspected nothing of what was going on twenty feet off.

The soil was light and friable, and below lay a bed of silicious tufa; therefore, even without tools, the aperture deepened quickly. It soon became evident that a man, or men, clinging to the sides of the "pah," were cutting a passage into its exterior wall. What could be the object? Did they know of the existence of the prisoners, or was it some private enterprise that led to the undertaking?

The prisoners redoubled their efforts. Their fingers bled, but still they worked on; after half an hour they had gone three feet deep; they perceived by the increased sharpness of the sounds that only a thin layer of earth prevented immediate communication.

Some minutes more passed, and the Major withdrew his hand from the stroke of a sharp blade. He suppressed a cry.

John Mangles, inserting the blade of his poniard, avoided the knife which now protruded above the soil, but seized the hand that wielded it.

It was the hand of a woman or child, a European! On

V. IV Verne neither side had a word been uttered. It was evidently the cue of both sides to be silent.

"Is it Robert?" whispered Glenarvan.

But softly as the name was breathed, Mary Grant, already awakened by the sounds in the hut, slipped over toward Glenarvan, and seizing the hand, all stained with earth, she covered it with kisses.

"My darling Robert," said she, never doubting, "it is you! it is you!"

"Yes, little sister," said he, "it is I am here to save you all; but be very silent."

"Brave lad!" repeated Glenarvan.

"Watch the savages outside," said Robert.

Mulrady, whose attention was distracted for a moment by the appearance of the boy, resumed his post.

"It is all right," said he. "There are only four awake; the rest are asleep."

A minute after, the hole was enlarged, and Robert passed from the arms of his sister to those of Lady Helena. Round his body was rolled a long coil of flax rope.

"My child, my child," murmured Lady Helena, "the savages did not kill you!"

"No, madam," said he; "I do not know how it happened, but in the scuffle I got away; I jumped the barrier; for two days I hid in the bushes, to try and see you; while the tribe were busy with the chief's funeral, I came and reconnoitered this side of the path, and I saw that I could get to you. I stole this knife and rope out of the desert hut. The tufts of bush and the branches made me a ladder, and I found a kind of grotto already hollowed out in the rock under this hut; I had only to bore some feet in soft earth, and here I am."

Twenty noiseless kisses were his reward.

"Let us be off!" said he, in a decided tone.

"Is Paganel below?" asked Glenarvan.

"Monsieur Paganel?" replied the boy, amazed.

"Yes; is he waiting for us?"

"No, my Lord; but is he not here?" inquired Robert.

"No, Robert!" answered Mary Grant.

"Why! have you not seen him?" asked Glenarvan. "Did you lose each other in the confusion? Did you not get away together?"

"No, my Lord!" said Robert, taken aback by the disappearance of his friend Paganel.

"Well, lose no more time," said the Major. "Wherever Paganel is, he cannot be in worse plight than ourselves. Let us go."

Truly, the moments were precious. They had to fly. The escape was not very difficult, except the twenty feet of perpendicular fall outside the grotto.

After that the slope was practicable to the foot of the mountain. From this point the prisoners could soon gain the lower valleys; while the Maories, if they perceived the flight of the prisoners, would have to make a long round to catch them, being unaware of the gallery between the Ware-Atoua and the outer rock.

The escape was commenced, and every precaution was taken.
The captives passed one by one through the narrow passage
into the grotto. John Mangles, before leaving the hut,
disposed of all the evidences of their work, and in his turn slipped
through the opening and let down over it the mats of the house,
so that the entrance to the gallery was quite concealed.

The next thing was to descend the vertical wall to the slope below,
and this would have been impracticable, but that Robert had brought
the flax rope, which was now unrolled and fixed to a projecting point
of rock, the end hanging over.

John Mangles, before his friends trusted themselves to this
flax rope, tried it; he did not think it very strong;
and it was of importance not to risk themselves imprudently,
as a fall would be fatal.

"This rope," said he, "will only bear the weight of two persons;
therefore let us go in rotation. Lord and Lady Glenarvan first;
when they arrive at the bottom, three pulls at the rope will be
a signal to us to follow."

"I will go first," said Robert. "I discovered a deep hollow
at the foot of the slope where those who come down can conceal
themselves and wait for the rest."

"Go, my boy," said Glenarvan, pressing Robert's hand.

Robert disappeared through the opening out of the grotto.
A minute after, the three pulls at the cord informed them
the boy had alighted safely.

Glenarvan and Lady Helena immediately ventured out of the grotto.
The darkness was still very great, though some grayish streaks
were already visible on the eastern summits.

The biting cold of the morning revived the poor young lady.
She felt stronger and commenced her perilous descent.

Glenarvan first, then Lady Helena, let themselves down along the rope,
till they came to the spot where the perpendicular wall met the top
of the slope. Then Glenarvan going first and supporting his wife,
began to descend backward.

He felt for the tufts and grass and shrubs able to afford a foothold;
tried them and then placed Lady Helena's foot on them.
Some birds, suddenly awakened, flew away, uttering feeble cries,
and the fugitives trembled when a stone loosened from its bed
rolled to the foot of the mountain.

They had reached half-way down the slope, when a voice was heard
from the opening of the grotto.

"Stop!" whispered John Mangles.

Glenarvan, holding with one hand to a tuft of tetragonia,
with the other holding his wife, waited with breathless anxiety.

Wilson had had an alarm. Having heard some unusual noise outside

the Ware-Atoua, he went back into the hut and watched the Maories from behind the mat. At a sign from him, John stopped Glenarvan.

One of the warriors on guard, startled by an unusual sound, rose and drew nearer to the Ware-Atoua. He stood still about two paces from the hut and listened with his head bent forward. He remained in that attitude for a minute that seemed an hour, his ear intent, his eye peering into the darkness. Then shaking his head like one who sees he is mistaken, he went back to his companions, took an armful of dead wood, and threw it into the smouldering fire, which immediately revived. His face was lighted up by the flame, and was free from any look of doubt, and after having glanced to where the first light of dawn whitened the eastern sky, stretched himself near the fire to warm his stiffened limbs.

"All's well!" whispered Wilson.

John signaled to Glenarvan to resume his descent.

Glenarvan let himself gently down the slope; soon Lady Helena and he landed on the narrow track where Robert waited for them.

The rope was shaken three times, and in his turn John Mangles, preceding Mary Grant, followed in the dangerous route.

He arrived safely; he rejoined Lord and Lady Glenarvan in the hollow mentioned by Robert.

Five minutes after, all the fugitives had safely escaped from the Ware-Atoua, left their retreat, and keeping away from the inhabited shores of the lakes, they plunged by narrow paths into the recesses of the mountains.

They walked quickly, trying to avoid the points where they might be seen from the pah. They were quite silent, and glided among the bushes like shadows. Whither? Where chance led them, but at any rate they were free.

Toward five o'clock, the day began to dawn, bluish clouds marbled the upper stratum of clouds. The misty summits began to pierce the morning mists. The orb of day was soon to appear, and instead of giving the signal for their execution, would, on the contrary, announce their flight.

It was of vital importance that before the decisive moment arrived they should put themselves beyond the reach of the savages, so as to put them off their track. But their progress was slow, for the paths were steep. Lady Glenarvan climbed the slopes, supported, not to say carried, by Glenarvan, and Mary Grant leaned on the arm of John Mangles; Robert, radiant with joy, triumphant at his success, led the march, and the two sailors brought up the rear.

Another half an hour and the glorious sun would rise out of the mists of the horizon. For half an hour the fugitives walked on as chance led them. Paganel was not there to take the lead. He was now the object of their anxiety, and whose absence was a black shadow between them and their happiness. But they bore steadily eastward,

as much as possible, and faced the gorgeous morning light.
Soon they had reached a height of 500 feet above Lake Taupo,
and the cold of the morning, increased by the altitude, was very keen.
Dim outlines of hills and mountains rose behind one another;
but Glenarvan only thought how best to get lost among them.
Time enough by and by to see about escaping from the labyrinth.

At last the sun appeared and sent his first rays on their path.

Suddenly a terrific yell from a hundred throats rent the air.
It came from the pah, whose direction Glenarvan did not know.
Besides, a thick veil of fog, which, spread at his feet,
prevented any distinct view of the valleys below.

But the fugitives could not doubt that their escape had been discovered;
and now the question was, would they be able to elude pursuit?
Had they been seen? Would not their track betray them?

At this moment the fog in the valley lifted, and enveloped them
for a moment in a damp mist, and at three hundred feet below they
perceived the swarming mass of frantic natives.

While they looked they were seen. Renewed howls broke forth,
mingled with the barking of dogs, and the whole tribe, after vainly
trying to scale the rock of Ware-Atoua, rushed out of the pah,
and hastened by the shortest paths in pursuit of the prisoners
who were flying from their vengeance.

CHAPTER XIII THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

THE summit of the mountain was still a hundred feet above them.
The fugitives were anxious to reach it that they might continue
their flight on the eastern slope out of the view of their pursuers.
They hoped then to find some practicable ridge that would allow
of a passage to the neighboring peaks that were thrown together
in an orographic maze, to which poor Paganel's genius would doubtless
have found the clew.

They hastened up the slope, spurred on by the loud cries that drew
nearer and nearer. The avenging crowd had already reached the foot
of the mountain.

"Courage! my friends," cried Glenarvan, urging his companions
by voice and look.

In less than five minutes they were at the top of the mountain,
and then they turned to judge of their position, and decide
on a route that would baffle their pursuers.

From their elevated position they could see over Lake Taupo,
which stretched toward the west in its setting of picturesque mountains.
On the north the peaks of Pirongia; on the south the burning crater
of Tongariro. But eastward nothing but the rocky barrier of peaks
and ridges that formed the Wahiti ranges, the great chain whose unbroken
links stretch from the East Cape to Cook's Straits. They had no
alternative but to descend the opposite slope and enter the narrow gorges,
uncertain whether any outlet existed.

Glenarvan could not prolong the halt for a moment.
Wearied as they might be, they must fly or be discovered.

"Let us go down!" cried he, "before our passage is cut off."

But just as the ladies had risen with a despairing effort,
McNabbs stopped them and said:

"Glenarvan, it is useless. Look!"

And then they all perceived the inexplicable change that had taken
place in the movements of the Maories.

Their pursuit had suddenly stopped. The ascent of the mountain
had ceased by an imperious command. The natives had paused in
their career, and surged like the sea waves against an opposing rock.
All the crowd, thirsting for blood, stood at the foot of the mountain
yelling and gesticulating, brandishing guns and hatchets, but not
advancing a foot. Their dogs, rooted to the spot like themselves,
barked with rage.

What stayed them? What occult power controlled these savages?
The fugitives looked without understanding, fearing lest the charm
that enchained Kai-Koumou's tribe should be broken.

Suddenly John Mangles uttered an exclamation which attracted
the attention of his companions. He pointed to a little inclosure
on the summit of the cone.

"The tomb of Kara-Tete!" said Robert.

"Are you sure, Robert?" said Glenarvan.

"Yes, my Lord, it is the tomb; I recognize it."

Robert was right. Fifty feet above, at the extreme peak of the mountain,
freshly painted posts formed a small palisaded inclosure,
and Glenarvan too was convinced that it was the chief's burial place.
The chances of their flight had led them to the crest of Maunganamu.

Glenarvan, followed by the rest, climbed to the foot of the tomb.
A large opening, covered with mats, led into it.
Glenarvan was about to invade the sanctity of the "oudoupa,"
when he reeled backward.

"A savage!" said he.

"In the tomb?" inquired the Major.

"Yes, McNabbs."

"No matter; go in."

Glenarvan, the Major, Robert and John Mangles entered.
There sat a Maori, wrapped in a large flax mat; the darkness
of the "oudoupa" preventing them from distinguishing his features.
He was very quiet, and was eating his breakfast quite coolly.

Glenarvan was about to speak to him when the native forestalled him by saying gayly and in good English:

"Sit down, my Lord; breakfast is ready."

It was Paganel. At the sound of his voice they all rushed into the "oudoupa," and he was cordially embraced all round. Paganel was found again. He was their salvation. They wanted to question him; to know how and why he was here on the summit of Maunganamu; but Glenarvan stopped this misplaced curiosity.

"The savages?" said he.

"The savages," said Paganel, shrugging his shoulders. "I have a contempt for those people! Come and look at them."

They all followed Paganel out of the "oudoupa." The Maories were still in the same position round the base of the mountain, uttering fearful cries.

"Shout! yell! till your lungs are gone, stupid wretches!" said Paganel. "I dare you to come here!"

"But why?" said Glenarvan.

"Because the chief is buried here, and the tomb protects us, because the mountain is tabooed."

"Tabooed?"

"Yes, my friends! and that is why I took refuge here, as the malefactors used to flee to the sanctuaries in the middle ages."

"God be praised!" said Lady Helena, lifting her hands to heaven.

The fugitives were not yet out of danger, but they had a moment's respite, which was very welcome in their exhausted state.

Glenarvan was too much overcome to speak, and the Major nodded his head with an air of perfect content.

"And now, my friends," said Paganel, "if these brutes think to exercise their patience on us, they are mistaken. In two days we shall be out of their reach."

"By flight!" said Glenarvan. "But how?"

"That I do not know," answered Paganel, "but we shall manage it."

And now everybody wanted to know about their friend's adventures. They were puzzled by the reserve of a man generally so talkative; on this occasion they had to drag the words out of his mouth; usually he was a ready story-teller, now he gave only evasive answers to the questions of the rest.

"Paganel is another man!" thought McNabbs.

His face was really altered. He wrapped himself closely in his great flax mat and seemed to deprecate observation.

Everyone noticed his embarrassment, when he was the subject
of conversation, though nobody appeared to remark it;
when other topics were under discussion, Paganel resumed
his usual gayety.

Of his adventures all that could be extracted from him at this time
was as follows:

After the murder of Kara-Tete, Paganel took advantage, like Robert,
of the commotion among the natives, and got out of the inclosure.
But less fortunate than young Grant, he walked straight into
a Maori camp, where he met a tall, intelligent-looking chief,
evidently of higher rank than all the warriors of his tribe.
The chief spoke excellent English, and he saluted the new-comer by
rubbing the end of his nose against the end of the geographer's nose.

Paganel wondered whether he was to consider himself a prisoner or not.
But perceiving that he could not stir without the polite escort
of the chief, he soon made up his mind on that point.

This chief, Hihi, or Sunbeam, was not a bad fellow.
Paganel's spectacles and telescope seemed to give him a great
idea of Paganel's importance, and he manifested great attachment
to him, not only by kindness, but by a strong flax rope,
especially at night.

This lasted for three days; to the inquiry whether he was well treated,
he said "Yes and no!" without further answer; he was a prisoner,
and except that he expected immediate execution, his state seemed to him
no better than that in which he had left his unfortunate friends.

One night, however, he managed to break his rope and escape.
He had seen from afar the burial of the chief, and knew that he was
buried on the top of Maunganamu, and he was well acquainted
with the fact that the mountain would be therefore tabooed.
He resolved to take refuge there, being unwilling to leave
the region where his companions were in durance. He succeeded
in his dangerous attempt, and had arrived the previous night
at the tomb of Kara-Tete, and there proposed to recruit his
strength while he waited in the hope that his friends might,
by Divine mercy, find the means of escape.

