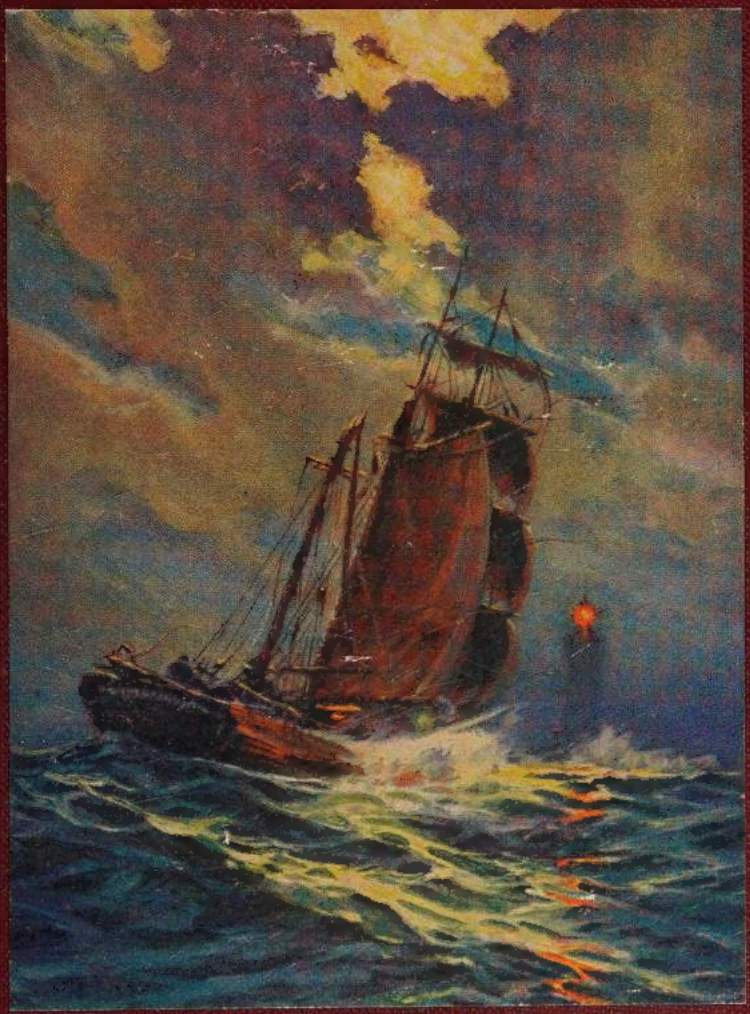
The Lighthouse at the end of the World

by Jules Verne

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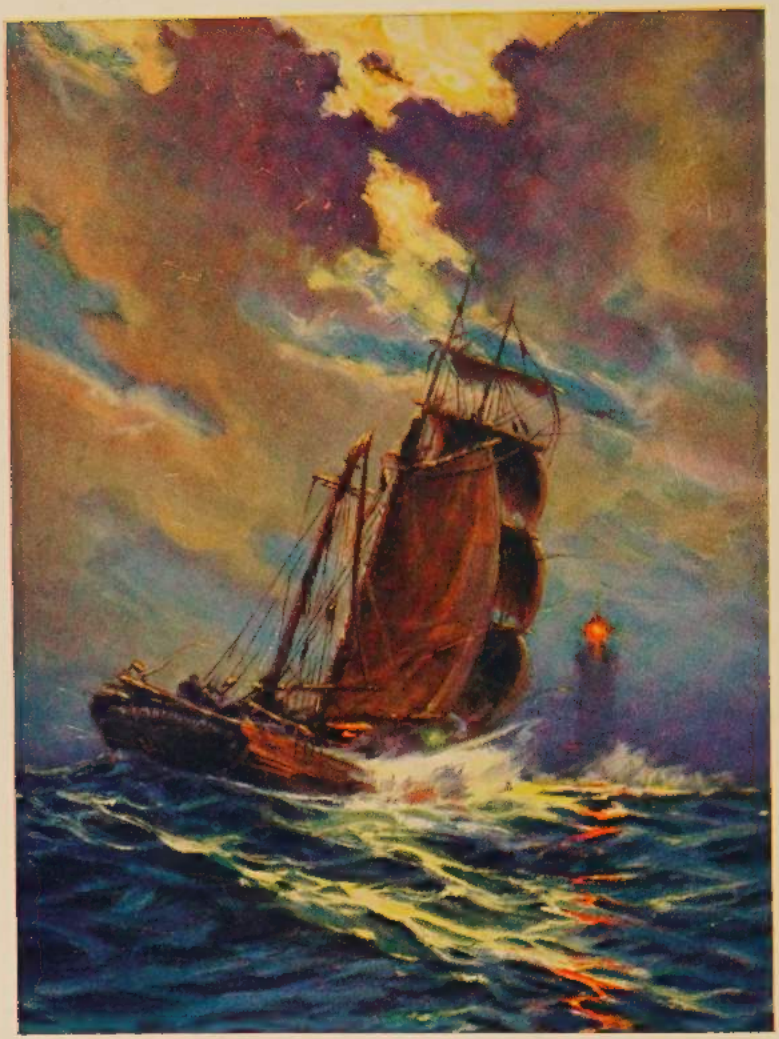
THE LIGHTHOUSE AT THE END OF THE WORLD

BOOKS BY JULES VERNE

THE LIGHTHOUSE AT THE END OF THE WORLD

THE CASTAWAYS OF THE FLAG

THEIR ISLAND HOME



During the night the wind changed and shifted to the south-west.

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THE LIGHTHOUSE AT THE END OF THE WORLD

JULES VERNE

AUTHOR OF
"THE CASTAWAYS OF THE FLAG,"
"THEIR ISLAND HOME," ETC.

