

CAST AWAY IN THE COLD

By Dr. Isaac I. Hayes
CHAPTER V.

THE OLD MAN MEETS THE LITTLE PEOPLE UNDER PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES, AND RELATES TO THEM HOW THE YOUNG MAN BEING CAST AWAY IN THE COLD, RESCUED A SHIPMATE, AND ALSO OTHER MATTERS, WHICH, IF PUT INTO THIS TITLE, WOULD SPOIL THE STORY ALTOGETHER

THIS time Captain Hardy was not to be caught napping, as on the previous day. Indeed, he was out looking for his young friends even before the time. "If they don't come soon," said he to himself, "I'll go after them"—and they did not come soon, at least the captain thought they were a long time in coming, and he started off, if not after them, at least to look after them. When he had reached the brow of the hill from which both the captain's and Mr. Earnest's houses could be seen, the old man discovered the children coming down one of the winding paths which led thru Mr. Earnest's grounds. It was some moments before they saw the captain, and when they did see him there was much wondering what had happened to bring him up so far on the hill.

"Why, what's the matter with him?" exclaimed William. "Look, he's flinging up his hat!"—and the little people set off upon a rapid run.

When the children came nearer, they heard the old man calling loudly to them, "Come, my hearties, you are slow today. Be lively, or we'll lose the chance."

"What chance?" asked William, when they had come up with him.

"The wind, the wind—why, don't you see there's a spankin' breeze? I was afraid we'd lose our sail, so I came to hurry you up."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted both the boys together; and without further ado the captain hurried the little people along with him down thru the woods to the water.

The little yacht was lying close beside the little wharf. "Look sharp now, and be lively," exclaimed the captain as he helped them one by one aboard; and then he got in himself, and shoved the yacht off from the landing, and with the assistance of a singular-looking boy, whom the captain called "Main Brace," he spread the sails, and the lively craft was soon skimming over the waters, carrying as lively a party as ever set out on an afternoon frolic.

And the captain was in no hurry to stop the sport, for he ran on clear across the harbor, and then said he would "bout ship," and put back again.

And thus the captain kept on "tacking" across the harbor, going to and fro, for more than an hour, enjoying every minute of it just as much as the children did. When at length, however, the children began to quiet down a little (the sharp edge of novelty being worn off), the captain ran into shoal water, and brought his boat's head once more up into the wind; but this time, instead of letting her head "pay" off to starboard, he steered her right into the wind's eye, with the sails shivering all the time, until the boat stopped, when he cried out to Main Brace to "let go the anchor," which Main Brace did promptly, with an "Ay, ay, sir!" and then he "clewed" up the sails, and spread a white and red striped and red-fringed awning over the place where they were seated, and said he was now going on with the story. "Isn't this a tip-top place," said he, "for story telling?"

"Now I call this a much better place than the 'Crow's Nest,'" went on the captain; "for, don't you see, when we knocked off yesterday I was standing in the middle of the sea, on a great ice raft."

"My shipmates were all either drowned or killed outright by the falling ice, so far at least as I knew."

"The waves which had been raised after a while began steadily to subside, and, as the sea became more calm, I found that I could approach nearer to where the wreck had happened by jumping over some of the cracks which had been made in the ice, and walking across piece after piece of it."

"Had the iceberg all gone to pieces at once, the sea would soon have become quiet; but it was evident from the noises which reached me that a considerable part of the berg was still holding together, and was wallowing in the sea in consequence of its equilibrium being disturbed by the first crash, and was still keeping the waters moving. I could indeed vaguely see this remaining fragment, swaying to right and left, and I could also perceive that, with every roll, fresh masses were breaking off, with loud reports, like the crash of artillery. I could, however, discover nothing of the ship nor either of the boats. I was able to detect, even at a considerable distance, some fragments of ice floating and rolling about, when the fog would clear up a little; and, as I peered into the gloom, I thought at one time that I saw a man standing upon one of them. It was but a moment, for the fog closed upon the object, whatever it may have been, and it vanished as a spectral figure."

"My eyes were strained to catch a further glimpse of this object, but nothing more was to be seen of it. From this my attention was soon attracted by a dark mass which had drifted upon the edge of the broken ice, not far to the right of the place where I had been standing when the boat left me. I soon made this out to be some part of the wreck of the ship. In a few moments I could clearly see that it was a piece of a mast; then I could plainly distinguish the 'fore-top.' Each succeeding wave was forcing it higher and higher out of the water, and I discovered, after a few moments, that other timbers were attached to it, and that beside these were sails and ropes, making of the whole a considerable mass."

"After observing this fragment of the wreck attentively for some time, I thought I perceived a man moving among the tangled collection of timbers and ropes and sails, endeavoring to extricate himself."

"It soon became clear to me that my suspicions that this was a man were correct; and being more convinced that one of my shipmates at least was yet alive, I rushed forward to rescue him if possible, without once stopping to give a thought to the risks I would encounter. It was clear that he could not liberate himself."