Such was Paganel's story. Did he designedly conceal
some incident of his captivity? More than once his
embarrassment led them to that conclusion. But however
that might be, he was heartily congratulated on all sides.
And then the present emergency came on for serious discussion.
The natives dare not climb Maunganamu, but they, of course,
calculated that hunger and thirst would restore them their prey.
It was only a question of time, and patience is one of the virtues
of all savages. Glenarvan was fully alive to the difficulty,
but made up his mind to watch for an opportunity, or make one.
First of all he made a thorough survey of Maunganamu,
their present fortress; not for the purpose of defence, but of escape.
The Major, John, Robert, Paganel, and himself, made an exact map
of the mountain. They noted the direction, outlet and inclination
of the paths. The ridge, a mile in length, which united
Maunganamu to the Wahiti chain had a downward inclination.
Its slope, narrow and jagged though it was, appeared the only

practicable route, if they made good their escape at all.
If they could do this without observation, under cover of night,
they might possibly reach the deep valleys of the Range and put
the Maories off the scent.

But there were dangers in this route; the last part of it
was within pistol shot of natives posted on the lower slopes.
Already when they ventured on the exposed part of the crest,
they were saluted with a hail of shot which did not reach them.
Some gun wads, carried by the wind, fell beside them; they were
made of printed paper, which Paganel picked up out of curiosity,
and with some trouble deciphered.

"That is a good idea! My friends, do you know what those creatures
use for wads?"

"No, Paganel!" said Glenarvan.

"Pages of the Bible! If that is the use they make of the
Holy Book, I pity the missionaries! It will be rather difficult
to establish a Maori library."

"And what text of scripture did they aim at us?"

"A message from God Himself!" exclaimed John Mangles,
who was in the act of reading the scorched fragment of paper.
"It bids us hope in Him," added the young captain, firm in
the faith of his Scotch convictions.

"Read it, John!" said Glenarvan.

And John read what the powder had left visible: "I will deliver him,
for he hath trusted in me."

"My friends," said Glenarvan, "we must carry these words of hope
to our dear, brave ladies. The sound will bring comfort
to their hearts."

Glenarvan and his companions hastened up the steep path to the cone,
and went toward the tomb. As they climbed they were astonished
to perceive every few moments a kind of vibration in the soil.
It was not a movement like earthquake, but that peculiar tremor
that affects the metal of a boiler under high pressure.
It was clear the mountain was the outer covering of a body of vapor,
the product of subterranean fires.

This phenomenon of course excited no surprise in those that had
just traveled among the hot springs of the Waikato. They knew
that the central region of the Ika-na-Mani is essentially volcanic.
It is a sieve, whose interstices furnish a passage for the earth's
vapors in the shape of boiling geysers and solfataras.

Paganel, who had already noticed this, called the attention
of his friends to the volcanic nature of the mountain.
The peak of Maunganamu was only one of the many cones which bristle
on this part of the island. It was a volcano of the future.
A slight mechanical change would produce a crater of eruption
in these slopes, which consisted merely of whitish silicious tufa.

"That may be," said Glenarvan, "but we are in no more danger
here than standing by the boiler of the DUNCAN; this solid
crust is like sheet iron."

"I agree with you," added the Major, "but however good a boiler may be,
it bursts at last after too long service."

"McNabbs," said Paganel, "I have no fancy for staying on the cone.
When Providence points out a way, I will go at once."

"I wish," remarked John, "that Maunganamu could carry us himself,
with all the motive power that he has inside. It is too bad that millions
of horse-power should lie under our feet unavailable for our needs.
Our DUNCAN would carry us to the end of the world with the thousandth
part of it."

The recollections of the DUNCAN evoked by John Mangles
turned Glenarvan's thoughts into their saddest channel;
for desperate as his own case was he often forgot it, in vain
regret at the fate of his crew.

His mind still dwelt on it when he reached the summit of Maunganamu
and met his companions in misfortune.

Lady Helena, when she saw Glenarvan, came forward to meet him.

"Dear Edward," said she, "you have made up your mind?
Are we to hope or fear?"

"Hope, my dear Helena," replied Glenarvan. "The natives will
never set foot on the mountain, and we shall have time to devise
a plan of escape."

"More than that, madam, God himself has encouraged us to hope."

And so saying, John Mangles handed to Lady Helena the fragment of paper on
which was legible the sacred words; and these young women, whose trusting
hearts were always open to observe Providential interpositions,
read in these words an indisputable sign of salvation.

"And now let us go to the 'oudoupa!'" cried Paganel, in his
gayest mood. "It is our castle, our dining-room, our study!
None can meddle with us there! Ladies! allow me to do the honors
of this charming abode."

They followed Paganel, and when the savages saw them profaning
anew the tabooed burial place, they renewed their fire
and their fearful yells, the one as loud as the other.
But fortunately the balls fell short of our friends,
though the cries reached them.

Lady Helena, Mary Grant, and their companions were quite relieved to find
that the Maories were more dominated by superstition than by anger,
and they entered the monument.

It was a palisade made of red-painted posts. Symbolic figures,
tattooed on the wood, set forth the rank and achievements
of the deceased. Strings of amulets, made of shells or
cut stones, hung from one part to another. In the interior,

the ground was carpeted with green leaves, and in the middle,
a slight mound betokened the place of the newly made grave.
There lay the chief's weapons, his guns loaded and capped,
his spear, his splendid ax of green jade, with a supply of powder
and ball for the happy hunting grounds.

"Quite an arsenal!" said Paganel, "of which we shall make a better use.
What ideas they have! Fancy carrying arms in the other world!"

"Well!" said the Major, "but these are English firearms."

"No doubt," replied Glenarvan, "and it is a very unwise practice
to give firearms to savages! They turn them against the invaders,
naturally enough. But at any rate, they will be very valuable to us."

"Yes," said Paganel, "but what is more useful still is the food
and water provided for Kara-Tete."

Things had been handsomely done for the deceased chief;
the amount of provisions denoted their esteem for the departed.
There was food enough to sustain ten persons for fifteen days,
or the dead man forever.

The vegetable aliments consisted of edible ferns, sweet potatoes,
the "convolvulus batatas," which was indigenous, and the potato
which had been imported long before by the Europeans. Large jars
contained pure water, and a dozen baskets artistically plaited
contained tablets of an unknown green gum.

The fugitives were therefore provided for some days against
hunger and thirst, and they needed no persuasion to begin
their attack on the deceased chief's stores. Glenarvan brought
out the necessary quantity and put them into Olbinett's hands.
The steward, who never could forget his routine ideas, even in
the most exceptional circumstances, thought the meal a slender one.
He did not know how to prepare the roots, and, besides, had no fire.

But Paganel soon solved the difficulty by recommending him
to bury his fern roots and sweet potatoes in the soil.
The temperature of the surface stratum was very high,
and a thermometer plunged into the soil would have marked
from 160 to 170 degrees; in fact, Olbinett narrowly missed
being scalded, for just as he had scooped a hole for the roots,
a jet of vapor sprang up and with a whistling sound rose six
feet above the ground.

The steward fell back in terror.

"Shut off steam!" cried the Major, running to close the hole
with the loose drift, while Paganel pondering on the singular
phenomenon muttered to himself:

"Let me see! ha! ha! Why not?"

"Are you hurt?" inquired McNabbs of Olbinett.

"No, Major," said the steward, "but I did not expect--"

"That Providence would send you fire," interrupted Paganel

in a jovial tone. "First the larder of Kara-Tete and then fire
out of the ground! Upon my word, this mountain is a paradise!
I propose that we found a colony, and cultivate the soil and settle
here for life! We shall be the Robinsons of Maunganamu. We should
want for nothing."

"If it is solid ground," said John Mangles.

"Well! it is not a thing of yesterday," said Paganel. "It has stood
against the internal fire for many a day, and will do so till we leave it,
at any rate."

"Breakfast is ready," announced Olbinett with as much dignity
as if he was in Malcolm Castle.

Without delay, the fugitives sat down near the palisade, and began
one of the many meals with which Providence had supplied them
in critical circumstances. Nobody was inclined to be fastidious,
but opinions were divided as regarded the edible fern.
Some thought the flavor sweet and agreeable, others pronounced
it leathery, insipid, and resembling the taste of gum.
The sweet potatoes, cooked in the burning soil, were excellent.
The geographer remarked that Kara-Tete was not badly off after all.

And now that their hunger was appeased, it was time to decide
on their plan of escape.

"So soon!" exclaimed Paganel in a piteous tone. "Would you quit
the home of delight so soon?"

"But, Monsieur Paganel," interposed Lady Helena, "if this be Capua,
you dare not intend to imitate Hannibal!"

"Madam, I dare not contradict you, and if discussion is the order
of the day, let it proceed."

"First," said Glenarvan, "I think we ought to start before we are driven
to it by hunger. We are revived now, and ought to take advantage of it.
To-night we will try to reach the eastern valleys by crossing the cordon
of natives under cover of the darkness."

"Excellent," answered Paganel, "if the Maories allow us to pass."

"And if not?" asked John Mangles.

"Then we will use our great resources," said Paganel.

"But have we great resources?" inquired the Major.

"More than we can use!" replied Paganel, without any further explanation.

And then they waited for the night.

The natives had not stirred. Their numbers seemed even greater,
perhaps owing to the influx of the stragglers of the tribe.
Fires lighted at intervals formed a girdle of flame round the base
of the mountain, so that when darkness fell, Maunganamu appeared to rise
out of a great brasier, and to hide its head in the thick darkness.
Five hundred feet below they could hear the hum and the cries

of the enemy's camp.

At nine o'clock the darkness being very intense,
Glenarvan and John Mangles went out to reconnoiter before
embarking the whole party on this critical journey.
They made the descent noiselessly, and after about ten minutes,
arrived on the narrow ridge that crossed the native lines,
fifty feet above the camp.

All went well so far. The Maories, stretched beside the fires,
did not appear to observe the two fugitives. But in an instant
a double fusillade burst forth from both sides of the ridge.

"Back," exclaimed Glenarvan; "those wretches have the eyes of cats
and the guns of riflemen!"

And they turned, and once more climbed the steep slope of the mountain,
and then hastened to their friends who had been alarmed at the firing.
Glenarvan's hat was pierced by two balls, and they concluded that it
was out of the question to venture again on the ridge between two
lines of marksmen.

"Wait till to-morrow," said Paganel, "and as we cannot elude
their vigilance, let me try my hand on them."

The night was cold; but happily Kara-Tete had been furnished
with his best night gear, and the party wrapped themselves each
in a warm flax mantle, and protected by native superstition,
slept quietly inside the inclosure, on the warm ground,
still violating with the violence of the internal ebullition.

CHAPTER XIV A BOLD STRATAGEM

NEXT day, February 17th, the sun's first rays awoke the sleepers of
the Maunganamu. The Maories had long since been astir, coming and going
at the foot of the mountain, without leaving their line of observation.
Furious clamor broke out when they saw the Europeans leave the sacred
place they had profaned.

Each of the party glanced first at the neighboring mountains,
and at the deep valleys still drowned in mist, and over
Lake Taupo, which the morning breeze ruffled slightly.
And then all clustered round Paganel eager to hear his project.

Paganel soon satisfied their curiosity. "My friends," said he,
"my plan has one great recommendation; if it does not accomplish all
that I anticipate, we shall be no worse off than we are at present.
But it must, it will succeed."

"And what is it?" asked McNabbs.

"It is this," replied Paganel, "the superstition of the natives has
made this mountain a refuge for us, and we must take advantage of their
superstition to escape. If I can persuade Kai-Koumou that we have
expiated our profanation, that the wrath of the Deity has fallen on us:
in a word, that we have died a terrible death, do you think he will leave
the plateau of Maunganamu to return to his village?"

"Not a doubt of it," said Glenarvan.

"And what is the horrible death you refer to?" asked Lady Helena.

"The death of the sacrilegious, my friends,"
replied Paganel. "The avenging flames are under our feet.
Let us open a way for them!"

"What! make a volcano!" cried John Mangles.

"Yes, an impromptu volcano, whose fury we can regulate. There are plenty
of vapors ready to hand, and subterranean fires ready to issue forth.
We can have an eruption ready to order."

"An excellent idea, Paganel; well conceived," said the Major.

"You understand," replied the geographer, "we are to pretend to fall
victims to the flames of the Maori Pluto, and to disappear spiritually
into the tomb of Kara-Tete. And stay there three, four, even five days
if necessary--that is to say, till the savages are convinced that we
have perished, and abandon their watch."

"But," said Miss Grant, "suppose they wish to be sure of our punishment,
and climb up here to see?"

"No, my dear Mary," returned Paganel. "They will not do that.
The mountain is tabooed, and if it devoured its sacrilegious intruders,
it would only be more inviolably tabooed."

"It is really a very clever plan," said Glenarvan. "There is
only one chance against it; that is, if the savages prolong their
watch at the foot of Maunganamu, we may run short of provisions.
But if we play our game well there is not much fear of that."

"And when shall we try this last chance?" asked Lady Helena.

"To-night," rejoined Paganel, "when the darkness is the deepest."

"Agreed," said McNabbs; "Paganel, you are a genius! and I, who seldom
get up an enthusiasm, I answer for the success of your plan.
Oh! those villains! They shall have a little miracle that will put
off their conversion for

V. IV Verne another century. I hope the missionaries will forgive us."

The project of Paganel was therefore adopted, and certainly
with the superstitious ideas of the Maories there seemed
good ground for hope. But brilliant as the idea might be,
the difficulty was in the _modus operandi_. The volcano
might devour the bold schemers, who offered it a crater.
Could they control and direct the eruption when they had succeeded
in letting loose its vapor and flames, and lava streams?
The entire cone might be engulfed. It was meddling with phenomena
of which nature herself has the absolute monopoly.

Paganel had thought of all this; but he intended to act
prudently and without pushing things to extremes.
An appearance would be enough to dupe the Maories, and there

was no need for the terrible realities of an eruption.

How long that day seemed. Each one of the party inwardly counted the hours. All was made ready for flight. The oudoupa provisions were divided and formed very portable packets. Some mats and firearms completed their light equipment, all of which they took from the tomb of the chief. It is needless to say that their preparations were made within the inclosure, and that they were unseen by the savages.

At six o'clock the steward served up a refreshing meal. Where or when they would eat in the valleys of the Ranges no one could foretell. So that they had to take in supplies for the future. The principal dish was composed of half a dozen rats, caught by Wilson and stewed. Lady Helena and Mary Grant obstinately refused to taste this game, which is highly esteemed by the natives; but the men enjoyed it like the real Maories. The meat was excellent and savory, and the six devourers were devoured down to the bones.

The evening twilight came on. The sun went down in a stormy-looking bank of clouds. A few flashes of lightning glanced across the horizon and distant thunder pealed through the darkened sky.

Paganel welcomed the storm, which was a valuable aid to his plans, and completed his program. The savages are superstitiously affected by the great phenomena of nature. The New Zealanders think that thunder is the angry voice of Noui-Atoua, and lightning the fierce gleam of his eyes. Thus their deity was coming personally to chastise the violators of the taboo.

At eight o'clock, the summit of the Maunganamu was lost in portentous darkness. The sky would supply a black background for the blaze which Paganel was about to throw on it. The Maories could no longer see their prisoners; and this was the moment for action. Speed was necessary. Glenarvan, Paganel, McNabbs, Robert, the steward, and the two sailors, all lent a hand.

The spot for the crater was chosen thirty paces from Kara-Tete's tomb. It was important to keep the oudoupa intact, for if it disappeared, the taboo of the mountain would be nullified. At the spot mentioned Paganel had noticed an enormous block of stone, round which the vapors played with a certain degree of intensity. This block covered a small natural crater hollowed in the cone, and by its own weight prevented the egress of the subterranean fire. If they could move it from its socket, the vapors and the lava would issue by the disencumbered opening.