Frontispiece by
H. C. MURPHY

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"LIGHTHOUSE AT THE END OF THE WORLD"

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

By too many people Jules Verne is considered only as a master of that form of fiction which is based upon intelligent anticipation of the progress of mechanical invention. As time goes on and one after another his forecasts in this direction are justified by the event, it is likely that he will be remembered as a prophet rather than as a romancer, which is his real claim to distinction. For in imaginative fiction what is required of the writer is not verity but verisimilitude, and the supreme merit of such books as "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" and "The Clipper of the Clouds" is not that submarine and aircraft have now been proved to be possible but that they were made to seem probable then. Above all things else Jules Verne was a master of the art of writing the adventure story and his greatness is most apparent in his simplest work.

In "The Lighthouse at the End of the World," Jules Verne is seen at his simplest and best. No antecedent improbability here has to be made good. The remoteness of the scene where the drama is

laid supplies an element of dread of which advantage is skilfully taken, and the shortness of the period over which the story is extended adds excitement to the race against time which the villains of the piece are compelled to make in their attempt to escape justice. The rest is pure action, courage and resourcefulness pitted against ferocity and power of numbers, with no merely invented complications to retard the issue. As a simple adventure story "The Lighthouse at the End of the World" must be declared a little masterpiece.

CRANSTOUN METCALFE.

THE LIGHTHOUSE AT THE END OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER I

THE INAUGURATION

THE sun was setting behind the hills which bounded the view to the west. The weather was fine. On the other side, over the sea, which to the north-east and east was indistinguishable from the sky, a few tiny clouds reflected the sun's last rays, soon to be extinguished in the shades of the twilight, which lasts for a considerable time in this high latitude of the fifty-fifth degree of the southern hemisphere.

At the moment when the upper rim of the solar disk alone remained visible a gun rang out from on board the despatch-boat *Santa-Fé,* and the flag of the Argentine Republic, unfolding in the breeze, was run up to her peak.

Simultaneously a bright light flashed out from the summit of the lighthouse erected a gunshot behind Elgor Bay, in which the *Santa-Fé* lay at anchor. Two of the lighthouse keepers, the workmen assembled on the beach, and the crew gathered

in the bows of the ship, greeted with prolonged cheering the first light lighted on the distant shore.

Their salute was answered by two other guns, whose reports were reverberated again and again by the loud echoes of the neighbourhood. Then the despatch-boat's colours were hauled down, in conformity with the regulations on all men of war, and silence fell once more upon Staten Island, which lies at the point where the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans meet.

The workmen went immediately aboard the *Sante-Fé,* and only the three lighthouse keepers remained on shore.

One of these was at his post, in the look-out room. The other two did not seek their quarters at once, but walked along the shore engaged in conversation.

"Well, Vasquez," said the younger of the two, "the despatch-boat sails to-morrow."

"Yes, Felipe," Vasquez replied, "and I hope she will have a good passage back to port."

"It's a long one, Vasquez."

"No longer coming than going, Felipe."

"You don't say so!" Felipe answered with a laugh.

"Well, my boy," Vasquez retorted, "it takes longer to go than to come back sometimes, unless the wind is pretty steady! But after all, fifteen

hundred miles is no great matter when a ship has good engines and carries her canvas well."

"Besides, Vasquez, Captain Lafayate knows his course."

"Which is a perfectly straight one, my lad. He steered south to come here, and he'll steer north to go back again, and if the wind continues to blow from the land he will have the shelter of the coast, and it'll be like sailing up a river."

"But a river with only one bank," Felipe retorted.

"That doesn't matter if it's the right one, and it always is the right one when it's to windward!"

"That's so," Felipe agreed; "but if the wind chops about——"

"Ah, that's bad luck, Felipe, and I hope it won't set against the *Santa-Fé*. In a fortnight she can do her fifteen hundred miles and be at anchor again at Buenos-Ayres roads. But if the wind were to veer round to the east——"

"She wouldn't find a port of refuge on either side, land or sea."

"That's so, boy. Tierra del Fuego or Patagonia, there's not a single place to put into. She'd be bound to run out to sea, to avoid going aground."

"But to my mind, Vasquez, there's every sign that the fair weather will last."

"I think so too, Felipe. We are almost at the

beginning of the fine season. Three months ahead of one is always something."

"The work has been finished at a good time," Felipe remarked.

"I know it, lad, I know it: at the beginning of December. That's as it might be the beginning of June for sailormen up north. At this time of year we get less and less of that dirty weather which makes no more to-do of blowing a ship to blazes than of blowing off your sou'wester! And then, once the *Santa-Fé* is in harbour, it may blow, blow a gale, blow a hurricane, as much as the devil pleases! We needn't be afraid of our island going to the bottom, and the lighthouse with it!"

"You bet, Vasquez. When the despatch-boat has been to report about us up there, and comes back with the relief——"

"In three months' time, Felipe."

"She will find the island in its proper place."

"And us on it," Vasquez answered, rubbing his hands and taking a long pull at his pipe, which enveloped him in a thick cloud of smoke. "You see, my lad, here we're not aboard a ship, to be blown here, there, and everywhere by squalls, or if it is a ship she's tied up fast to America's tail, and she won't drag her anchor. These seas hereabouts are bad, I allow! That Cape Horn has a shocking reputation, that's right enough! That

the number of wrecks on Staten Island has been lost count of, and that wreckers couldn't find a better place to make their fortunes I grant you too! But all that's going to be altered now, Felipe! Here in Staten Island with its lighthouse, and it isn't any hurricane that could put its light out, though it should blow from all points of the compass at once! Ships will see it in time to get their bearings. They will find their way by its light, and they won't be in danger of running onto the rocks on Cape Saint-Jean, or Cape Saint-Diegos, or Cape Fallows even on the darkest night. For you and I and Moriz will be attending to the lamp, and it'll be well attended to!"

Vasquez talked with this cheery confidence, which did not fail to hearten his comrade. Felipe perhaps was contemplating much less lightly the long weeks to be spent upon this lonely island, without the possibility of any communication with his fellowmen until the day when all three of them would be relieved.

In conclusion Vasquez added:

"You see, boy, for forty years now I have travelled about a bit, over all the seas in the old and the new world too, as ship's boy, apprentice, seaman, and mate. Well, now that my time has come to retire from the service, I could ask nothing better than to be keeper of a lighthouse; and what

a lighthouse! The Lighthouse at the End of the World!"