"What I had taken for a man proved to be one, or, as I soon found out, a boy—the cabin boy of the ship, a light, pale-faced lad, and only 14 years old. The boy was evidently fast in some way among the rigging, and had been trying to free himself. As I came closer, I observed that he was entirely quiet, and had sunk out of view. Quick as thought I mounted up into the wreck, and then I saw the boy with a rope tangled round his leg, and lying quite insensible. Underneath him another man was lying, much mutilated, and evidently quite dead. As I was mounting up, a wave washed in under the wreck, but I escaped with only a little spray flying over me, which, however, did not wet me much. It was but the work of a moment to whip out my knife, which I carried in a belt, like every other

sailor, and cut the rope which bound the boy down, and which he had tried in vain to loosen. After this I had no further difficulty, and, seizing the boy around the waist with one arm (he was very light even for his years), I clambered out of the wreck to the ice without getting much more water upon me, and, hurrying off, did not stop until I had jumped with my burden across several cracks, and ran across several pieces of ice, reaching a place of present safety on the unbroken or fast ice. Here I laid down my insensible burden, all dripping with the cold water and in a state of great anxiety I bent over the boy. At first I thought that he was dead, but it was soon clear that this was not the case, for he was breathing, altho slowly, yet freely. Out from his wet hair a little blood was oozing, and upon examining the spot I found that there was a bad bruise there, and that the skin was broken, tho there was not a serious cut. This was clearly the cause of his present unconsciousness, as his breathing seemed conclusively to show that he had managed to keep his head above water and had not been brought to his present state by drowning. When I rose up, fully impressed with the necessity of securing for the lad rest and warmth and fully realized, for the first time my powerless situation (that I was even apparently unable to save myself still less the boy), my heart seemed to give way entirely, and I sank down once more beside him. A prayer to heaven for succor which I had no thought could ever come to me, rose to my lips, and at that very moment a ray of hope dawned upon me. The great fog was breaking away, the bright sun was scattering the mists, and land was bursting thru it near at hand. Light, fleecy clouds were rolling up above the sea, and, as they floated off before a gentle wind, a blaze of sunshine burst thru an opening in them and fell upon myself and the boy whose life I had at least for the present, saved.

"I must here pause to tell you that, altho we were in the Arctic regions and on the ice, the weather was not cold, the time being the middle of the summer."

"Seeing that there was now nothing to be gained by longer delay on the ice, I picked up the boy in my arms and started for the land."

"Altho the boy was not heavy, yet I found that in the distance I had to carry him I grew much fatigued; but the necessity for haste made me strong, and to save the boy's life seemed now much more desirable than to save my own, inasmuch as if the boy died, and I survived him, and could in any way manage to live on, I should be in a worse condition than if dead, as it appeared to me—being all alone."

"I got at last upon the rocks, and then on a patch of green grass, where I laid down the insensible boy in the blazing sun."

"The grass was warm, and the air, as I have said, was scarcely chilly. Under these improved conditions it was clearly better to expose the boy's body wholly to the air than to allow him to remain in his wet clothes. The first thing, therefore, which I did was to divest myself of my own clothing, in order that I might give my warm underclothing to the boy."

"The scene around me was dreary enough to strike terror into a stouter heart than mine; and, when I had fully viewed it, I had to confess that it did not seem probable that any living thing, not to mention human beings, could possibly be there. The first thought I had was to shout and halloo again and again at the very top of my voice; but no answer reached me except the echo of my own words in a deep and dark gorge close by. This echo startled me and made me afraid, tho I never could tell why. My loud calling had failed to produce any impression upon the boy whatever, and I felt sure that he was going to die. Without exactly knowing what I did, or what I was doing it for, I now ran to the

right over the green grass, and then over rough stones up to a considerable elevation, and commenced hallooming again, when, much to my astonishment, I heard a great fluttering and loud sounds right below and within thirty feet of me. I sprang back as if some terrible enemy had attacked me; but I recovered myself in an instant, when I observed that the fluttering came from a number of birds which rose from among the rocks. The birds were brown and quite large, and I knew at once that they were eider ducks, for I had seen them frequently before, while in the ship, and the sailors had told me their name."

"You must know that the eider duck, in order to protect its eggs from the air when it goes off to get for food the little fish that it catches in the sea, plucks from its breast the fine feathers called down, in which it buries its eggs very carefully. In each of the nests I found there was a good handful of this down, and the thought at once occurred to me to gather a quantity of it, and cover the boy with it. I went to work immediately and collected a great armful of it, and hastening to where the boy was, I deposited it, and then hurried back for more. In a very short time I had accumulated a great pile, and, spreading a thick layer of it out close beside the boy, I drew him over upon it, and then covered him completely, and spread my overcoat as I had done before."

"The value of putting this discovery to prompt use was soon seen. The boy, from being cold almost as a corpse, began to show some symptoms of returning warmth. His breathing seemed to be more rapid and free, and his eyelids began to move a little, tho they did not fully open for some time; but it was then only for an instant, and I was not certain whether he recognized me or not. I called to him loudly by name, I rubbed his forehead, I pounded his hands, but he gave no further recognition, yet he was getting more and more warm, and in this circumstance I rested my hope."

"Having accomplished this much, and feeling pretty sure that the boy would recover in the end, my mind very naturally fell back upon the contemplation of my own unhappy condition. I moved a few steps from the boy, and sat down upon a rock overlooking the sea. There was nothing there to inspire me with courage, when this question came uppermost in my mind: 'Suppose the boy does recover from his present stupor, how are we going to live? Could anybody indeed be in a more sorry state?'

"When I thought of all this, I buried my face in my hands, and moaned aloud, and the big tears began to gather in my eyes."

"O, wasn't it awful!" exclaimed William.

"I don't see what you could do, Captain Hardy," exclaimed Fred.

"The poor boy," exclaimed Alice, "I hope he didn't die. Did he, Captain Hardy?"

"Well, I'll tell you about that some other time," answered the captain.



(TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)