The workers used as levers some posts taken from the interior of the oudoupa, and they plied their tools vigorously against the rocky mass. Under their united efforts the stone soon moved. They made a little trench so that it might roll down the inclined plane. As they gradually raised it, the vibrations under foot became more distinct. Dull roarings of flame and the whistling sound of a furnace ran along under the thin crust. The intrepid la-borers, veritable Cyclops handling Earth's fires, worked in silence; soon some fissures and jets of steam warned them that their place was growing dangerous. But a crowning effort moved the mass which rolled down and disappeared. Immediately the thin crust gave way. A column of fire rushed to the sky

with loud detonations, while streams of boiling water and lava flowed toward the native camp and the lower valleys.

All the cone trembled as if it was about to plunge into a fathomless gulf.

Glenarvan and his companions had barely time to get out of the way; they fled to the enclosure of the oudoupa, not without having been sprinkled with water at 220 degrees. This water at first spread a smell like soup, which soon changed into a strong odor of sulphur.

Then the mud, the lava, the volcanic stones, all spouted forth in a torrent. Streams of fire furrowed the sides of Maunganamu. The neighboring mountains were lit up by the glare; the dark valleys were also filled with dazzling light.

All the savages had risen, howling under the pain inflicted by the burning lava, which was bubbling and foaming in the midst of their camp.

Those whom the liquid fire had not touched fled to the surrounding hills; then turned, and gazed in terror at this fearful phenomenon, this volcano in which the anger of their deity would swallow up the profane intruders on the sacred mountain. Now and then, when the roar of the eruption became less violent, their cry was heard:

"Taboo! taboo! taboo!"

An enormous quantity of vapors, heated stones and lava was escaping by this crater of Maunganamu. It was not a mere geyser like those that girdle round Mount Hecla, in Iceland, it was itself a Hecla. All this volcanic commotion was confined till then in the envelope of the cone, because the safety valve of Tangariro was enough for its expansion; but when this new issue was afforded, it rushed forth fiercely, and by the laws of equilibrium, the other eruptions in the island must on that night have lost their usual intensity.

An hour after this volcano burst upon the world, broad streams of lava were running down its sides. Legions of rats came out of their holes, and fled from the scene.

All night long, and fanned by the tempest in the upper sky, the crater never ceased to pour forth its torrents with a violence that alarmed Glenarvan. The eruption was breaking away the edges of the opening. The prisoners. hidden behind the inclosure of stakes, watched the fearful progress of the phenomenon.

Morning came. The fury of the volcano had not slackened. Thick yellowish fumes were mixed with the flames; the lava torrents wound their serpentine course in every direction.

Glenarvan watched with a beating heart, looking from all the interstices of the palisaded enclosure, and observed the movements in the native camp.

The Maories had fled to the neighboring ledges, out of the reach of the volcano. Some corpses which lay at the foot of the cone, were charred by the fire. Further off toward the "pah," the lava had reached a group of twenty huts, which were still smoking.

The Maories, forming here and there groups, contemplated the canopied summit of Maunganamu with religious awe.

Kai-Koumou approached in the midst of his warriors, and Glenarvan recognized him. The chief advanced to the foot of the hill, on the side untouched by the lava, but he did not ascend the first ledge.

Standing there, with his arms stretched out like an ex-erciser, he made some grimaces, whose meaning was obvious to the prisoners. As Paganel had foreseen, Kai-Koumou launched on the avenging mountain a more rigorous taboo.

Soon after the natives left their positions and followed the winding paths that led toward the pah.

"They are going!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "They have left their posts! God be praised! Our stratagem has succeeded! My dear Lady Helena, my brave friends, we are all dead and buried! But this evening when night comes, we shall rise and leave our tomb, and fly these barbarous tribes!"

It would be difficult to conceive of the joy that pervaded the oudoupa. Hope had regained the mastery in all hearts. The intrepid travelers forgot the past, forgot the future, to enjoy the present delight! And yet the task before them was not an easy one--to gain some European outpost in the midst of this unknown country. But Kai-Koumou once off their track, they thought themselves safe from all the savages in New Zealand.

A whole day had to elapse before they could make a start, and they employed it in arranging a plan of flight. Paganel had treasured up his map of New Zealand, and on it could trace out the best roads.

After discussion, the fugitives resolved to make for the Bay of Plenty, towards the east. The region was unknown, but apparently desert. The travelers, who from their past experience, had learned to make light of physical difficulties, feared nothing but meeting Maories. At any cost they wanted to avoid them and gain the east coast, where the missionaries had several stations. That part of the country had hitherto escaped the horrors of war, and the natives were not in the habit of scouring the country.

As to the distance that separated Lake Taupo from the Bay of Plenty, they calculated it about a hundred miles. Ten days' march at ten miles a day, could be done, not without fatigue, but none of the party gave that a thought. If they could only reach the mission stations they could rest there while waiting for a favorable opportunity to get to Auckland, for that was the point they desired to reach.

This question settled, they resumed their watch of the native proceedings, and continued so doing till evening fell. Not a solitary native remained at the foot of the mountain, and when darkness set in over the Taupo valleys, not a fire indicated the presence of the Maories at the base. The road was free.

At nine o'clock, the night being unusually dark,
Glenarvan gave the order to start. His companions and he,
armed and equipped at the expense of Kara-Tete, began
cautiously to descend the slopes of Maunganamu, John Mangles
and Wilson leading the way, eyes and ears on the alert.
They stopped at the slightest sound, they started at every
passing cloud. They slid rather than walked down the spur,
that their figures might be lost in the dark mass of the mountain.
At two hundred feet below the summit, John Mangles and his
sailors reached the dangerous ridge that had been so obstinately
defended by the natives. If by ill luck the Maories,
more cunning than the fugitives, had only pretended to retreat;
if they were not really duped by the volcanic phenomenon,
this was the spot where their presence would be betrayed.
Glenarvan could not but shudder, in spite of his confidence,
and in spite of the jokes of Paganel. The fate of the whole party
would hang in the balance for the ten minutes required to pass
along that ridge. He felt the beating of Lady Helena's heart,
as she clung to his arm.

He had no thought of turning back. Neither had John.
The young captain, followed closely by the whole party,
and protected by the intense darkness, crept along the ridge,
stopping when some loose stone rolled to the bottom.
If the savages were still in the ambush below, these unusual
sounds might provoke from both sides a dangerous fusillade.

But speed was impossible in their serpent-like progress down this
sloping crest. When John Mangles had reached the lowest point,
he was scarcely twenty-five feet from the plateau, where the natives
were encamped the night before, and then the ridge rose again pretty
steeply toward a wood for about a quarter of a mile.

All this lower part was crossed without molestation, and they
commenced the ascent in silence. The clump of bush was invisible,
though they knew it was there, and but for the possibility of an ambush,
Glenarvan counted on being safe when the party arrived at that point.
But he observed that after this point, they were no longer protected
by the taboo. The ascending ridge belonged not to Maunganamu,
but to the mountain system of the eastern side of Lake Taupo, so that
they had not only pistol shots, but hand-to-hand fighting to fear.
For ten minutes, the little band ascended by insensible degrees
toward the higher table-land. John could not discern the dark wood,
but he knew it ought to be within two hundred feet. Suddenly he stopped;
almost retreated. He fancied he heard something in the darkness;
his stoppage interrupted the march of those behind.

He remained motionless long enough to alarm his companions.
They waited with unspeakable anxiety, wondering if they were doomed
to retrace their steps, and return to the summit of Maunganamu.

But John, finding that the noise was not repeated, resumed the ascent
of the narrow path of the ridge. Soon they perceived the shadowy
outline of the wood showing faintly through the darkness.
A few steps more and they were hid from sight in the thick foliage
of the trees.

CHAPTER XV FROM PERIL TO SAFETY

THE night favored their escape, and prudence urged them
to lose no time in getting away from the fatal neighborhood
of Lake Taupo. Paganel took the post of leader, and his wonderful
instinct shone out anew in this difficult mountain journey.
His nyctalopia was a great advantage, his cat-like sight enabling
him to distinguish the smallest object in the deepest gloom.

For three hours they walked on without halting along the far-reaching
slope of the eastern side. Paganel kept a little to the southeast,
in order to make use of a narrow passage between the Kaimanawa
and the Wahiti Ranges, through which the road from Hawkes' Bay to
Auckland passes. Once through that gorge, his plan was to keep off
the road, and, under the shelter of the high ranges, march to the coast
across the inhabited regions of the province.

At nine o'clock in the morning, they had made twelve miles
in twelve hours. The courageous women could not be pressed
further, and, besides, the locality was suitable for camping.
The fugitives had reached the pass that separates the two chains.
Paganel, map in hand, made a loop toward the northeast,
and at ten o'clock the little party reached a sort of redan,
formed by a projecting rock.

The provisions were brought out, and justice was done to their meal.
Mary Grant and the Major, who had not thought highly of the edible fern
till then, now ate of it heartily.

The halt lasted till two o'clock in the afternoon, then they
resumed their journey; and in the evening they stopped eight
miles from the mountains, and required no persuasion to sleep
in the open air.

Next day was one of serious difficulties. Their route lay across
this wondrous region of volcanic lakes, geysers, and solfataras,
which extended to the east of the Wahiti Ranges. It is a country
more pleasant for the eye to ramble over, than for the limbs.
Every quarter of a mile they had to turn aside or go around for
some obstacle, and thus incurred great fatigue; but what a strange
sight met their eyes! What infinite variety nature lavishes
on her great panoramas!

On this vast extent of twenty miles square, the subterranean
forces had a field for the display of all their varied effects.
Salt springs, of singular transparency, peopled by myriads
of insects, sprang up from thickets of tea-tree scrub.
They diffused a powerful odor of burnt powder, and scattered
on the ground a white sediment like dazzling snow.
The limpid waters were nearly at boiling point, while some
neighboring springs spread out like sheets of glass.
Gigantic tree-ferns grew beside them, in conditions analogous
to those of the Silurian vegetation.

On every side jets of water rose like park fountains, out of
a sea of vapor; some of them continuous, others intermittent,
as if a capricious Pluto controlled their movements.
They rose like an amphitheater on natural terraces; their waters
gradually flowed together under folds of white smoke, and corroding

the edges of the semi-transparent steps of this gigantic staircase.
They fed whole lakes with their boiling torrents.

Farther still, beyond the hot springs and tumultuous geysers,
came the solfataras. The ground looked as if covered with
large pustules. These were slumbering craters full of cracks
and fissures from which rose various gases. The air was
saturated with the acrid and unpleasant odor of sulphurous acid.
The ground was encrusted with sulphur and crystalline concretions.
All this incalculable wealth had been accumulating for centuries,
and if the sulphur beds of Sicily should ever be exhausted,
it is here, in this little known district of New Zealand,
that supplies must be sought.

The fatigue in traveling in such a country as this will be
best understood. Camping was very difficult, and the sportsmen
of the party shot nothing worthy of Olbinett's skill; so that they
had generally to content themselves with fern and sweet potato--
a poor diet which was scarcely sufficient to recruit the exhausted
strength of the little party, who were all anxious to escape
from this barren region.

But four days at least must elapse before they could hope to leave it.
On February 23, at a distance of fifty miles from Maunganamu, Glenarvan
called a halt, and camped at the foot of a nameless mountain,
marked on Paganel's map. The wooded plains stretched away from sight,
and great forests appeared on the horizon.

That day McNabbs and Robert killed three kiwis, which filled the chief
place on their table, not for long, however, for in a few moments they
were all consumed from the beaks to the claws.

At dessert, between the potatoes and sweet potatoes,
Paganel moved a resolution which was carried with enthusiasm.
He proposed to give the name of Glenarvan to this unnamed mountain,
which rose 3,000 feet high, and then was lost in the clouds,
and he printed carefully on his map the name of the Scottish nobleman.

It would be idle to narrate all the monotonous and uninteresting
details of the rest of the journey. Only two or three occurrences
of any importance took place on the way from the lakes to
the Pacific Ocean. The march was all day long across forests
and plains. John took observations of the sun and stars.
Neither heat nor rain increased the discomfort of the journey,
but the travelers were so reduced by the trials they had undergone,
that they made very slow progress; and they longed to arrive
at the mission station.

They still chatted, but the conversation had ceased to be general.
The little party broke up into groups, attracted to each other,
not by narrow sympathies, but by a more personal communion of ideas.

Glenarvan generally walked alone; his mind seemed to recur
to his unfortunate crew, as he drew nearer to the sea.
He apparently lost sight of the dangers which lay before them
on their way to Auckland, in the thought of his massacred men;
the horrible picture haunted him.

Harry Grant was never spoken of; they were no longer in a position

to make any effort on his behalf. If his name was uttered at all, it was between his daughter and John Mangles.

John had never reminded Mary of what she had said to him on that last night at Ware-Atoua. He was too wise to take advantage of a word spoken in a moment of despair. When he mentioned Captain Grant, John always spoke of further search. He assured Mary that Lord Glenarvan would re-embark in the enterprise. He persistently returned to the fact that the authenticity of the document was indisputable, and that therefore Harry Grant was somewhere to be found, and that they would find him, if they had to try all over the world. Mary drank in his words, and she and John, united by the same thought, cherished the same hope. Often Lady Helena joined in the conversation; but she did not participate in their illusions, though she refrained from chilling their enthusiasm.

McNabbs, Robert, Wilson, and Mulrady kept up their hunting parties, without going far from the rest, and each one furnished his QUOTA of game.

Paganel, arrayed in his flax mat, kept himself aloof, in a silent and pensive mood.

And yet, it is only justice to say, in spite of the general rule that, in the midst of trials, dangers, fatigues, and privations, the most amiable dispositions become ruffled and embittered, all our travelers were united, devoted, ready to die for one another.

On the 25th of February, their progress was stopped by a river which answered to the Wakari on Paganel's map, and was easily forded. For two days plains of low scrub succeeded each other without interruption. Half the distance from Lake Taupo to the coast had been traversed without accident, though not without fatigue.

Then the scene changed to immense and interminable forests, which reminded them of Australia, but here the kauri took the place of the eucalyptus. Although their enthusiasm had been incessantly called forth during their four months' journey, Glenarvan and his companions were compelled to admire and wonder at those gigantic pines, worthy rivals of the Cedars of Lebanon, and the "Mammoth trees" of California. The kauris measured a hundred feet high, before the ramification of the branches. They grew in isolated clumps, and the forest was not composed of trees, but of innumerable groups of trees, which spread their green canopies in the air two hundred feet from the ground.

Some of these pines, still young, about a hundred years old, resembled the red pine of Europe. They had a dark crown surmounted by a dark conical shoot. Their older brethren, five or six hundred years of age, formed great green pavilions supported on the inextricable network of their branches. These patriarchs of the New Zealand forest measured fifty yards in circumference, and the united arms of all the travelers could not embrace the giant trunk.

For three days the little party made their way under these vast arches, over a clayey soil which the foot of man had never trod. They knew this by the quantity of resinous gum that lay in heaps at the foot of the trees, and which would have lasted for native exportation many years.

The sportsmen found whole coveys of the kiwi, which are scarce
in districts frequented by the Maories; the native dogs drive
them away to the shelter of these inaccessible forests.
They were an abundant source of nourishing food to our travelers.

Paganel also had the good fortune to espy, in a thicket, a pair
of gigantic birds; his instinct as a naturalist was awakened.
He called his companions, and in spite of their fatigue,
the Major, Robert, and he set off on the track of these animals.

His curiosity was excusable, for he had recognized, or thought
he had recognized, these birds as "moas" belonging to the species
of "dinornis," which many naturalists class with the extinct birds.
This, if Paganel was right, would confirm the opinion of Dr. Hochstetter
and other travelers on the present existence of the wingless giants
of New Zealand.