And in sober truth, the lighthouse situated at the far end of this out of the way island, so remote from every inhabited and inhabitable land, quite justified that name.

"Say, Felipe," Vasquez went on, knocking out his pipe against the hollow of his hand, "what time do you relieve Moriz?"

"At ten o'clock."

"Good; and then I relieve you at two in the morning, and take your place until daybreak."

"That's right, Vasquez. And so the wisest thing for both of us to do now is to go to sleep."

"To bed then, Felipe, to bed!"

And Vasquez and Felipe returned to the little enclosure in the midst of which the lighthouse stood and went into their quarters closing the door behind them.

The night was quiet. The moment it drew to its end Vasquez extinguished the light which had been lighted twelve hours before.

As a broad rule, the tides in the Pacific are of no great strength, especially along the coasts of America and Asia bathed by that immense ocean; but they are, on the contrary, very strong indeed over the surface of the Atlantic, even making their violence felt in the distant waters of Magellan.

The ebb, that day, began at six o'clock in the morning, and the despatch-boat should have got under way at daybreak to get the advantage of it. But all her preparations were not finished, and her commander did not expect to leave Elgor Bay until the evening tide.

The *Santa-Fé* was a vessel of two hundred tons' burthen and a hundred and sixty horse power, belonging to the Argentine Navy; she was commanded by a captain, with a lieutenant, carried a crew of fifty men, including the mates, and was employed in watching the coasts from the south of the Rio de la Plata to Lemaire Strait on the Atlantic Ocean. At the time of this story naval engineers had not yet constructed high speed vessels, cruisers, torpedo boats and the like. Thus the *Santa-Fé's* screws did not carry her more than nine knots an hour, a speed quite sufficient, however, for the policing of the Patagonian and Fuegian coasts, which are frequented only by fishing boats.

This particular year the despatch-boat had been commissioned to supervise the construction of the lighthouse which the Argentine Government was erecting at the entrance to Lemaire Strait. She had taken out the men and material required for this work, which had just been brought to a satis-

factory conclusion in accordance with the plans of a clever engineer of Buenos-Ayres.

The *Santa-Fé* had lain at anchor in Elgor Bay for about three weeks now. After landing sufficient provisions for four months, and making sure that the keepers of the new lighthouse would lack for nothing until it was time for them to be relieved, Captain Lafayate was about to take home the workmen who had been sent to Staten Island. If some unforeseen circumstances had not delayed the completion of the work, the *Santa-Fé* should indeed already have been back at her home port a month ago.

Captain Lafayate, however, had no cause for apprehension during the whole time of his stay within this bay, which was completely sheltered from the winds from the north, south, and west. Heavy weather from the open sea alone could have disturbed him. But the spring had proved a mild one, and now, at the beginning of the summer, there was every reason to hope that there would be nothing more than passing trouble in the Magellanic waters.

It was seven o'clock when Captain Lafayate and his lieutenant, Riegal, left their cabins on the poop, in the stern of the despatch-boat. The sailors had finished scrubbing down the deck, and the last of the water swept along by the men was running

away through the scuppers. The first mate was making his preparations for everything to be cleared when the time should come to get under way. Although it need not have been done until the afternoon, the sails were being taken out of their cases, the pipes, and the brasses of the binnacle and skylights were being rubbed up, and the ship's long boat was hoisted up on its davits, while the dinghy remained in the water for present use.

When the sun rose the flag was run up to the peak.

Three quarters of an hour later four bells struck from the bell forward, and the watch was changed.

After breakfasting together the two officers went up onto the poop again, took a look at the sky, which the land breeze had pretty nearly cleared, and ordered the mate to have them put ashore.

During the morning the captain intended to make a final inspection of the lighthouse and its adjuncts, the lighthousemen's quarters, and the stores which held the provisions and fuel, and finally to satisfy himself that the apparatus was in good working order.

So he stepped onto the beach, accompanied by the officer, and went towards the enclosure in which the lighthouse stood.

They were feeling some concern for the three men who were to stay in the melancholy solitude of Staten Island.

"It's really hard lines," the captain said. "However, we must not forget that these good fellows have always led a very hard life, most of them being old sailors. For them, service in a lighthouse is a comparative rest."

"That's true," Riegal replied; "but it is one thing to be keeper of a lighthouse on a coast which is frequented and in easy touch of land, quite another thing to live on a desert island which ships do no more than sight, and that from as far off as possible."

"I agree, Riegal. But the relief is due in three months. Vasquez, Felipe, and Moriz begin with the least inclement period."

"That is so, sir; they won't have one of those awful Cape Horn winters to go through."

"Awful, indeed!" the captain agreed. "I have had nothing left to learn about storms since one trip we made a few years ago in the strait to Tierra del Fuego and Desolation Island, from Cape de las Virgenes to Cape Pilar! But anyhow, these lighthousemen of ours have got a solid building which the storms won't demolish. They won't run out of food or coal, even if their time should be prolonged for an extra couple of months. We are

leaving them fit, and we shall find them fit when we come back, for if the air is keen at least it is pure here, at the entrance to the Atlantic and Pacific. And then, Riegal, there is another thing: when the Admiralty asked for men to serve as keepers of this lighthouse at the end of the world, they had only too many to choose from."

The two officers had just reached the enclosure, where Vasquez and his comrades were waiting for them. The gate was opened to them, and they halted after acknowledging the regulation salute of the three men.

Before speaking to them Captain Lafayate inspected them, from their feet, shod in stout sea boots, to their heads, covered with oilskin caps.

"Everything all right last night?" he asked, addressing the head keeper.

"Quite, sir," Vasquez answered.

"You saw no ship out to sea?"

"None; and as the sky was quite clear we could have seen a light at least four miles away."

"The lamps worked properly?"

"Without a hitch, sir, till sunrise."

"You did not feel the cold too much in the look-out room?"

"No, sir. It is quite snug, and the wind is kept out by the double glass of the windows."

"We are going to inspect your quarters and the light."

"At your service, sir," Vasquez replied.