These moas which Paganel was chasing, the contemporaries of the
Megatherium and the Pterodactyles, must have been eighteen feet high.
They were huge ostriches, timid too, for they fled with extreme rapidity.
But no shot could stay their course. After a few minutes of chase,
these fleet-footed moas disappeared among the tall trees,
and the sportsmen lost their powder and their pains.

That evening, March 1, Glenarvan and his companions, emerging at last
from the immense kauri-forest, camped at the foot of Mount Ikirangi,
whose summit rose five thousand five hundred feet into the air.
At this point they had traveled a hundred miles from Maunganamu,
and the shore was still thirty miles away. John Mangles had calculated
on accomplishing the whole journey in ten days, but he did not foresee
the physical difficulties of the country.

On the whole, owing to the circuits, the obstacles,
and the imperfect observations, the journey had been extended
by fully one-fifth, and now that they had reached Mount Ikirangi,
they were quite worn out.

Two long days of walking were still to be accomplished,
during which time all their activity and vigilance would be required,
for their way was through a district often frequented by the natives.
The little party conquered their weariness, and set out next
morning at daybreak.

Between Mount Ikirangi which was left to the right, and Mount Hardy
whose summit rose on the left to a height of 3,700 feet, the journey
was very trying; for about ten miles the bush was a tangle
of "supple-jack," a kind of flexible rope, appropriately called
"stifling-creeper," that caught the feet at every step.
For two days, they had to cut their way with an ax through
this thousand-headed hydra. Hunting became impossible,
and the sportsmen failed in their accustomed tribute.
The provisions were almost exhausted, and there was no means
of renewing them; their thirst was increasing by fatigue,
and there was no water wherewith to quench it.

The sufferings of Glenarvan and his party became terrible,
and for the first time their moral energy threatened to give way.
They no longer walked, they dragged themselves along, soulless bodies,

animated only by the instinct of self-preservation which survives every other feeling, and in this melancholy plight they reached Point Lottin on the shores of the Pacific.

Here they saw several deserted huts, the ruins of a village lately destroyed by the war, abandoned fields, and everywhere signs of pillage and incendiary fires.

They were toiling painfully along the shore, when they saw, at a distance of about a mile, a band of natives, who rushed toward them brandishing their weapons. Glenarvan, hemmed in by the sea, could not fly, and summoning all his remaining strength he was about to meet the attack, when John Mangles cried:

"A boat! a boat!"

And there, twenty paces off, a canoe with six oars lay on the beach. To launch it, jump in and fly from the dangerous shore, was only a minute's work. John Mangles, McNabbs, Wilson and Mulrady took the oars; Glenarvan the helm; the two women, Robert and Olbinett stretched themselves beside him. In ten minutes the canoe was a quarter of a mile from the shore. The sea was calm. The fugitives were silent. But John, who did not want to get too far from land, was about to give the order to go up the coast, when he suddenly stopped rowing.

He saw three canoes coming out from behind Point Lottin and evidently about to give chase.

"Out to sea! Out to sea!" he exclaimed. "Better to drown if we must!"

The canoe went fast under her four rowers. For half an hour she kept her distance; but the poor exhausted fellows grew weaker, and the three pursuing boats began to gain sensibly on them. At this moment, scarcely two miles lay between them. It was impossible to avoid the attack of the natives, who were already preparing to fire their long guns.

What was Glenarvan about?--standing up in the stern he was looking toward the horizon for some chimerical help. What did he hope for? What did he wish? Had he a presentiment?

In a moment his eyes gleamed, his hand pointed out into the distance.

"A ship! a ship!" he cried. "My friends, row! row hard!"

Not one of the rowers turned his head--not an oar-stroke must be lost. Paganel alone rose, and turned his telescope to the point indicated.

"Yes," said he, "a ship! a steamer! they are under full steam! they are coming to us! Found now, brave comrades!"

The fugitives summoned new energy, and for another half hour, keeping their distance, they rowed with hasty strokes. The steamer came nearer and nearer. They made out her two masts, bare of sails, and the great volumes of black smoke. Glenarvan, handing the tiller to Robert, seized Paganel's glass, and watched the movements of the steamer.

John Mangles and his companions were lost in wonder when they saw Glenarvan's features contract and grow pale, and the glass drop from his hands. One word explained it.

"The DUNCAN!" exclaimed Glenarvan. "The DUNCAN, and the convicts!"

"The DUNCAN!" cried John, letting go his oar and rising.

"Yes, death on all sides!" murmured Glenarvan, crushed by despair.

It was indeed the yacht, they could not mistake her--the yacht and her bandit crew!

The major could scarcely restrain himself from cursing their destiny.

The canoe was meantime standing still. Where should they go? Whither fly? What choice was there between the convicts and the savages?

A shot was fired from the nearest of the native boats, and the ball struck Wilson's oar.

A few strokes then carried the canoe nearer to the DUNCAN.

The yacht was coming down at full speed, and was not more than half a mile off.

John Mangles, between two enemies, did not know what to advise, whither to fly! The two poor ladies on their knees, prayed in their agony.

The savages kept up a running fire, and shots were raining round the canoe, when suddenly a loud report was heard, and a ball from the yacht's cannon passed over their heads, and now the boat remained motionless between the DUNCAN and the native canoes.

John Mangles, frenzied with despair, seized his ax. He was about to scuttle the boat and sink it with his unfortunate companions, when a cry from Robert arrested his arm.

"Tom Austin! Tom Austin!" the lad shouted. "He is on board! I see him! He knows us! He is waving his hat."

The ax hung useless in John's hand.

A second ball whistled over his head, and cut in two the nearest of the three native boats, while a loud hurrah burst forth on board the DUNCAN.

The savages took flight, fled and regained the shore.

"Come on, Tom, come on!" cried John Mangles in a joyous voice.

And a few minutes after, the ten fugitives, how, they knew not, were all safe on board the DUNCAN.

CHAPTER XVI WHY THE "DUNCAN" WENT TO NEW ZEALAND

IT would be vain to attempt to depict the feelings of Glenarvan and his friends when the songs of old Scotia fell on their ears. The moment they set foot on the deck of the DUNCAN, the piper blew his bagpipes, and commenced the national pibroch of the Malcolm clan, while loud hurrahs rent the air.

Glenarvan and his whole party, even the Major himself, were crying and embracing each other. They were delirious with joy. The geographer was absolutely mad. He frisked about, telescope in hand, pointing it at the last canoe approaching the shore.

But at the sight of Glenarvan and his companions, with their clothing in rags, and thin, haggard faces, bearing marks of horrible sufferings, the crew ceased their noisy demonstrations. These were specters who had returned--not the bright, adventurous travelers who had left the yacht three months before, so full of hope! Chance, and chance only, had brought them back to the deck of the yacht they never thought to see again. And in what a state of exhaustion and feebleness. But before thinking of fatigue, or attending to the imperious demands of hunger and thirst, Glenarvan questioned Tom Austin about his being on this coast.

Why had the DUNCAN come to the eastern coast of New Zealand? How was it not in the hands of Ben Joyce? By what providential fatality had God brought them in the track of the fugitives?

Why? how? and for what purpose? Tom was stormed with questions on all sides. The old sailor did not know which to listen to first, and at last resolved to hear nobody but Glenarvan, and to answer nobody but him.

"But the convicts?" inquired Glenarvan. "What did you do with them?"

"The convicts?" replied Tom, with the air of a man who does not in the least understand what he is being asked.

"Yes, the wretches who attacked the yacht."

"What yacht? Your Honor's?"

"Why, of course, Tom. The DUNCAN, and Ben Joyce, who came on board."

"I don't know this Ben Joyce, and have never seen him."

"Never seen him!" exclaimed Paganel, stupefied at the old sailor's replies. "Then pray tell me, Tom, how it is that the DUNCAN is cruising at this moment on the coast of New Zealand?"

But if Glenarvan and his friends were totally at a loss to understand the bewilderment of the old sailor, what was their amazement when he replied in a calm voice:

"The DUNCAN is cruising here by your Honor's orders."

"By my orders?" cried Glenarvan.

"Yes, my Lord. I only acted in obedience to the instructions
sent in your letter of January fourteenth."

"My letter! my letter!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

The ten travelers pressed closer round Tom Austin, devouring him
with their eyes. The letter dated from Snowy River had reached
the DUNCAN, then.

"Let us come to explanations, pray, for it seems to me I am dreaming.
You received a letter, Tom?"

"Yes, a letter from your Honor."

"At Melbourne?"

"At Melbourne, just as our repairs were completed."

"And this letter?"

"It was not written by you, but bore your signature, my Lord."

"Just so; my letter was brought by a convict called Ben Joyce."

"No, by a sailor called Ayrton, a quartermaster on the BRITANNIA."

"Yes, Ayrton or Ben Joyce, one and the same individual.
Well, and what were the contents of this letter?"

"It contained orders to leave Melbourne without delay, and go
and cruise on the eastern coast of--"

"Australia!" said Glenarvan with such vehemence that the old sailor
was somewhat disconcerted.

"Of Australia?" repeated Tom, opening his eyes. "No, but New Zealand."

"Australia, Tom! Australia!" they all cried with one voice.

Austin's head began to feel in a whirl. Glenarvan spoke
with such assurance that he thought after all he must have
made a mistake in reading the letter. Could a faithful,
exact old servant like himself have been guilty of such a thing!
He turned red and looked quite disturbed.

"Never mind, Tom," said Lady Helena. "God so willed it."

"But, no, madam, pardon me," replied old Tom. "No, it is impossible,
I was not mistaken. Ayrton read the letter as I did, and it was he,
on the contrary, who wished to bring me to the Australian coast."

"Ayrton!" cried Glenarvan.

"Yes, Ayrton himself. He insisted it was a mistake:
that you meant to order me to Twofold Bay."

"Have you the letter still, Tom?" asked the Major, extremely interested
in this mystery.

"Yes, Mr. McNabbs," replied Austin. "I'll go and fetch it."

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He ran at once to his cabin in the forecastle. During his momentary absence they gazed at each other in silence, all but the Major, who crossed his arms and said:

"Well, now, Paganel, you must own this would be going a little too far."

"What?" growled Paganel, looking like a gigantic note of interrogation, with his spectacles on his forehead and his stooping back.

Austin returned directly with the letter written by Paganel and signed by Glenarvan.

"Will your Honor read it?" he said, handing it to him.

Glenarvan took the letter and read as follows:

"Order to Tom Austin to put out to sea without delay, and to take the Duncan, by latitude 37 degrees to the eastern coast of New Zealand!"

"New Zealand!" cried Paganel, leaping up.

And he seized the letter from Glenarvan, rubbed his eyes, pushed down his spectacles on his nose, and read it for himself.

"New Zealand!" he repeated in an indescribable tone, letting the order slip between his fingers.

That same moment he felt a hand laid on his shoulder, and turning round found himself face to face with the Major, who said in a grave tone:

"Well, my good Paganel, after all, it is a lucky thing you did not send the DUNCAN to Cochin China!"

This pleasantry finished the poor geographer. The crew burst out into loud Homeric laughter. Paganel ran about like a madman, seized his head with both hands and tore his hair. He neither knew what he was doing nor what he wanted to do. He rushed down the poop stairs mechanically and paced the deck, nodding to himself and going straight before without aim or object till he reached the forecastle. There his feet got entangled in a coil of rope. He stumbled and fell, accidentally catching hold of a rope with both hands in his fall.

Suddenly a tremendous explosion was heard. The forecastle gun had gone off, riddling the quiet calm of the waves with a volley of small shot. The unfortunate Paganel had caught hold of the cord of the loaded gun. The geographer was thrown down the forecastle ladder and disappeared below.

A cry of terror succeeded the surprise produced by the explosion. Everybody thought something terrible must have happened. The sailors rushed between decks and lifted up Paganel, almost bent double.

The geographer uttered no sound.

They carried his long body onto the poop. His companions were in despair. The Major, who was always the surgeon on great occasions, began to strip the unfortunate that he might dress his wounds; but he had scarcely put his hands on the dying man when he started up as if touched by an electrical machine.

"Never! never!" he exclaimed, and pulling his ragged coat tightly round him, he began buttoning it up in a strangely excited manner.

"But, Paganel," began the Major.

"No, I tell you!"

"I must examine--"

"You shall not examine."

"You may perhaps have broken--" continued McNabbs.

"Yes," continued Paganel, getting up on his long legs, "but what I have broken the carpenter can mend."

"What is it, then?"

"There."

Bursts of laughter from the crew greeted this speech. Paganel's friends were quite reassured about him now. They were satisfied that he had come off safe and sound from his adventure with the forecastle gun.

"At any rate," thought the Major, "the geographer is wonderfully bashful."

But now Paganel was recovered a little, he had to reply to a question he could not escape.

"Now, Paganel," said Glenarvan, "tell us frankly all about it. I own that your blunder was providential. It is sure and certain that but for you the DUNCAN would have fallen into the hands of the convicts; but for you we should have been recaptured by the Maories. But for my sake tell me by what supernatural aberration of mind you were induced to write New Zealand instead of Australia?"

"Well, upon my oath," said Paganel, "it is--"

But the same instant his eyes fell on Mary and Robert Grant, and he stopped short and then went on:

"What would you have me say, my dear Glenarvan? I am mad, I am an idiot, an incorrigible fellow, and I shall live and die the most terrible absent man. I can't change my skin."

"Unless you get flayed alive."

"Get flayed alive!" cried the geographer, with a furious look. "Is that a personal allusion?"

"An allusion to what?" asked McNabbs, quietly. This was all that passed. The mystery of the DUNCAN'S presence on the coast was explained, and all that the travelers thought about now was to get back to their comfortable cabins, and to have breakfast.

However, Glenarvan and John Mangles stayed behind with Tom Austin after the others had retired. They wished to put some further questions to him.

"Now, then, old Austin," said Glenarvan, "tell me, didn't it strike you as strange to be ordered to go and cruise on the coast of New Zealand?"

"Yes, your Honor," replied Tom. "I was very much surprised, but it is not my custom to discuss any orders I receive, and I obeyed. Could I do otherwise? If some catastrophe had occurred through not carrying out your injunctions to the letter, should not I have been to blame? Would you have acted differently, captain?"

"No, Tom," replied John Mangles.

"But what did you think?" asked Glenarvan.

"I thought, your Honor, that in the interest of Harry Grant, it was necessary to go where I was told to go. I thought that in consequence of fresh arrangements, you were to sail over to New Zealand, and that I was to wait for you on the east coast of the island. Moreover, on leaving Melbourne, I kept our destination a secret, and the crew only knew it when we were right out at sea, and the Australian continent was finally out of sight. But one circumstance occurred which greatly perplexed me."

"What was it, Tom?" asked Glenarvan.

"Just this, that when the quartermaster of the BRITANNIA heard our destination--"

"Ayrton!" cried Glenarvan. "Then he is on board?"

"Yes, your Honor."

"Ayrton here?" repeated Glenarvan, looking at John Mangles.

"God has so willed!" said the young captain.

In an instant, like lightning, Ayrton's conduct, his long-planned treachery, Glenarvan's wound, Mulrady's assassination, the sufferings of the expedition in the marshes of the Snowy River, the whole past life of the miscreant, flashed before the eyes of the two men. And now, by the strangest concourse of events, the convict was in their power.

"Where is he?" asked Glenarvan eagerly.

"In a cabin in the forecastle, and under guard."

"Why was he imprisoned?"

"Because when Ayrton heard the vessel was going to New Zealand, he was

in a fury; because he tried to force me to alter the course of the ship; because he threatened me; and, last of all, because he incited my men to mutiny. I saw clearly he was a dangerous individual, and I must take precautions against him."

"And since then?"

"Since then he has remained in his cabin without attempting to go out."

"That's well, Tom."

Just at this moment Glenarvan and John Mangles were summoned to the saloon where breakfast, which they so sorely needed, was awaiting them. They seated themselves at the table and spoke no more of Ayrton.

But after the meal was over, and the guests were refreshed and invigorated, and they all went upon deck, Glenarvan acquainted them with the fact of the quartermaster's presence on board, and at the same time announced his intention of having him brought before them.

"May I beg to be excused from being present at his examination?" said Lady Helena. "I confess, dear Edward, it would be extremely painful for me to see the wretched man."

"He must be confronted with us, Helena," replied Lord Glenarvan; "I beg you will stay. Ben Joyce must see all his victims face to face."

Lady Helena yielded to his wish. Mary Grant sat beside her, near Glenarvan. All the others formed a group round them, the whole party that had been compromised so seriously by the treachery of the convict. The crew of the yacht, without understanding the gravity of the situation, kept profound silence.

"Bring Ayrton here," said Glenarvan.

CHAPTER XVII AYRTON'S OBSTINACY

AYRTON came. He crossed the deck with a confident tread, and mounted the steps to the poop. His eyes were gloomy, his teeth set, his fists clenched convulsively. His appearance betrayed neither effrontery nor timidity. When he found himself in the presence of Lord Glenarvan he folded his arms and awaited the questions calmly and silently.

"Ayrton," said Glenarvan, "here we are then, you and us, on this very DUNCAN that you wished to deliver into the hands of the convicts of Ben Joyce."

The lips of the quartermaster trembled slightly and a quick flush suffused his impassive features. Not the flush of remorse, but of shame at failure. On this yacht which he thought he was to command as master, he was a prisoner, and his fate was about to be decided in a few seconds.

However, he made no reply. Glenarvan waited patiently.

But Ayrton persisted in keeping absolute silence.

"Speak, Ayrton, what have you to say?" resumed Glenarvan.

Ayrton hesitated, the wrinkles in his forehead deepened,
and at length he said in calm voice:

"I have nothing to say, my Lord. I have been fool enough to allow
myself to be caught. Act as you please."

Then he turned his eyes away toward the coast which lay on the west,
and affected profound indifference to what was passing around him.
One would have thought him a stranger to the whole affair.
But Glenarvan was determined to be patient. Powerful motives
urged him to find out certain details concerning the mysterious
life of Ayrton, especially those which related to Harry Grant
and the BRITANNIA. He therefore resumed his interrogations,
speaking with extreme gentleness and firmly restraining his violent
irritation against him.

"I think, Ayrton," he went on, "that you will not refuse to reply
to certain questions that I wish to put to you; and, first of all,
ought I to call you Ayrton or Ben Joyce? Are you, or are you not,
the quartermaster of the BRITANNIA?"

Ayrton remained impassive, gazing at the coast, deaf to every question.

Glenarvan's eyes kindled, as he said again:

"Will you tell me how you left the BRITANNIA, and why you
are in Australia?"

The same silence, the same impassibility.

"Listen to me, Ayrton," continued Glenarvan; "it is to your
interest to speak. Frankness is the only resource left to you,
and it may stand you in good stead. For the last time, I ask you,
will you reply to my questions?"

Ayrton turned his head toward Glenarvan, and looked into his eyes.

"My Lord," he said, "it is not for me to answer. Justice may witness
against me, but I am not going to witness against myself."

"Proof will be easy," said Glenarvan.

"Easy, my Lord," repeated Ayrton, in a mocking tone.
"Your honor makes rather a bold assertion there, it seems to me.
For my own part, I venture to affirm that the best judge in
the Temple would be puzzled what to make of me. Who will say why
I came to Australia, when Captain Grant is not here to tell?
Who will prove that I am the Ben Joyce placarded by the police,
when the police have never had me in their hands, and my companions
are at liberty? Who can damage me except yourself, by bringing
forward a single crime against me, or even a blameable action?
Who will affirm that I intended to take possession of this
ship and deliver it into the hands of the convicts?
No one, I tell you, no one. You have your suspicions, but you
need certainties to condemn a man, and certainties you have none.

Until there is a proof to the contrary, I am Ayrton,
quartermaster of the BRITANNIA."

Ayrton had become animated while he was speaking, but soon relapsed
into his former indifference.

He, no doubt, expected that his reply would close the examination,
but Glenarvan commenced again, and said:

"Ayrton, I am not a Crown prosecutor charged with your indictment.
That is no business of mine. It is important that our
respective situations should be clearly defined.
I am not asking you anything that could compromise you.
That is for justice to do. But you know what I am searching for,
and a single word may put me on the track I have lost.
Will you speak?"

Ayrton shook his head like a man determined to be silent.

"Will you tell me where Captain Grant is?" asked Glenarvan.

"No, my Lord," replied Ayrton.

"Will you tell me where the BRITANNIA was wrecked?"

"No, neither the one nor the other."

"Ayrton," said Glenarvan, in almost beseeching tones, "if you know
where Harry Grant is, will you, at least, tell his poor children,
who are waiting for you to speak the word?"

Ayrton hesitated. His features contracted, and he muttered
in a low voice, "I cannot, my Lord."

Then he added with vehemence, as if reproaching himself for
a momentary weakness:

"No, I will not speak. Have me hanged, if you choose."

"Hanged!" exclaimed Glenarvan, overcome by a sudden feeling of anger.

But immediately mastering himself, he added in a grave voice:

"Ayrton, there is neither judge nor executioner here.
At the first port we touch at, you will be given up into the hands
of the English authorities."

"That is what I demand," was the quartermaster's reply.

Then he turned away and quietly walked back to his cabin,
which served as his prison. Two sailors kept guard at
the door, with orders to watch his slightest movement.
The witnesses of this examination retired from the scene
indignant and despairing.

As Glenarvan could make no way against Ayrton's obstinacy,
what was to be done now? Plainly no course remained but to
carry out the plan formed at Eden, of returning to Europe
and giving up for the time this unsuccessful enterprise,

for the traces of the BRITANNIA seemed irrevocably lost,
and the document did not appear to allow any fresh interpretation.
On the 37th parallel there was not even another country,
and the DUNCAN had only to turn and go back.

After Glenarvan had consulted his friends, he talked over
the question of returning, more particularly with the captain.
John examined the coal bunkers, and found there was only
enough to last fifteen days longer at the outside.
It was necessary, therefore, to put in at the nearest port
for a fresh supply.

John proposed that he should steer for the Bay of Talcahuano,
where the DUNCAN had once before been revictualed before she
commenced her voyage of circumnavigation. It was a direct
route across, and lay exactly along the 37th parallel.
From thence the yacht, being amply provisioned, might go south,
double Cape Horn, and get back to Scotland by the Atlantic route.

This plan was adopted, and orders were given to the engineer to get up
the steam. Half an hour afterward the beak-head of the yacht was turned
toward Talcahuano, over a sea worthy of being called the Pacific,
and at six P. M. the last mountains of New Zealand had disappeared
in warm, hazy mist on the horizon.

The return voyage was fairly commenced. A sad voyage, for the
courageous searching party to come back to the port without bringing
home Harry Grant with them! The crew, so joyous at departure and
so hopeful, were coming back to Europe defeated and discouraged.
There was not one among the brave fellows whose heart did
not swell at the thought of seeing his own country once more;
and yet there was not one among them either who would not have
been willing to brave the perils of the sea for a long time still
if they could but find Captain Grant.

Consequently, the hurrahs which greeted the return of Lord Glenarvan
to the yacht soon gave place to dejection. Instead of the close
intercourse which had formerly existed among the passengers,
and the lively conversations which had cheered the voyage,
each one kept apart from the others in the solitude of his own cabin,
and it was seldom that anyone appeared on the deck of the DUNCAN.

Paganel, who generally shared in an exaggerated form
the feelings of those about him, whether painful or joyous--
a man who could have invented hope if necessary--even Paganel
was gloomy and taciturn. He was seldom visible; his natural
loquacity and French vivacity gave place to silence and dejection.
He seemed even more downhearted than his companions.
If Glenarvan spoke at all of renewing the search, he shook his
head like a man who has given up all hope, and whose convictions
concerning the fate of the shipwrecked men appeared settled.
It was quite evident he believed them irrevocably lost.

And yet there was a man on board who could have spoken the decisive word,
and refused to break his silence. This was Ayrton. There was no doubt
the fellow knew, if not the present whereabouts of the captain, at least
the place of shipwreck. But it was evident that were Grant found,
he would be a witness against him. Hence his persistent silence,
which gave rise to great indignation on board, especially among the crew,

who would have liked to deal summarily with him.

Glenarvan repeatedly renewed his attempts with the quartermaster,
but promises and threats were alike useless.
Ayrton's obstinacy was so great, and so inexplicable,
that the Major began to believe he had nothing to reveal.
His opinion was shared, moreover, by the geographer, as it
corroborated his own notion about Harry Grant.

But if Ayrton knew nothing, why did he not confess his ignorance?
It could not be turned against him. His silence increased the difficulty
of forming any new plan. Was the presence of the quartermaster
on the Australian continent a proof of Harry Grant's being there?
It was settled that they must get this information out of Ayrton.

Lady Helena, seeing her husband's ill-success, asked his permission
to try her powers against the obstinacy of the quartermaster.
When a man had failed, a woman perhaps, with her gentler influence,
might succeed. Is there not a constant repetition going on of
the story of the fable where the storm, blow as it will, cannot tear
the cloak from the shoulders of the traveler, while the first warm
rays of sunshine make him throw it off immediately?

Glenarvan, knowing his young wife's good sense, allowed her to act
as she pleased.

The same day (the 5th of March), Ayrton was conducted to
Lady Helena's saloon. Mary Grant was to be present at the interview,
for the influence of the young girl might be considerable,
and Lady Helena would not lose any chance of success.

For a whole hour the two ladies were closeted with
the quartermaster, but nothing transpired about their interview.
What had been said, what arguments they used to win the secret
from the convict, or what questions were asked, remained unknown;
but when they left Ayrton, they did not seem to have succeeded,
as the expression on their faces denoted discouragement.

In consequence of this, when the quartermaster was being taken
back to his cabin, the sailors met him with violent menaces.
He took no notice except by shrugging his shoulders, which so increased
their rage, that John Mangles and Glenarvan had to interfere,
and could only repress it with difficulty.

But Lady Helena would not own herself vanquished.
She resolved to struggle to the last with this pitiless man,
and went next day herself to his cabin to avoid exposing him
again to the vindictiveness of the crew.

The good and gentle Scotchwoman stayed alone with the convict leader
for two long hours. Glenarvan in a state of extreme nervous anxiety,
remained outside the cabin, alternately resolved to exhaust completely
this last chance of success, alternately resolved to rush in and snatch
his wife from so painful a situation.

But this time when Lady Helena reappeared, her look was full of hope.
Had she succeeded in extracting the secret, and awakening in that adamant
heart a last faint touch of pity?

McNabbs, who first saw her, could not restrain a gesture of incredulity.

However the report soon spread among the sailors that the quartermaster had yielded to the persuasions of Lady Helena. The effect was electrical. The entire crew assembled on deck far quicker than Tom Austin's whistle could have brought them together.

Glenarvan had hastened up to his wife and eagerly asked:

"Has he spoken?"

"No," replied Lady Helena, "but he has yielded to my entreaties, and wishes to see you."

"Ah, dear Helena, you have succeeded!"

"I hope so, Edward."

"Have you made him any promise that I must ratify?"

"Only one; that you will do all in your power to mitigate his punishment."

"Very well, dear Helena. Let Ayrton come immediately."

Lady Helena retired to her cabin with Mary Grant, and the quartermaster was brought into the saloon where Lord Glenarvan was expecting him.

CHAPTER XVIII A DISCOURAGING CONFESSION

As soon as the quartermaster was brought into the presence of Lord Glenarvan, his keepers withdrew.

"You wanted to speak to me, Ayrton?" said Glenarvan.

"Yes, my Lord," replied the quartermaster.

"Did you wish for a private interview?"

"Yes, but I think if Major McNabbs and Mr. Paganel were present it would be better."

"For whom?"

"For myself."

Ayrton spoke quite calmly and firmly. Glenarvan looked at him for an instant, and then sent to summon McNabbs and Paganel, who came at once.

"We are all ready to listen to you," said Glenarvan, when his two friends had taken their place at the saloon table.

Ayrton collected himself, for an instant, and then said:

"My Lord, it is usual for witnesses to be present at every contract or transaction between two parties. That is why I desire the presence of Messrs. Paganel and McNabbs, for it is,

properly speaking, a bargain which I propose to make."

Glenarvan, accustomed to Ayrton's ways, exhibited no surprise, though any bargaining between this man and himself seemed strange.

"What is the bargain?" he said.

"This," replied Ayrton. "You wish to obtain from me certain facts which may be useful to you. I wish to obtain from you certain advantages which would be valuable to me. It is giving for giving, my Lord. Do you agree to this or not?"

"What are the facts?" asked Paganel eagerly.

"No," said Glenarvan. "What are the advantages?"

Ayrton bowed in token that he understood Glenarvan's distinction.

"These," he said, "are the advantages I ask. It is still your intention, I suppose, to deliver me up to the English authorities?"

"Yes, Ayrton, it is only justice."

"I don't say it is not," replied the quartermaster quietly. "Then of course you would never consent to set me at liberty."

Glenarvan hesitated before replying to a question so plainly put. On the answer he gave, perhaps the fate of Harry Grant might depend!

However, a feeling of duty toward human justice compelled him to say:

"No, Ayrton, I cannot set you at liberty."

"I do not ask it," said the quartermaster proudly.

"Then, what is it you want?"

"A middle place, my Lord, between the gibbet that awaits me and the liberty which you cannot grant me."

"And that is--"

"To allow me to be left on one of the uninhabited islands of the Pacific, with such things as are absolute necessaries. I will manage as best I can, and will repent if I have time."

Glenarvan, quite unprepared for such a proposal, looked at his two friends in silence. But after a brief reflection, he replied:

"Ayrton, if I agree to your request, you will tell me all I have an interest in knowing."

"Yes, my Lord, that is to say, all I know about Captain Grant and the BRITANNIA."

"The whole truth?"

"The whole."

"But what guarantee have I?"

"Oh, I see what you are uneasy about. You need a guarantee
for me, for the truth of a criminal. That's natural.
But what can you have under the circumstances. There is no help
for it, you must either take my offer or leave it."

"I will trust to you, Ayrton," said Glenarvan, simply.

"And you do right, my Lord. Besides, if I deceive you,
vengeance is in your own power."

"How?"

"You can come and take me again from where you left me,
as I shall have no means of getting away from the island."

Ayrton had an answer for everything. He anticipated the difficulties
and furnished unanswerable arguments against himself. It was
evident he intended to affect perfect good faith in the business.
It was impossible to show more complete confidence.
And yet he was prepared to go still further in disinterestedness.

"My Lord and gentlemen," he added, "I wish to convince you of the fact
that I am playing cards on the table. I have no wish to deceive you,
and I am going to give you a fresh proof of my sincerity in this matter.
I deal frankly with you, because I reckon on your honor."

"Speak, Ayrton," said Glenarvan.

"My Lord, I have not your promise yet to accede to my proposal,
and yet I do not scruple to tell you that I know very little
about Harry Grant."

"Very little," exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, my Lord, the details I am in a position to give you relate
to myself. They are entirely personal, and will not do much
to help you to recover the lost traces of Captain Grant."