The lighthousemen's quarters were at the foot of the tower, with thick walls proof against any Magellanic storm. The two officers visited the different rooms, which were suitably planned. There was nothing to be feared from rain or cold or snowstorms, which last are formidable in this almost antarctic latitude.

These rooms were separated by a passage, at the end of which a door gave access into the inside of the tower.

"Let's go up," said Captain Lafayate.

"At your service, sir," Vasquez said again.

"It will be enough if you come with us."

Vasquez signed to his two comrades to remain at the entrance into the passage. Then he pushed open the staircase door, and the two officers followed him.

The narrow corkscrew staircase, with stone steps built into the wall, was not dark. Ten loopholes lighted it from storey to storey.

When they reached the look-out room, above which the lantern and lighting apparatus were installed, the two officers sat down on the circular bench fixed to the wall. Through the four little

windows pierced in this room the eye could range towards every point of the horizon.

Although the breeze was a light one, it blew pretty strongly at this height, but not strongly enough to drown the shrill screams of the gulls, frigate birds, and albatrosses which flew by on powerful wings.

Captain Lafayate and his lieutenant climbed up the ladder to the gallery surrounding the lighthouse lantern, in order to obtain a more complete view of the island and the surrounding sea.

That part of the island which lay before their eyes to the west was deserted, as also was the sea, a vast arc of which they could sweep from the north-west to the south, an arc broken only towards the north-east by the top of Cape Saint-Jean. At the foot of the tower Elgor Bay lay, hollowed out, its shore alive with the coming and going of the sailors of the *Santa-Fé*. Out at sea there was no sail or trail of smoke to be seen: nothing but the vast immensity of the ocean.

After a stay of a quarter of an hour in the lighthouse gallery the two officers, followed by Vasquez, came down and went back on board.

After luncheon Captain Lafayate and Riegal came ashore again. They wished to devote the time remaining before they sailed to a walk along the north shore of the bay. Several times already,

and without the help of a pilot—for of course there were no pilots on Staten Island—the captain had come in by daylight to take up his usual moorings in the little creek at the foot of the lighthouse. But, as a matter of prudence, he never omitted to make a fresh survey of this little, or at best imperfectly, known region.

So the two officers extended their excursion. Crossing the narrow isthmus which attaches Cape Saint-Jean to the rest of the island, they examined the shore of the tidal harbour of the same name, which, on the other side of the cape, forms a kind of pendant to Elgor Bay.

"This harbour of Saint-Jean is excellent," the captain remarked. "It has enough water everywhere even for ships of the greatest tonnage. It is quite a pity that the entry to it is so difficult. A light, even the weakest one, placed in a line with the Elgor light, would enable ships that were in difficulties to take refuge in it easily."

"And it is a possible harbour after leaving the Strait of Magellan," Riegal observed.

At four o'clock the two officers were back once more. They went on board after taking leave of Vasquez, Felipe, and Moriz, who remained on shore waiting for the moment of departure.

At five o'clock the pressure began to rise in the despatch-boat's boilers, and her funnel vomited

volumes of black smoke. The tide was almost slack, and the *Santa-Fé* was to weigh anchor directly the ebb made itself felt.

At a quarter to six the captain gave the order to man the capstan and balance the engines. The excess steam was pouring through the waste-pipe.

The lieutenant, forward, superintended the operation. Soon the anchor was lifted, hauled up to the cathead, and fished.

The *Santa-Fé* began to move, the three lighthouse keepers paying a farewell salute. And, whatever Vasquez's thoughts on the matter might be, his comrades watched with emotion the despatch-boat drawing away, and her officers and crew were sensible of deep feeling at leaving these three men on this island at the far end of America.

The *Santa-Fé,* at a moderate speed, followed the coast bounding Elgor Bay on the north-west. It was not yet eight o'clock when she reached the open sea. Rounding Cape San Juan, she went full steam ahead, leaving the strait on the west, and when night fell the light from the Lighthouse at the End of the World was only visible from her decks like a star upon the edge of the horizon.

CHAPTER II

STATEN ISLAND

STATEN ISLAND, also called Staten Land, is situated at the extreme south-west point of the new continent. It is the last and most easterly fragment of that Magellanic archipelago which the convulsions of the Plutonic epoch scattered over the sea of the fifty-fifth parallel, less than seven degrees from the south polar zone. Washed by the waters of two oceans, it is sought out by ships passing from one to the other, whether from the north-east or the south-west, after they have doubled Cape Horn.

Lemaire Strait, discovered in the seventeenth century by the Dutch navigator of that name, separates Staten Island from Tierra del Fuego which is fifteen or twenty miles distant. It provides ships with a shorter and easier passage, sparing them the formidable seas which lash the shore of Staten Island. That island forms its eastern wall for about ten miles, from Cape Saint Anthony to Cape Kemp, and steam or sailing ships are much less exposed within it than when passing to the south of the island.

Staten Island measures thirty-nine miles from

west to east, and eleven miles from north to south.

Its coast line is very jagged. It is a long succession of gulfs, bays, and creeks, the entrances to many of which are protected by chains of islets and reefs. In consequence there are many wrecks upon these coasts, which are here walled by perpendicular cliffs and there fringed by enormous rocks, against which, even in calm weather, the sea breaks with incomparable fury.

The island was uninhabited. It might not, however, have been uninhabitable, at any rate during the fine season, that is to say during the four months of November, December, January, and February, which make up the summer of this high latitude. Flocks and herds might even have found sufficient food upon the plains of the interior, more particularly in the region situated to the east of Port Parry and comprised between Conway Point and Cape Webster. When the thick layer of snow has melted beneath the rays of the Anarctic sun, the grass springs forth, and until winter the ground preserves its moisture. Ruminants created for the habitat of Magellanic climes might flourish there. But with the return of the cold weather it would be necessary to bring the flocks and herds to the milder pastures of Patagonia or even Tierra del Fuego.

A few couples of guanaco may be found there in a wild state. This is a species of deer of very

primitive nature, whose flesh is tolerably good when properly roasted or grilled. That these animals do not die of starvation during the long winter period is due to their ability to find beneath the snow roots and mosses with which their stomachs have to be satisfied.

Plains extend on all sides to the centre of the island; a few woods display their scanty branches and put forth a short-lived foliage which is rather yellowish than green. For the most part the trees are Antarctic beeches, with trunks that sometimes attain a height of sixty feet, and branches spreading horizontally, berberry of a very hardy species, and Winter's bark, which has properties similar to those of the vanilla.

These plains and woods, however, cover only a quarter of the superficial area of Staten Island. The rest is a rocky tableland, chiefly quartz, with deep gorges and long lines of random rocks which have been strewn about by volcanic action in times long remote. One might look in vain to-day even for the craters of any extinct volcanoes in this part of Tierra del Fuego or the Strait of Magellan.

Towards the centre of the island the widespread plains assume the appearance of steppes, when in the winter months nothing breaks the level surface of the layer of snow that covers them. As one

travels westward, the relief of the island becomes accentuated. The cliffs along the littoral are loftier and more precipitous. Steep cones tower here, peaks rising to three thousand feet above sea-level, from which the eye can see over the whole surface of the island. These are the last links of the prodigious chain of the Andes which, running from north to south, forms as it were the gigantic bony framework of the new continent.

Under climatic conditions such as these, and under the biting breath of terrible hurricanes, the flora of the island is naturally reduced to but a few specimens, their species being only acclimatised, and barely that, in the neighbourhood of the Strait of Magellan or in the Falkland Islands which lie some two hundred and fifty miles distant from the coast of Tierra del Fuego. They consist of calceolarias, cytisus, pimpernels, brome-grass, veronicas, and grasses in which the colouring matter is developed in but a low degree. In the shelter of the woods, and among the grass of the prairies, these wan flowerets show their corollas which wither almost as soon as they blow. At the foot of the rocks along the shore, and on their slopes where a little soil clings, the naturalist might almost find a few mosses and, in the shelter of the trees, some edible roots, of an azalea, for instance, from which the Fuegian

natives make a substitute for bread, but none of them containing much nourishment.

One would look in vain for any regular water-course on the surface of Staten Island. No river or stream gushes forth from this stony ground. But the snow accumulates in thick layers; it lasts for eight months out of the twelve, and in the hot season —the less cold season would be a more accurate phrase—it melts under the slanting rays of the sun and keeps up a permanent moisture. Little lagoons are formed here and there at this period, pools whose water is preserved until the first frosts. This is how it was that at the time when our story begins quantities of water were falling from the heights adjacent to the lighthouse, on their way to lose themselves in the little creek of Elgor Bay or in the harbour of Saint-Jean.

There is abundance of fish all along its coast. As a consequence, despite the really serious risks which their boats incur in crossing Lemaire Strait, the Fuegians come here sometimes for profitable fishing. The species are very various, cod, smelt, leach, bonito, dorado, mullet, and others. Big fishing might also draw many ships to this coast, for, at this time at any rate, cetaceans, whales and cachalots, and also seals and morse, came readily in numbers to these waters. But these marine animals have been hunted so recklessly that now they take

refuge in the Antarctic seas, where the pursuit of them is as dangerous as it is laborious.

The entire coast of this island, one long succession of strands and coves and rocky banks, is alive with shells and shell-fish, bivalves and others, mussels, periwinkles, oysters, limpets and whelks. Crustaceans crawled in thousands among the reefs.

Birds were plentiful. Uncounted numbers of albatrosses white as swans, of snipe and plovers, sand-pipers, sea-larks, noisy gulls, screaming sea-mews, and deafening skua gulls frequented the island.

The island was really nothing more than an enormous rock, almost uninhabitable. To whom did it belong at the time when this story begins? All that can be said on that point is that it formed part of the Magellanic archipelago which belonged to the two Republics of Argentina and Chile in joint ownership.*

During the fine season the Fuegians make a few occasional appearances here, when compelled by heavy weather to put in. Merchant vessels mostly prefer to use the Strait of Magellan, the course of which is marked with the utmost accuracy on the charts, so that they can follow it without any risk, whether they come from the east or the west,

*Since Magellania was partitioned in 1881, Staten Island has belonged to the Argentine Republic.

on their way from one ocean to the other, thanks to the progress made in steam navigation. The only vessels that take note of Staten Island are those which are about to double, or have doubled, Cape Horn.

The Argentine Republic had displayed a happy initiative in constructing this lighthouse at the end of the world, and all nations owe a debt of gratitude to it therefor. For at this time no light illumined these Magellanic waters from the mouth of the Strait of Magellan at Cape de las Virgenes as far as its exit at Cape Pilar on the Pacific. The Staten Island light would render undeniable services to navigation in these dangerous waters. There is not even one at Cape Horn, where it could prevent many a catastrophe, by affording ships coming from the Pacific greater security in entering Lemaire Strait.

The Argentine Republic had resolved therefore to erect this new lighthouse within Elgor Bay. After a year of work skilfully conducted, its inauguration had just been completed on this 9th of December, 1859.

A hundred and fifty yards from the little creek in which the bay ended the ground rose into a mound with a superficial area of four or five hundred square yards, and about a hundred and twenty feet high. A wall of stones encompassed this platform,

this rocky terrace which was to serve as the base for the lighthouse tower.

This tower rose in the centre above the mass of the annex, quarters, and stores.

The annex comprised: (1) the lighthouse keepers' chamber, furnished with beds, cupboards, tables, and chairs, and warmed by means of a coal stove, the smoke of which was carried above the roof by a pipe; (2) the common-room, similarly fitted with a heating apparatus and serving as a dining-hall, with a table in the centre, lamps fastened to the wall, cupboards containing various instruments such as a telescope, barometer, thermometer, and also lamps to replace those in the lantern in the event of any accident, and lastly a clock with weights, hung upon the side wall; (3) the storerooms in which were kept provisions for a year, although the re-victualling and the relief were timed for every three months, preserves of various kinds, salt meat, corned-beef, bacon, dried vegetables, sea biscuits, tea, coffee, sugar, kegs of whisky and brandy, and a few drugs in ordinary use; (4) the reserve of oil required for the lighthouse lamps; (5) the magazine, containing fuel in sufficient quantity for the needs of the staff throughout the whole duration of the Antarctic winter.