Keen disappointment was depicted on the faces of Glenarvan and the Major.
They thought the quartermaster in the possession of an important secret,
and he declared that his communications would be very nearly barren.
Paganel's countenance remained unmoved.

Somehow or other, this avowal of Ayrton, and surrender of himself,
so to speak, unconditionally, singularly touched his auditors,
especially when the quartermaster added:

"So I tell you beforehand, the bargain will be more to my
profit than yours."

"It does not signify," replied Glenarvan. "I accept
your proposal, Ayrton. I give you my word to land you on one
of the islands of the Pacific Ocean."

"All right, my Lord," replied the quartermaster.

Was this strange man glad of this decision? One might have doubted it,

for his impassive countenance betokened no emotion whatever.
It seemed as if he were acting for someone else rather than himself.

"I am ready to answer," he said.

"We have no questions to put to you," said Glenarvan. "Tell us
all you know, Ayrton, and begin by declaring who you are."

"Gentlemen," replied Ayrton, "I am really Tom Ayrton, the quartermaster
of the BRITANNIA. I left Glasgow on Harry Grant's ship on the 12th
of March, 1861. For fourteen months I cruised with him in the Pacific
in search of an advantageous spot for founding a Scotch colony.
Harry Grant was the man to carry out grand projects, but serious
disputes often arose between us. His temper and mine could not agree.
I cannot bend, and with Harry Grant, when once his resolution is taken,
any resistance is impossible, my Lord. He has an iron will both for
himself and others.

"But in spite of that, I dared to rebel, and I tried to get
the crew to join me, and to take possession of the vessel.
Whether I was to blame or not is of no consequence.
Be that as it may, Harry Grant had no scruples, and on the 8th
of April, 1862, he left me behind on the west coast of Australia."

"Of Australia!" said the Major, interrupting Ayrton in his narrative.
"Then of course you had quitted the BRITANNIA before she touched
at Callao, which was her last date?"

"Yes," replied the quartermaster, "for the BRITANNIA did not touch
there while I was on board. And how I came to speak of Callao
at Paddy O'Moore's farm was that I learned the circumstances
from your recital."

"Go on, Ayrton," said Glenarvan.

"I found myself abandoned on a nearly desert coast,
but only forty miles from the penal settlement at Perth,
the capital of Western Australia. As I was wandering there
along the shore, I met a band of convicts who had just escaped,
and I joined myself to them. You will dispense, my Lord,
with any account of my life for two years and a half.
This much, however, I must tell you, that I became the leader
of the gang, under the name of Ben Joyce. In September,
1864, I introduced myself at the Irish farm, where I engaged
myself as a servant in my real name, Ayrton. I waited
there till I should get some chance of seizing a ship.
This was my one idea. Two months afterward the DUNCAN arrived.
During your visit to the farm you related Captain Grant's history,
and I learned then facts of which I was not previously aware--
that the BRITANNIA had touched at Callao, and that her latest
news was dated June, 1862, two months after my disembarkation,
and also about the document and the loss of the ship somewhere
along the 37th parallel; and, lastly, the strong reasons you
had for supposing Harry Grant was on the Australian continent.
Without the least hesitation I determined to appropriate the DUNCAN,
a matchless vessel, able to outdistance the swiftest ships
in the British Navy. But serious injuries had to be repaired.
I therefore let it go to Melbourne, and joined myself to you
in my true character as quartermaster, offering to guide

you to the scene of the shipwreck, fictitiously placed by me on the east coast of Australia. It was in this way, followed or sometimes preceded by my gang of convicts, I directed your expedition toward the province of Victoria. My men committed a bootless crime at Camden Bridge; since the DUNCAN, if brought to the coast, could not escape me, and with the yacht once mine, I was master of the ocean. I led you in this way unsuspectingly as far as the Snowy River. The horses and bullocks dropped dead one by one, poisoned by the gastrolobium. I dragged the wagon into the marshes, where it got half buried. At my instance--but you know the rest, my Lord, and you may be sure that but for the blunder of Mr. Paganel, I should now command the DUNCAN. Such is my history, gentlemen. My disclosures, unfortunately, cannot put you on the track of Harry Grant, and you perceive that you have made but a poor bargain by coming to my terms."

The quartermaster said no more, but crossed his arms in his usual fashion and waited. Glenarvan and his friends kept silence. They felt that this strange criminal had spoken the whole truth. He had only missed his coveted prize, the DUNCAN, through a cause independent of his will. His accomplices had gone to Twofold Bay, as was proved by the convict blouse found by Glenarvan. Faithful to the orders of their chief, they had kept watch on the yacht, and at length, weary of waiting, had returned to the old haunt of robbers and incendiaries in the country parts of New South Wales.

The Major put the first question, his object being to verify the dates of the BRITANNIA.

"You are sure then," he said, "that it was on the 8th of April you were left on the west coast of Australia?"

"On that very day," replied Ayrton.

"And do you know what projects Harry Grant had in view at the time?"

"In an indefinite way I do."

"Say all you can, Ayrton," said Glenarvan, "the least indication may set us in the right course."

"I only know this much, my Lord," replied the quartermaster, "that Captain Grant intended to visit New Zealand. Now, as this part of the programme was not carried out while I was on board, it is not impossible that on leaving Callao the BRITANNIA went to reconnoiter New Zealand. This would agree with the date assigned by the document to the shipwreck--the 27th of June, 1862."

"Clearly," said Paganel.

"But," objected Glenarvan, "there is nothing in the fragmentary words in the document that could apply to New Zealand."

"That I cannot answer," said the quartermaster.

"Well, Ayrton," said Glenarvan, "you have kept your word, and I will keep mine. We have to decide now on what island of the Pacific Ocean you are to be left?"

"It matters little, my Lord," replied Ayrton.

"Return to your cabin," said Glenarvan, "and wait our decision."

The quartermaster withdrew, guarded by the two sailors.

"That villain might have been a man," said the Major.

"Yes," returned Glenarvan; "he is a strong, clear-headed fellow. Why was it that he must needs turn his powers to such evil account?"

"But Harry Grant?"

"I must fear he is irrevocably lost. Poor children! Who can tell them where their father is?"

"I can!" replied Paganel. "Yes; I can!" One could not help remarking that the geographer, so loquacious and impatient usually, had scarcely spoken during Ayrton's examination. He listened without opening his mouth. But this speech of his now was worth many others, and it made Glenarvan spring to his feet, crying out: "You, Paganel! you know where Captain Grant is?"

"Yes, as far as can be known."

"How do you know?"

"From that infernal document."

"Ah!" said the Major, in a tone of the most profound incredulity.

"Hear me first, and shrug your shoulders afterward," said Paganel. "I did not speak sooner, because you would not have believed me. Besides, it was useless; and I only speak to-day because Ayrton's opinion just supports my own."

"Then it is New Zealand?" asked Glenarvan.

"Listen and judge," replied Paganel. "It is not without reason, or, rather, I had a reason for making the blunder which has saved our lives. When I was in the very act of writing the letter to Glenarvan's dictation, the word ZEALAND was swimming in my brain. This is why. You remember we were in the wagon. McNabbs had just apprised Lady Helena about the convicts; he had given her the number of the _Australian and New Zealand Gazette_ which contained the account of the catastrophe at Camden Bridge. Now, just as I was writing, the newspaper was lying on the ground, folded in such a manner that only two syllables of the title were visible; these two syllables were ALAND. What a sudden light flashed on my mind. ALAND was one of the words in the English document, one that hitherto we had translated _a terre_, and which must have been the termination of the proper noun, ZEALAND."

"Indeed!" said Glenarvan.

"Yes," continued Paganel, with profound conviction; "this meaning had escaped me, and do you know why? Because my wits were exercised naturally on the French document, as it was most complete, and in that this important word was wanting."

"Oh, oh!" said the Major; "your imagination goes too far, Paganel; and you forget your former deductions."

"Go on, Major; I am ready to answer you."

"Well, then, what do you make of your word AUSTRA?"

"What it was at first. It merely means southern countries."

"Well, and this syllable, INDI, which was first the root of the INDIANS, and second the root of the word _indigenes?_"

"Well, the third and last time," replied Paganel, "it will be the first syllable of the word INDIGENCE."

"And CONTIN?" cried McNabbs. "Does that still mean CONTINENT?"

"No; since New Zealand is only an island."

"What then?" asked Glenarvan.

"My dear lord," replied Paganel, "I am going to translate the document according to my third interpretation, and you shall judge. I only make two observations beforehand. First, forget as much as possible preceding interpretations, and divest your mind of all preconceived notions. Second, certain parts may appear to you strained, and it is possible that I translate them badly; but they are of no importance; among others, the word AGONIE, which chokes me; but I cannot find any other explanation. Besides, my interpretation was founded on the French document; and don't forget it was written by an Englishman, who could not be familiar with the idioms of the French language. Now then, having said this much, I will begin."

And slowly articulating each syllable, he repeated the following sentences:

"LE 27th JUIN, 1862, _le trois-mats Britannia_, de _Glasgow, a sombre_ apres une longue AGONIE dans les mers AUSTRALES sur les cotes de la Nouvelle ZELANDE--in English _Zealand. Deux matelots_ et le _Capitaine Grant_ ont pu y ABORDER. La CONTINUellement en PRoie a une CRUELle INDIgence, ils ont _jete ce document_ par--_de lon_gitude ET 37 degrees 11' de LATItude. _Venex a leur_ secours, ou ils sont PERDUS!" (On the 27th of June, 1865, the three-mast vessel BRITANNIA, of Glasgow, has foundered after a long AGOnie in the Southern Seas, on the coast of New Zealand. Two sailors and Captain Grant have succeeded in landing. Continually a prey to cruel indigence, they have thrown this document into the sea in-- longitude and 37 degrees 11' latitude. Come to their help, or they are lost.)

Paganel stopped. His interpretation was admissible. But precisely because it appeared as likely as the preceding, it might be as false. Glenarvan and the Major did not then try

and discuss it. However, since no traces of the BRITANNIA had yet been met with, either on the Patagonian or Australian coasts, at the points where these countries are crossed by the 37th parallel, the chances were in favor of New Zealand.

"Now, Paganel," said Glenarvan, "will you tell me why you have kept this interpretation secret for nearly two months?"

"Because I did not wish to buoy you up again with vain hopes. Besides, we were going to Auckland, to the very spot indicated by the latitude of the document."

"But since then, when we were dragged out of the route, why did you not speak?"

"Because, however just the interpretation, it could do nothing for the deliverance of the captain."

"Why not, Paganel?"

"Because, admitting that the captain was wrecked on the New Zealand coast, now that two years have passed and he has not reappeared, he must have perished by shipwreck or by the New Zealanders."

"Then you are of the opinion," said Glenarvan, "that--"

"That vestiges of the wreck might be found; but that the survivors of the BRITANNIA have, beyond doubt, perished."

"Keep all this silent, friends," said Glenarvan, "and let me choose a fitting moment to communicate these sad tidings to Captain Grant's children."

CHAPTER XIX A CRY IN THE NIGHT

THE crew soon heard that no light had been thrown on the situation of Captain Grant by the revelations of Ayrton, and it caused profound disappointment among them, for they had counted on the quartermaster, and the quartermaster knew nothing which could put the DUNCAN on the right track.

The yacht therefore continued her course. They had yet to select the island for Ayrton's banishment.

Paganel and John Mangles consulted the charts on board, and exactly on the 37th parallel found a little isle marked by the name of Maria Theresa, a sunken rock in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, 3,500 miles from the American coast, and 1,500 miles from New Zealand. The nearest land on the north was the Archipelago of Pomotou, under the protectorate of France; on the south there was nothing but the eternal ice-belt of the Polar Sea. No ship would come to reconnoiter this solitary isle. No echoes from the world would ever reach it. The storm birds only would rest awhile on it during their long flight, and in many charts the rock was not even marked.

If ever complete isolation was to be found on earth, it was on this

little out-of-the-way island. Ayrton was informed of its situation, and expressed his willingness to live there apart from his fellows. The head of the vessel was in consequence turned toward it immediately.

Two days later, at two o'clock, the man on watch signaled land on the horizon. This was Maria Theresa, a low, elongated island, scarcely raised above the waves, and looking like an enormous whale. It was still thirty miles distant from the yacht, whose stem was rapidly cutting her way over the water at the rate of sixteen knots an hour.

Gradually the form of the island grew more distinct on the horizon. The orb of day sinking in the west, threw up its peculiar outlines in sharp relief. A few peaks of no great elevation stood out here and there, tipped with sunlight. At five o'clock John Mangles could discern a light smoke rising from it.

"Is it a volcano?" he asked of Paganel, who was gazing at this new land through his telescope.

"I don't know what to think," replied the geographer; "Maria Theresa is a spot little known; nevertheless, it would not be surprising if its origin were due to some submarine upheaval, and consequently it may be volcanic."

"But in that case," said Glenarvan, "is there not reason to fear that if an eruption produced it, an eruption may carry it away?"

"That is not possible," replied Paganel. "We know of its existence for several centuries, which is our security. When the Isle Julia emerged from the Mediterranean, it did not remain long above the waves, and disappeared a few months after its birth."

"Very good," said Glenarvan. "Do you think, John, we can get there to-night?"

"No, your honor, I must not risk the DUNCAN in the dark, for I am unacquainted with the coast. I will keep under steam, but go very slowly, and to-morrow, at daybreak, we can send off a boat."

At eight o'clock in the evening, Maria Theresa, though five miles to leeward, appeared only an elongated shadow, scarcely visible. The DUNCAN was always getting nearer.

At nine o'clock, a bright glare became visible, and flames shot up through the darkness. The light was steady and continued.

"That confirms the supposition of a volcano," said Paganel, observing it attentively.

"Yet," replied John Mangles, "at this distance we ought to hear the noise which always accompanies an eruption, and the east wind brings no sound whatever to our ear."

"That's true," said Paganel. "It is a volcano that blazes, but does not speak. The gleam seems intermittent too, sometimes, like that of a lighthouse."

"You are right," said John Mangles, "and yet we are not on a lighted coast."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "another fire? On the shore this time! Look! It moves! It has changed its place!"

John was not mistaken. A fresh fire had appeared, which seemed to die out now and then, and suddenly flare up again.

"Is the island inhabited then?" said Glenarvan.

"By savages, evidently," replied Paganel.

"But in that case, we cannot leave the quartermaster there."

"No," replied the Major, "he would be too bad a gift even to bestow on savages."

"We must find some other uninhabited island," said Glenarvan, who could not help smiling at the delicacy of McNabbs. "I promised Ayrton his life, and I mean to keep my promise."

"At all events, don't let us trust them," added Paganel. "The New Zealanders have the barbarous custom of deceiving ships by moving lights, like the wreckers on the Cornish coast in former times. Now the natives of Maria Theresa may have heard of this proceeding."

"Keep her off a point," called out John to the man at the helm. "To-morrow at sunrise we shall know what we're about."

At eleven o'clock, the passengers and John Mangles retired to their cabins. In the forepart of the yacht the man on watch was pacing the deck, while aft, there was no one but the man at the wheel.

At this moment Mary Grant and Robert came on the poop.

The two children of the captain, leaning over the rail, gazed sadly at the phosphorescent waves and the luminous wake of the DUNCAN. Mary was thinking of her brother's future, and Robert of his sister's. Their father was uppermost in the minds of both. Was this idolized parent still in existence? Must they give him up? But no, for what would life be without him? What would become of them without him? What would have become of them already, but for Lord Glenarvan and Lady Helena?