Such were the edifices forming a building which spread out over the platform.

The tower was of great solidity, built of material supplied by the island itself. Stones of exceeding hardness, fortified by iron transoms, dressed with perfect precision, and dovetailed into one another, formed a wall capable of resisting the violent storms and terrible hurricanes which so frequently break out in this far extremity of the two greatest oceans on the globe. As Vasquez had said, the wind would not carry this tower away. It was to be a beacon which he and his mates must keep, and they would keep in spite of all the storms of Magellan.

The tower measured a hundred and three feet in height, and the elevation of the platform on which it stood raised the light two hundred and twenty-three feet above the level of the sea. It might thus have been visible from a distance of fifteen miles out at sea, that being the range of vision from that altitude. But as a matter of fact its range was ten miles only.

At this period there was as yet no question of lighthouses operating with carburetted gas, or electric light. Besides, on an island so remote as this, between which and even the nearest States communication was very difficult, the simplest possible system, necessitating the very minimum of repairs, was imperatively required. Illumination by oil had therefore been adopted, equipped with the latest perfections then known to science and industry.

Moreover, this visibility at a range of ten miles was sufficient. Ships coming from the north-east, east, and south-east still had a wide margin in which to make Lemaire Strait or to take a course to the south of the island. All risks would be avoided by punctual observance of the instructions issued at the instance of the naval authority: to keep the lighthouse on the north-north-west in the latter case and on the south-south-west in the former case. Cape San-Juan and Several Point or Fallows Point would be cleared by leaving the one to port and the other to starboard, and in plenty of time to escape being driven ashore there by the wind or currents.

Furthermore, on the very infrequent occasions when a ship should be compelled to put in to Elgor Bay, by steering for the lighthouse she would have every chance of reaching her moorings. So the *Santa-Fé,* on her return, would find it quite easy to get into the little creek, even during the night. The bay being about three miles in length to the end of Cape Saint-Jean, and the range of the light being ten, the despatch-boat would still have seven before it ere reaching the foremost bluffs of the island.

It is unnecessary to say that the Lighthouse at the End of the World had a fixed light. There was no fear of the captain of a ship confusing it with another light, since there was no other in these seas. It appeared unnecessary, therefore, to distinguish it

either by eclipses or by flashes, and this fact enabled the constructors to dispense with a mechanism that is always delicate and which it would have been far from easy to repair on an island like this, inhabited only by the three lighthouse keepers.

So the lantern was furnished with oil lamps, with a double current of air and concentric wicks. Their flame, which produced an intense light in a small volume, could then be placed almost in the focus of the lenses. Leaving the island in fairly clear weather, the captain of the despatch-boat was able to ascertain that there was nothing amiss with the installation and working of the lighthouse.

This satisfactory working depended solely upon the vigilance of the lighthouse keepers. Provided the lamps were kept in perfect condition, the wicks carefully renewed, the supply of oil in the desired quantity attended to, the draught properly regulated, the light lighted and extinguished at sunset and sunrise, and a minute supervision never relaxed, this lighthouse would render the greatest possible services to navigation in these remote waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

There was, moreover, no slightest occasion to question either the good will or the zeal of Vasquez and his two companions. Appointed after strict examination from a large number of candidates, they had all three given proof of their conscientious-

ness, courage, and endurance in their former employment.

The personal safety of the three lighthouse keepers appeared to be complete, isolated though Staten Island was, fifteen hundred miles from Buenos-Ayres, whence alone fresh supplies and assistance could come. The few Fuegians or other natives who came there sometimes during the fine season made no long stay, and were entirely inoffensive. Their fishing finished, they hastened to recross Lemaire Strait and regain the shore of Tierra del Fuego or the islands of the archipelago. The coasts of the island were too much feared by navigators for any ship to attempt to find there a refuge which it might find more surely and more easily at several other points in the Magellan archipelago.

Nevertheless all precautions had been taken in anticipation of the possible arrival of suspicious persons within Elgor Bay. The outbuildings were closed with solid doors bolted from within, and the gratings over the windows of the stores and quarters could not have been forced. Moreover, Vasquez, Moriz, and Felipe were armed with carbines and revolvers, and had plenty of ammunition.

Finally, at the end of the passage which opened into the foot of the tower, an iron door had been fixed, impossible to shatter or drive in. As for getting into the inside of the tower by any other

way, how could that have been effected through the narrow loopholes of the staircase, protected by solid cross-bars, and how could the gallery surrounding the lantern be reached, unless perhaps by scaling the lightning conductor?

These, then, were the highly important works which had just been brought to a successful conclusion on Staten Island by the Government of the Argentine Republic.

CHAPTER III

THE THREE LIGHTHOUSEMEN

IT is from November to March that navigation is at its busiest in the vicinity of Magellan.

The sea is always merciless there. But if nothing checks or calms the tremendous surges that roll in from the two oceans, at this time the atmosphere is more equable, and the storms that disturb even the highest zones are only passing ones. During this period of comparatively fair weather, steamships and sailing ships are more ready to adventure upon the doubling of Cape Horn.

But the passing to and fro of vessels, either through Lemaire Strait or to the south of Staten Island, could not break the monotony of the long days of this season. They have never been numerous, and they have become fewer still since the development of steam navigation and the perfecting of charts have rendered the Strait of Magellan less dangerous, the route which is at once shorter and easier.

Nevertheless, this monotony, which is a part of lighthouse existence, is not immediately noticeable

to the men who are usually appointed to their service. They are for the most part old sailors or old fishermen. They are not men to count the days and hours; they have the knack of keeping themselves constantly occupied and amused. Besides, the duties are not limited to maintaining the light between sunset and sunrise. Vasquez and his companions had been instructed to maintain a careful watch upon the approaches to Elgor Bay, to go several times a week to Cape San-Juan, and to patrol the coast as far as Several Point, never, however, going more than three or four miles away.

They were to keep the lighthouse log up to date, entering into it every incident that might occur, the passing of steam and sailing ships, their nationality, their name when they reported that with their number, the height of the tides, the direction and force of the wind, the weather reports, the duration of the rains, the frequency of the storms, the maxima and minima of the barometer, the temperature and other phenomena, to enable the meteorological charts of these seas to be prepared.

Vasquez, who like Felipe and Moriz was Argentine by birth, was to be the chief lighthouse keeper on Staten Island. Vasquez was forty-seven years of age. A powerful man, of robust health and astonishing endurance, as is proper in a sailor who has crossed most of the hundred and eighty parallels

over and over again, resolute, energetic and familiar with danger, he had come through many dangers. It was not only to his seniority that he owed his selection as chief watchman, but also to his finely tempered character, which inspired the highest confidence. Although he had never attained a higher rank than that of first mate in the Republican navy, he had left the service with the esteem of everybody. And so, when he applied for this appointment on Staten Island, the naval authorities had had no hesitation whatever in giving it to him.

Felipe and Moriz also were sailors, aged forty and thirty-seven respectively. Vasquez had known their families for a long time, and he had recommended them to the government. Like Vasquez, Felipe was a bachelor. Moriz was the only married man of the three, but he was childless, and his wife, whom he would see again in three months' time, was in service in a lodging house in Buenos Ayres.

At the expiration of the three months, Vasquez, Felipe, and Moriz were to re-embark upon the *Santa-Fé*, which would bring three other lighthousemen to Staten Island. They would take the place of these again three months later.

It would be in June, July, and August that they would take their second term of duty—that is to say, about the middle of winter. Thus, after

comparative immunity from inclemency of weather during their first stay, they would have a rather wretched existence to look forward to upon their return to the island. But there was nothing in that to cause them anxiety. Vasquez and his mates would be fairly acclimatised by that time, and would be able to brave the cold and storms and all the rigours of Antarctic seasons.

From the 10th of December the service was properly organised. Every night the lamps worked under the supervision of one of the keepers stationed in the watch room, while the other two took their rest in their quarters. During the day the various instruments were inspected, cleaned, furnished with new wicks according to need, and put in order for the due projection of their powerful rays at sunset.

Between times, as duty permitted, Vasquez and his mates went down Elgor Bay to the sea, sometimes on foot along one shore or the other, sometimes in their boat, a half-decked launch, rigged with foresail and jib, which lay in a little creek safe from danger, protected by high cliffs from the easterly winds, the only ones to be feared.

When any of the three made these expeditions in the bay or in the neighbourhood of the enclosure, one always remained on watch in the upper gallery of the lighthouse. A ship might happen to pass off

Staten Island and wish to report her number. So it was necessary that one of the lighthouse keepers should always be at his post. From the platform the sea was visible only to east and north-east; in all other directions the view was closed by cliffs a few hundred yards away.

The first few days following the departure of the despatch-boat were unmarked by any incident. The weather remained fine, the temperature fairly high. The thermometer sometimes registered ten degrees above zero, centigrade. The wind blew off the sea, and as a rule there was a light breeze between sunrise and sunset; then, at evening, it veered to the landward, that is to say, it went round to the north-west and came from the vast plains of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego.

As the weather grew warmer the flora began to appear. The grass land near by the enclosure showed a pale green carpet. In the woods of Antarctic beech it would even have been pleasant to lie at length beneath the fresh foliage. The stream ran brim full to the creek. Mosses and lichens reappeared at the foot of the trees and carpeted the sides of the rocks. In a word, it was such summer as the region knows, and summer would reign for several weeks yet on this far point of the American continent.

At the end of one day, before the actual moment

came to light the lamps, Vasquez, Felipe, and Moriz sat together in the circular balcony which ran around the lantern, talking.

"Well, boys," said Vasquez, after he had carefully packed his pipe—an example copied by the other two —"what about this new life? Are you beginning to get accustomed to it?"

"Sure, Vasquez," Felipe answered. "We haven't had time as yet to get bored or tired."

"That's so," Moriz agreed. "Our three months will pass quicker than I would have believed."

"Ay, my boy, they will slip along like a corvette under royals, topgallantsails, and studding sails."

"Talking about ships," Felipe remarked, "we haven't seen a single one to-day, not even on the horizon."

"They'll come, Felipe, they'll come," Vasquez replied, holding his hand to his eye as if to form a telescope. "It wouldn't have been worth while to build this beautiful lighthouse on Staten Island, throwing a light ten miles out to sea, if no ships came along to profit by it."

"Besides," Moriz pointed out, "our lighthouse is brand new."

"As you say, boy," Vasquez replied; "skippers must have time to learn that this coast is lighted now. When they know it they won't hesitate to come closer to it and to make the strait, much to

the advantage of their navigation. But to know that there is a lighthouse isn't everything; you've still got to be sure that it's always alight, from sunset till early dawn."

"That won't be generally known until the *Santa-Fé* has got back to Buenos-Ayres," Felipe observed.

"True, lad," Vasquez assented; "and when Captain Lafayate's report is published the authorities will make haste to spread the news all over the shipping world. But even now most navigators must know what has been happening here."

"The *Santa-Fé* only started five days ago," Moriz went on; "her passage will take——"

"Not more than another week I guess," Vasquez broke in. "The weather is fair, the sea is calm, and the wind is in a good quarter. With flowing sails day and night, and her engines, I should be very much surprised if the despatch-boat didn't make her nine or ten knots."

"By this time," said Felipe, "she must have got past the Strait of Magellan and doubled Cape de las Virgenes with a good fifteen miles to spare."

"Sure, boy," Vasquez declared. "At this minute she is going along the coast of Patagonia, and she can beat any Patagonian horse at racing."

It was natural that thoughts of the *Santa-Fé*

should still occupy the minds of these good fellows. She was like a piece of their own native land which had just left them to go back there. In thought they would follow her to the end of her voyage.

"Did you get any good fishing to-day?" Vasquez went on, addressing Felipe.

"Pretty good, Vasquez. I got a few dozen with my line, and with my hand I caught a turtle weighing a good three pounds as it was crawling among the rocks."