The young boy, old above his years through trouble, divined the thoughts that troubled his sister, and taking her hand in his own, said, "Mary, we must never despair. Remember the lessons our father gave us. Keep your courage up and no matter what befalls you, let us show this obstinate courage which can rise above everything. Up to this time, sister, you have been working for me, it is my turn now, and I will work for you."

"Dear Robert!" replied the young girl.

"I must tell you something," resumed Robert. "You mustn't be vexed, Mary!"

"Why should I be vexed, my child?"

"And you will let me do it?"

"What do you mean?" said Mary, getting uneasy.

"Sister, I am going to be a sailor!"

"You are going to leave me!" cried the young girl,
pressing her brother's hand.

"Yes, sister; I want to be a sailor, like my father and
Captain John. Mary, dear Mary, Captain John has not lost all hope,
he says. You have confidence in his devotion to us, and so have I. He
is going to make a grand sailor out of me some day, he has promised
me he will; and then we are going to look for our father together.
Tell me you are willing, sister mine. What our father would
have done for us it is our duty, mine, at least, to do for him.
My life has one purpose to which it should be entirely consecrated--
that is to search, and never cease searching for my father, who would
never have given us up. Ah, Mary, how good our father was!"

"And so noble, so generous!" added Mary. "Do you know, Robert, he was
already a glory to our country, and that he would have been numbered
among our great men if fate had not arrested his course."

"Yes, I know it," said Robert.

Mary put her arm around the boy, and hugged him fondly as he felt
her tears fall on his forehead.

"Mary, Mary!" he cried, "it doesn't matter what our friends say,
I still hope, and will always hope. A man like my father doesn't
die till he has finished his work."

Mary Grant could not reply. Sobs choked her voice.
A thousand feelings struggled in her breast at the news that
fresh attempts were about to be made to recover Harry Grant,
and that the devotion of the captain was so unbounded.

"And does Mr. John still hope?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Robert. "He is a brother that will never
forsake us, never! I will be a sailor, you'll say yes,
won't you, sister? And let me join him in looking for my father.
I am sure you are willing."

"Yes, I am willing," said Mary. "But the separation!" she murmured.

"You will not be alone, Mary, I know that. My friend John
told me so. Lady Helena will not let you leave her.
You are a woman; you can and should accept her kindness.
To refuse would be ungrateful, but a man, my father has said
a hundred times, must make his own way."

"But what will become of our own dear home in Dundee,
so full of memories?"

"We will keep it, little sister! All that is settled, and settled so well, by our friend John, and also by Lord Glenarvan. He is to keep you at Malcolm Castle as if you were his daughter. My Lord told my friend John so, and he told me. You will be at home there, and have someone to speak to about our father, while you are waiting till John and I bring him back to you some day. Ah! what a grand day that will be!" exclaimed Robert, his face glowing with enthusiasm.

"My boy, my brother," replied Mary, "how happy my father would be if he could hear you. How much you are like him, dear Robert, like our dear, dear father. When you grow up you'll be just himself."

"I hope I may," said Robert, blushing with filial and sacred pride.

"But how shall we requite Lord and Lady Glenarvan?" said Mary Grant.

"Oh, that will not be difficult," replied Robert, with boyish confidence. "We will love and revere them, and we will tell them so; and we will give them plenty of kisses, and some day, when we can get the chance, we will die for them."

"We'll live for them, on the contrary," replied the young girl, covering her brother's forehead with kisses. "They will like that better, and so shall I."

The two children then relapsed into silence, gazing out into the dark night, and giving way to long reveries, interrupted occasionally by a question or remark from one to the other. A long swell undulated the surface of the calm sea, and the screw turned up a luminous furrow in the darkness.

A strange and altogether supernatural incident now occurred. The brother and sister, by some of those magnetic communications which link souls mysteriously together, were the subjects at the same time and the same instant of the same hallucination.

Out of the midst of these waves, with their alternations of light and shadow, a deep plaintive voice sent up a cry, the tones of which thrilled through every fiber of their being.

"Come! come!" were the words which fell on their ears.

They both started up and leaned over the railing, and peered into the gloom with questioning eyes.

"Mary, you heard that? You heard that?" cried Robert.

But they saw nothing but the long shadow that stretched before them.

"Robert," said Mary, pale with emotion, "I thought--yes, I thought as you did, that--We must both be ill with fever, Robert."

A second time the cry reached them, and this time the illusion was so great, that they both exclaimed simultaneously, "My father! My father!"

It was too much for Mary. Overcome with emotion, she fell fainting

into Robert's arms.

"Help!" shouted Robert. "My sister! my father! Help! Help!"

The man at the wheel darted forward to lift up the girl.
The sailors on watch ran to assist, and John Mangles, Lady Helena,
and Glenarvan were hastily roused from sleep.

"My sister is dying, and my father is there!" exclaimed Robert,
pointing to the waves.

They were wholly at a loss to understand him.

"Yes!" he repeated, "my father is there! I heard my father's voice;
Mary heard it too!"

Just at this moment, Mary Grant recovering consciousness, but wandering
and excited, called out, "My father! my father is there!"

And the poor girl started up, and leaning over the side of the yacht,
wanted to throw herself into the sea.

"My Lord--Lady Helena!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands,
"I tell you my father is there! I can declare that I heard
his voice come out of the waves like a wail, as if it were
a last adieu."

The young girl went off again into convulsions and spasms,
which became so violent that she had to be carried to
her cabin, where Lady Helena lavished every care on her.
Robert kept on repeating, "My father! my father is there!
I am sure of it, my Lord!"

The spectators of this painful scene saw that the captain's
children were laboring under an hallucination. But how were
they to be undeceived?

Glenarvan made an attempt, however. He took Robert's hand, and said,
"You say you heard your father's voice, my dear boy?"

"Yes, my Lord; there, in the middle of the waves.
He cried out, 'Come! come!'"

"And did you recognize his voice?"

"Yes, I recognized it immediately. Yes, yes; I can swear to it!
My sister heard it, and recognized it as well. How could we
both be deceived? My Lord, do let us go to my father's help.
A boat! a boat!"

Glenarvan saw it was impossible to undeceive the poor boy,
but he tried once more by saying to the man at the wheel:

"Hawkins, you were at the wheel, were you not, when Miss Mary
was so strangely attacked?"

"Yes, your Honor," replied Hawkins.

"And you heard nothing, and saw nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Now Robert, see?"

"If it had been Hawkins's father," returned the boy,
with indomitable energy, "Hawkins would not say he had heard nothing.
It was my father, my lord! my father."

Sobs choked his voice; he became pale and silent, and presently
fell down insensible, like his sister.

Glenarvan had him carried to his bed, where he lay in a deep swoon.

"Poor orphans," said John Mangles. "It is a terrible trial they
have to bear!"

"Yes," said Glenarvan; "excessive grief has produced the same
hallucination in both of them, and at the same time."

"In both of them!" muttered Paganel; "that's strange, and pure
science would say inadmissible."

He leaned over the side of the vessel, and listened attentively,
making a sign to the rest to keep still.

But profound silence reigned around. Paganel shouted his loudest.
No response came.

"It is strange," repeated the geographer, going back to his cabin.
"Close sympathy in thought and grief does not suffice to
explain this phenomenon."

Next day, March 4, at 5 A. M., at dawn, the passengers, including Mary
and Robert, who would not stay behind, were all assembled on the poop,
each one eager to examine the land they had only caught a glimpse
of the night before.

The yacht was coasting along the island at the distance of about a mile,
and its smallest details could be seen by the eye.

Suddenly Robert gave a loud cry, and exclaimed he could see two men
running about and gesticulating, and a third was waving a flag.

"The Union Jack," said John Mangles, who had caught up a spy-glass.

"True enough," said Paganel, turning sharply round toward Robert.

"My Lord," said Robert, trembling with emotion, "if you
don't want me to swim to the shore, let a boat be lowered.
Oh, my Lord, I implore you to let me be the first to land."

No one dared to speak. What! on this little isle,
crossed by the 37th parallel, there were three men,
shipwrecked Englishmen! Instantaneously everyone thought
of the voice heard by Robert and Mary the preceding night.
The children were right, perhaps, in the affirmation.
The sound of a voice might have reached them, but this voice--
was it their father's? No, alas, most assuredly no.

And as they thought of the dreadful disappointment that awaited them, they trembled lest this new trial should crush them completely. But who could stop them from going on shore? Lord Glenarvan had not the heart to do it.

"Lower a boat," he called out.

Another minute and the boat was ready. The two children of Captain Grant, Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Paganel, rushed into it, and six sailors, who rowed so vigorously that they were presently almost close to the shore.

At ten fathoms' distance a piercing cry broke from Mary's lips.

"My father!" she exclaimed.

A man was standing on the beach, between two others. His tall, powerful form, and his physiognomy, with its mingled expression of boldness and gentleness, bore a resemblance both to Mary and Robert. This was indeed the man the children had so often described. Their hearts had not deceived them. This was their father, Captain Grant!

The captain had heard Mary's cry, for he held out his arms, and fell flat on the sand, as if struck by a thunderbolt.

CHAPTER XX CAPTAIN GRANT'S STORY

JOY does not kill, for both father and children recovered before they had reached the yacht. The scene which followed, who can describe? Language fails. The whole crew wept aloud at the sight of these three clasped together in a close, silent embrace.

The moment Harry Grant came on deck, he knelt down reverently. The pious Scotchman's first act on touching the yacht, which to him was the soil of his native land, was to return thanks to the God of his deliverance. Then, turning to Lady Helena and Lord Glenarvan, and his companions, he thanked them in broken words, for his heart was too full to speak. During the short passage from the isle to the yacht, his children had given him a brief sketch of the DUNCAN'S history.

What an immense debt he owed to this noble lady and her friends! From Lord Glenarvan, down to the lowest sailor on board, how all had struggled and suffered for him! Harry Grant expressed his gratitude with such simplicity and nobleness, his manly face suffused with pure and sweet emotion, that the whole crew felt amply recompensed for the trials they had undergone. Even the impassable Major himself felt a tear steal down his cheek in spite of all his self-command; while the good, simple Paganel cried like a child who does not care who sees his tears.

Harry Grant could not take his eyes off his daughter. He thought her beautiful, charming; and he not only said so to himself, but repeated it aloud, and appealed to Lady Helena for confirmation of his opinion, as if to convince himself that he was not blinded by his paternal affection. His boy, too, came in for admiration. "How he has grown! he is a man!" was his delighted exclamation.

And he covered the two children so dear to him with the kisses
he had been heaping up for them during his two years of absence.

Robert then presented all his friends successively,
and found means always to vary the formula of introduction,
though he had to say the same thing about each. The fact was,
each and all had been perfect in the children's eyes.

John Mangles blushed like a child when his turn came, and his voice
trembled as he spoke to Mary's father.

Lady Helena gave Captain Grant a narrative of the voyage,
and made him proud of his son and daughter. She told him of
the young hero's exploits, and how the lad had already paid back
part of the paternal debt to Lord Glenarvan. John Mangles sang
Mary's praises in such terms, that Harry Grant, acting on a hint
from Lady Helena, put his daughter's hand into that of the brave
young captain, and turning to Lord and Lady Glenarvan, said:
"My Lord, and you, Madam, also give your blessing to our children."

When everything had been said and re-said over and over again,
Glenarvan informed Harry Grant about Ayrton. Grant confirmed
the quartermaster's confession as far as his disembarkation
on the coast of Australia was concerned.

"He is an intelligent, intrepid man," he added, "whose passions
have led him astray. May reflection and repentance bring him
to a better mind!"

But before Ayrton was transferred, Harry Grant wished to do the honors
of his rock to his friends. He invited them to visit his wooden house,
and dine with him in Robinson Crusoe fashion.

Glenarvan and his friends accepted the invitation most willingly.
Robert and Mary were eagerly longing to see the solitary house
where their father had so often wept at the thought of them.
A boat was manned, and the Captain and his two children,
Lord and Lady Glenarvan, the Major, John Mangles, and Paganel,
landed on the shores of the island.

A few hours sufficed to explore the whole domain of Harry Grant. It was
in fact the summit of a submarine mountain, a plateau composed of basaltic
rocks and volcanic DEBRIS. During the geological epochs of the earth,
this mountain had gradually emerged from the depths of the Pacific,
through the action of the subterranean fires, but for ages back
the volcano had been a peaceful mountain, and the filled-up crater,
an island rising out of the liquid plain. Then soil formed.
The vegetable kingdom took possession of this new land.
Several whalers landed domestic animals there in passing; goats and pigs,
which multiplied and ran wild, and the three kingdoms of nature
were now displayed on this island, sunk in mid ocean.

When the survivors of the shipwrecked BRITANNIA took refuge there,
the hand of man began to organize the efforts of nature. In two years
and a half, Harry Grant and his two sailors had metamorphosed the island.
Several acres of well-cultivated land were stocked with vegetables
of excellent quality.

The house was shaded by luxuriant gum-trees. The magnificent

ocean stretched before the windows, sparkling in the sunlight.
Harry Grant had the table placed beneath the grand trees,
and all the guests seated themselves. A hind quarter of a goat,
nardou bread, several bowls of milk, two or three roots of
wild endive, and pure fresh water, composed the simple repast,
worthy of the shepherds of Arcadia.

Paganel was enchanted. His old fancies about Robinson Crusoe
revived in full force. "He is not at all to be pitied,
that scoundrel, Ayrton!" he exclaimed, enthusiastically.
"This little isle is just a paradise!"

"Yes," replied Harry Grant, "a paradise to these poor,
shipwrecked fellows that Heaven had pity on, but I am sorry
that Maria Theresa was not an extensive and fertile island,
with a river instead of a stream, and a port instead of a tiny
bay exposed to the open sea."

"And why, captain?" asked Glenarvan.

"Because I should have made it the foundation of the colony
with which I mean to dower Scotland."

"Ah, Captain Grant, you have not given up the project, then, which made
you so popular in our old country?"

"No, my Lord, and God has only saved me through your efforts that I
might accomplish my task. My poor brothers in old Caledonia,
all who are needy must have a refuge provided for them in another
land against their misery, and my dear country must have a colony
of her own, for herself alone, somewhere in these seas, where she
may find that independence and comfort she so lacks in Europe."

"Ah, that is very true, Captain Grant," said Lady Helena. "This is
a grand project of yours, and worthy of a noble heart.
But this little isle--"

"No, madam, it is a rock only fit at most to support a few settlers;
while what we need is a vast country, whose virgin soil abounds
in untouched stores of wealth," replied the captain.

"Well, captain," exclaimed Glenarvan, "the future is ours,
and this country we will seek for together."

And the two brave Scotchmen joined hands in a hearty grip
and so sealed the compact.

A general wish was expressed to hear, while they were on
the island, the account of the shipwreck of the BRITANNIA,
and of the two years spent by the survivors in this very place.
Harry Grant was delighted to gratify their curiosity,
and commenced his narration forthwith.

"My story," he said, "is that of all the Robinson Cru-soes
cast upon an island, with only God and themselves to rely on,
and feeling it a duty to struggle for life with the elements.

"It was during the night of the 26th or 27th of June, 1862,
that the BRITANNIA, disabled by a six days' storm, struck against

the rocks of Maria Theresa. The sea was mountains high,
and lifeboats were useless. My unfortunate crew all perished,
except Bob Learce and Joe Bell, who with myself managed to reach
shore after twenty unsuccessful attempts.

"The land which received us was only an uninhabited island,
two miles broad and five long, with about thirty trees
in the interior, a few meadows, and a brook of fresh water,
which fortunately never dried up. Alone with my sailors, in this
corner of the globe, I did not despair. I put my trust in God,
and accustomed myself to struggle resolutely for existence.
Bob and Joe, my brave companions in misfortune, my friends,
seconded me energetically.

"We began like the fictitious Robinson Crusoe of Defoe,
our model, by collecting the planks of the ship, the tools,
a little powder, and firearms, and a bag of precious seeds.
The first few days were painful enough, but hunting and fishing
soon afforded us a sure supply of food, for wild goats were
in abundance in the interior of the island, and marine animals
abounded on the coast. By degrees we fell into regular ways
and habits of life.

"I had saved my instruments from the wreck, and knew exactly the
position of the island. I found we were out of the route of vessels,
and could not be rescued unless by some providential chance.
I accepted our trying lot composedly, always thinking, however,
of my dear ones, remembering them every day in my prayers,
though never hoping to see them again.

"However, we toiled on resolutely, and before long several acres of land
were sown with the seed off the BRITANNIA; potatoes, endive, sorrel,
and other vegetables besides, gave wholesome variety to our daily fare.
We caught some young kids, which soon grew quite tame. We had milk
and butter. The nardou, which grew abundantly in dried up creeks,
supplied us with tolerably substantial bread, and we had no longer
any fears for our material life.

"We had built a log hut with the DEBRIS of the BRITANNIA,
and this was covered over with sail cloth, carefully tarred over,
and beneath this secure shelter the rainy season passed comfortably.
Many a plan was discussed here, and many a dream indulged in,
the brightest of which is this day realized.

"I had at first the idea of trying to brave the perils of the ocean
in a canoe made out of the spars of the ship, but 1,500 miles lay
between us and the nearest coast, that is to say the islands of the
Archipelago of Pomotou. No boat could have stood so long a voyage.
I therefore relinquished my scheme, and looked for no deliverance
except from a divine hand.

"Ah, my poor children! how often we have stood on the top of the rocks
and watched the few vessels passing in the distance far out at sea.
During the whole period of our exile only two or three vessels appeared
on the horizon, and those only to disappear again immediately.
Two years and a half were spent in this manner. We gave up hoping,
but yet did not despair. At last, early yesterday morning, when I
was standing on the highest peak of the island, I noticed a light smoke
rising in the west. It increased, and soon a ship appeared in sight.

It seemed to be coming toward us. But would it not rather steer clear
of an island where there was no harbor.

"Ah, what a day of agony that was! My heart was almost bursting.
My comrades kindled a fire on one of the peaks. Night came on,
but no signal came from the yacht. Deliverance was there, however.
Were we to see it vanish from our eyes?

"I hesitated no longer. The darkness was growing deeper.
The ship might double the island during the night.
I jumped into the sea, and attempted to make my way toward it.
Hope trebled my strength, I cleft the waves with superhuman vigor,
and had got so near the yacht that I was scarcely thirty fathoms off,
when it tacked about.

"This provoked me to the despairing cry, which only my two
children heard. It was no illusion.

"Then I came back to the shore, exhausted and overcome with
emotion and fatigue. My two sailors received me half dead.
It was a horrible night this last we spent on the island,
and we believed ourselves abandoned forever, when day dawned,
and there was the yacht sailing nearly alongside, under easy steam.
Your boat was lowered--we were saved--and, oh, wonder of
Divine goodness, my children, my beloved children, were there
holding out their arms to me!"

Robert and Mary almost smothered their father with kisses and caresses
as he ended his narrative.

It was now for the first time that the captain heard that he owed
his deliverance to the somewhat hieroglyphical

V. IV Verne document which he had placed in a bottle and confined
to the mercy of the ocean.

But what were Jacques Paganel's thoughts during Captain Grant's recital?
The worthy geographer was turning over in his brain for the thousandth
time the words of the document. He pondered his three successive
interpretations, all of which had proved false. How had this island,
called Maria Theresa, been indicated in the papers originally?

At last Paganel could contain himself no longer, and seizing
Harry Grant's hand, he exclaimed:

"Captain! will you tell me at last what really was in
your indecipherable document?"

A general curiosity was excited by this question of the geographer,
for the enigma which had been for nine months a mystery was about
to be explained.

"Well, captain," repeated Paganel, "do you remember the precise
words of the document?"

"Exactly," replied Harry Grant; "and not a day has passed without
my recalling to memory words with which our last hopes were linked."

"And what are they, captain?" asked Glenarvan. "Speak, for our _amour

propre_ is wounded to the quick!"

"I am ready to satisfy you," replied Harry Grant; "but, you know,
to multiply the chances of safety, I had inclosed three
documents in the bottle, in three different languages.
Which is it you wish to hear?"

"They are not identical, then?" cried Paganel.

"Yes, they are, almost to a word."

"Well, then, let us have the French document," replied Glenarvan.
"That is the one that is most respected by the waves, and the one
on which our interpretations have been mostly founded."

"My Lord, I will give it you word for word," replied Harry Grant.

"LE 27 JUIN, 1862, _le trois-mats Britannia, de Glasgow, s'est perdu
a quinze cents lieues de la Patagonie, dans l'hemisphere austral.
Partes a terre, deux matelots et le Capitaine Grant ont
atteint l'ile Tabor_--"

"Oh!" exclaimed Paganel.

"LA," continued Harry Grant, "_continuellement en proie
a une cruelle indigence, ils ont jete ce document par_ 153
degrees _de longitude et_ 37 degrees 11' _de latitude.
Venes a leur secours, ou ils sont perdus_."

At the name of Tabor, Paganel had started up hastily, and now being
unable to restrain himself longer, he called out:

"How can it be Isle Tabor? Why, this is Maria Theresa!"

"Undoubtedly, Monsieur Paganel," replied Harry Grant. "It is
Maria Theresa on the English and German charts, but is named
Tabor on the French ones!"

At this moment a vigorous thump on Paganel's shoulder almost bent
him double. Truth obliges us to say it was the Major that dealt the blow,
though strangely contrary to his usual strict politeness.

"Geographer!" said McNabbs, in a tone of the most supreme contempt.

But Paganel had not even felt the Major's hand. What was that compared
to the geographical blow which had stunned him?

He had been gradually getting nearer the truth, however,
as he learned from Captain Grant. He had almost
entirely deciphered the indecipherable document.
The names Patagonia, Australia, New Zealand, had appeared to him
in turn with absolute certainty. CONTIN, at first CONTINENT,
had gradually reached its true meaning, _continuelle.
Indi_ had successively signified _indiens, indigenes_,
and at last the right word was found--INDIGENCE. But one
mutilated word, ABOR, had baffled the geographer's sagacity.
Paganel had persisted in making it the root of the verb ABORDER,
and it turned out to be a proper name, the French name of the
Isle Tabor, the isle which had been a refuge for the shipwrecked

sailors of the BRITANNIA. It was difficult to avoid falling into the error, however, for on the English planispheres on the DUNCAN, the little isle was marked Maria Theresa.

"No matter?" cried Paganel, tearing his hair; "I ought not to have forgotten its double appellation. It is an unpardonable mistake, one unworthy of a secretary of the Geographical Society. I am disgraced!"

"Come, come, Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena; "moderate your grief."

"No, madam, no; I am a mere ass!"

"And not even a learned one!" added the Major, by way of consolation.

When the meal was over, Harry Grant put everything in order in his house. He took nothing away, wishing the guilty to inherit the riches of the innocent. Then they returned to the vessel, and, as Glenarvan had determined to start the same day, he gave immediate orders for the disembarkation of the quartermaster. Ayrton was brought up on the poop, and found himself face to face with Harry Grant.

"It is I, Ayrton!" said Grant

"Yes, it is you, captain," replied Ayrton, without the least sign of surprise at Harry Grant's recovery. "Well, I am not sorry to see you again in good health."

"It seems, Ayrton, that I made a mistake in landing you on an inhabited coast."

"It seems so, captain."

"You are going to take my place on this uninhabited island. May Heaven give you repentance!"

"Amen," said Ayrton, calmly.

Glenarvan then addressed the quartermaster.

"It is still your wish, then, Ayrton, to be left behind?"

"Yes, my Lord!"

"And Isle Tabor meets your wishes?"

"Perfectly."

"Now then, listen to my last words, Ayrton. You will be cut off here from all the world, and no communication with your fellows is possible. Miracles are rare, and you will not be able to quit this isle. You will be alone, with no eye upon you but that of God, who reads the deepest secrets of the heart; but you will be neither lost nor forsaken, as Captain Grant was. Unworthy as you are of anyone's remembrance, you will not be dropped out of recollection. I know where you are, Ayrton; I know where to find you-- I shall never forget."

"God keep your Honor," was all Ayrton's reply.

These were the final words exchanged between Glenarvan and the quartermaster. The boat was ready and Ayrton got into it.

John Mangles had previously conveyed to the island several cases of preserved food, besides clothing, and tools and firearms, and a supply of powder and shot. The quartermaster could commence a new life of honest labor. Nothing was lacking, not even books; among others, the Bible, so dear to English hearts.

The parting hour had come. The crew and all the passengers were assembled on deck. More than one felt his heart swell with emotion. Mary Grant and Lady Helena could not restrain their feelings.

"Must it be done?" said the young wife to her husband. "Must the poor man be left there?"

"He must, Helena," replied Lord Glenarvan. "It is in expiation of his crimes."

At that moment the boat, in charge of John Mangles, turned away. Ayrton, who remained standing, and still unmoved, took off his cap and bowed gravely.

Glenarvan uncovered, and all the crew followed his example, as if in presence of a man who was about to die, and the boat went off in profound silence.

On reaching land, Ayrton jumped on the sandy shore, and the boat returned to the yacht. It was then four o'clock in the afternoon, and from the poop the passengers could see the quartermaster gazing at the ship, standing with folded arms on a rock, motionless as a statue.

"Shall we set sail, my Lord?" asked John Mangles.

"Yes, John," replied Glenarvan, hastily, more moved than he cared to show.

"Go on!" shouted John to the engineer.

The steam hissed and puffed out, the screw began to stir the waves, and by eight o'clock the last peaks of Isle Tabor disappeared in the shadows of the night.

CHAPTER XXI PAGANEL'S LAST ENTANGLEMENT

ON the 19th of March, eleven days after leaving the island, the DUNCAN sighted the American coast, and next day dropped anchor in the bay of Talcahuano. They had come back again after a voyage of five months, during which, and keeping strictly along the 37th parallel, they had gone round the world. The passengers in this memorable expedition, unprecedented in the annals of the Travelers' Club, had visited Chili, the Pampas, the Argentine Republic, the Atlantic, the island of Tristan d'Acunha, the Indian Ocean, Amsterdam Island, Australia, New Zealand, Isle Tabor, and the Pacific. Their search had not been fruitless, for they

were bringing back the survivors of the shipwrecked BRITANNIA.

Not one of the brave Scots who set out at the summons of their chief, but could answer to their names; all were returning to their old Scotia.

As soon as the DUNCAN had re-provisioned, she sailed along the coast of Patagonia, doubled Cape Horn, and made a swift run up the Atlantic Ocean. No voyage could be more devoid of incident. The yacht was simply carrying home a cargo of happiness. There was no secret now on board, not even John Mangles's attachment to Mary Grant.

Yes, there was one mystery still, which greatly excited McNabbs's curiosity. Why was it that Paganel remained always hermetically fastened up in his clothes, with a big comforter round his throat and up to his very ears? The Major was burning with desire to know the reason of this singular fashion. But in spite of interrogations, allusions, and suspicions on the part of McNabbs, Paganel would not unbutton.

Not even when the DUNCAN crossed the line, and the heat was so great that the seams of the deck were melting. "He is so DISTRAIT that he thinks he is at St. Petersburg," said the Major, when he saw the geographer wrapped in an immense great-coat, as if the mercury had been frozen in the thermometer.

At last on the 9th of May, fifty-three days from the time of leaving Talcahuano, John Mangles sighted the lights of Cape Clear. The yacht entered St. George's Channel, crossed the Irish Sea, and on the 10th of May reached the Firth of Clyde. At 11 o'clock she dropped anchor off Dunbarton, and at 2 P.M. the passengers arrived at Malcolm Castle amidst the enthusiastic cheering of the Highlanders.

As fate would have it then, Harry Grant and his two companions were saved. John Mangles wedded Mary Grant in the old cathedral of St. Mungo, and Mr. Paxton, the same clergyman who had prayed nine months before for the deliverance of the father, now blessed the marriage of his daughter and his deliverer. Robert was to become a sailor like Harry Grant and John Mangles, and take part with them in the captain's grand projects, under the auspices of Lord Glenarvan.

But fate also decreed that Paganel was not to die a bachelor? Probably so.

The fact was, the learned geographer after his heroic exploits, could not escape celebrity. His blunders made quite a FURORE among the fashionables of Scotland, and he was overwhelmed with courtesies.

It was then that an amiable lady, about thirty years of age, in fact, a cousin of McNabbs, a little eccentric herself, but good and still charming, fell in love with the geographer's oddities, and offered him her hand. Forty thousand pounds went with it, but that was not mentioned.

Paganel was far from being insensible to the sentiments of Miss Arabella, but yet he did not dare to speak. It was the Major who was the medium of communication between these two souls, evidently made for each other.

He even told Paganel that his marriage was the last freak he would be able to allow himself. Paganel was in a great state of embarrassment, but strangely enough could not make up his mind to speak the fatal word.

"Does not Miss Arabella please you then?" asked McNabbs.

"Oh, Major, she is charming," exclaimed Paganel, "a thousand times too charming, and if I must tell you all, she would please me better if she were less so. I wish she had a defect!"

"Be easy on that score," replied the Major, "she has, and more than one. The most perfect woman in the world has always her quota. So, Paganel, it is settled then, I suppose?"

"I dare not."

"Come, now, my learned friend, what makes you hesitate?"

"I am unworthy of Miss Arabella," was the invariable reply of the geographer. And to this he would stick.

At last, one day being fairly driven in a corner by the intractable Major, he ended by confiding to him, under the seal of secrecy, a certain peculiarity which would facilitate his apprehension should the police ever be on his track.

"Bah!" said the Major.

"It is really as I tell you," replied Paganel.

"What does it matter, my worthy friend?"

"Do you think so, Major?"

"On the contrary, it only makes you more uncommon. It adds to your personal merits. It is the very thing to make you the nonpareil husband that Arabella dreams about."

And the Major with imperturbable gravity left Paganel in a state of the utmost disquietude.

A short conversation ensued between McNabbs and Miss Arabella. A fortnight afterwards, the marriage was celebrated in grand style in the chapel of Malcolm Castle. Paganel looked magnificent, but closely buttoned up, and Miss Arabella was arrayed in splendor.

And this secret of the geographer would have been forever buried in oblivion, if the Major had not mentioned it to Glenarvan, and he could not hide it from Lady Helena, who gave a hint to Mrs. Mangles. To make a long story short, it got in the end to M. Olbinett's ears, and soon became noised abroad.

Jacques Paganel, during his three days' captivity among the Maories, had been tattooed from the feet to the shoulders, and he bore on his chest a heraldic kiwi with outspread wings, which was biting at his heart.

This was the only adventure of his grand voyage that Paganel could never get over, and he always bore a grudge to New Zealand on account of it.

It was for this reason too, that, notwithstanding solicitation and regrets, he never would return to France. He dreaded lest he should expose the whole Geographical Society in his person to the jests of caricaturists and low newspapers, by their secretary coming back tattooed.

The return of the captain to Scotland was a national event, and Harry Grant was soon the most popular man in old Caledonia. His son Robert became a sailor like himself and Captain Mangles, and under the patronage of Lord Glenarvan they resumed the project of founding a Scotch colony in the Southern Seas.

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