"That's good," Vasquez exclaimed. "You need not be afraid of unstocking the bay. The more fish you catch, the more there are, as the saying is, and that will enable us to economise our stores of tinned meat and salt pork. As for vegetables——"

"I went down to the beech-wood," Moriz announced. "I dug up some roots, and I will turn you out a splendid dish of them. I've seen the chief cook on the despatch-boat do it, and he knew all about it."

"It will be welcome," Vasquez declared. "One mustn't overdo it with tinned things. They are never as good as what has been fresh killed, or fresh caught, or fresh picked."

"Ah!" said Felipe. "If we could only get hold of a few deer from the interior of the island: a couple of guanacos or something like that."

"I'm not saying that a fillet or a haunch of guanaco is to be sneezed at," Vasquez replied. "A good slice of venison, and the stomach can't say anything but 'thank you!' when you've put it inside it! So if any game heaves in sight we'll try to bowl it over. But, boys, mind not to get far away from the enclosure to go after game, big or little. The main thing is to obey orders and not to wander away from the lighthouse, unless it is to observe what is going on in Elgor Bay and out at sea between Cape San-Juan and Diegos Point."

"But," said Moriz, who was very fond of hunting, "suppose a fine head came within gunshot——"

"Within gunshot, or even two, or even three, and I don't say," Vasquez answered. "But you know the guanaco is too wild a beast by nature to be fond of good society—of ours, that is—and I should be uncommonly surprised if we saw even one pair of horns above the rocks beside the beech wood, or anywhere near the enclosure."

As a matter of fact, since the works had been begun not a single animal had been seen anywhere near Elgor Bay. On several occasions the lieutenant of the *Santa-Fé,* who was an ardent sportsman, had tried to hunt the guanaco. His attempts had been in vain, although he had penetrated five or six miles into the interior. If big game were not actually lacking, at any rate it only allowed itself to be seen

when too far away to be shot. Perhaps if he had scaled the heights and gone beyond Port Parry, if he had pushed to the other end of the island, the lieutenant might have been more fortunate. But over there, in the western part of the island, where high peaks towered up, the going would have been very difficult, and neither he nor any one else of the crew of the *Santa-Fé* had ever explored the neighbourhood of Cape Saint Bartholomew.

During the night of the 16th of December, while Moriz was on duty in the watch room from six until ten o'clock, a light appeared in the eastward, five or six miles out at sea. It was evidently a ship's light, the first that had been seen in the waters of the island since the completion of the lighthouse.

Moriz rightly thought that it would interest his comrades, who were not yet asleep, and he went to call them.

Vasquez and Felipe immediately went up with him, and with telescopes to their eyes posted themselves at the window opening to the eastward.

"It's a white light," Vasquez announced.

"And therefore not a position light, which would be either green or red," said Felipe.

The position lights, according to their colour, are placed one on the port and the other on the starboard of a vessel.

"And," Vasquez added, "being white, it's on the forestays, and that means a steamer off the island."

It certainly was a steamer making towards Cape San-Juan. The question the lighthouse keepers put to themselves was whether it would enter Lemaire Strait or whether it would pass to the southward.

So they watched the ship's progress as she drew near, and after about half an hour were sure about her course.

The steamer, leaving the lighthouse to port on the south-south-west, steered boldly towards the strait. Her red light could be seen as she passed the opening into the harbour of Saint-Jean; then she soon disappeared in the midst of the darkness.

"That's the first ship to pick up the Lighthouse at the End of the World!" Felipe exclaimed.

"It won't be the last!" Vasquez assured him.

The next day, in the forenoon, Felipe sighted a large sailing ship appearing on the horizon. The weather was clear, a light breeze from the south-east driving away the mists and enabling the vessel to be seen at a distance of at least ten miles.

Vasquez and Moriz were called, and went up into the lighthouse gallery. The ship that had been signalled could be made out above the far cliffs of the shore, a little to the right of Elgor Bay, between Diegos Point and Point Several.

This ship was scudding fast before the wind,

under full canvas, at a speed of not less than twelve or thirteen knots. She was sailing large, on the port tack. But, as she was making a bee line for Staten Island, it was too early to say if she would pass it to the north or the south.

Like seamen, who are always interested in such questions, Vasquez, Felipe, and Moriz argued the point. Finally it was Moriz who was proved to be in the right, he having maintained that the sailing ship would not make for the mouth of the strait.

When she was not more than a mile and a half from the coast, she luffed, so as to come more up into the wind with the object of rounding Point Several.

She was a big ship, of at least eighteen hundred tons' burthen, rigged as a three-masted barque, one of those American-built clippers whose speed is truly remarkable.

"May my telescope change into an umbrella," Vasquez exclaimed, "if that ship didn't come out of a New England yard!"

"Do you think she will give us her number?" Moriz enquired.

"She would only be doing her duty if she did," was the chief lighthouseman's reply.

And that was what happened just as the clipper was turning Point Several. A string of flags ran up to her peak, signals which Vasquez immediately

translated, after consulting the signal book kept in the watch room.

She was the *Montank*, from Boston harbour, New England, United States of America.

The lighthousemen replied by hoisting the Argentine flag to the rod of the lightning conductor, and they continued to watch the ship until the top of her masts disappeared behind the heights of Cape Webster, on the south side of the island.

"And now," said Vasquez, "goodbye and good luck to the *Montank*, and may the Saints grant she does not run into bad weather off Cape Horn!"

During the next few days the sea remained practically deserted. Just a glimpse was caught of one or two sails on the eastern horizon. The ships which passed ten miles or so away from Staten Island were manifestly not bound for American shores. In Vasquez's opinion they were probably whalers on their way to the fishing grounds in the Antarctic waters.

A few cetaceans were observed, coming from the higher latitudes. They kept at a good distance from Point Several, and were making towards the Pacific Ocean.

With the exception of the meteorological observations, nothing happened worth recording until the 20th of December. The weather had become rather changeable, the wind shifting from north-east to

south-west. On several occasions there were somewhat heavy falls of rain, sometimes accompanied by hail, indicating electric tension of the atmosphere.

On the morning of the 21st Felipe was walking about the platform, pipe in mouth, when he thought he saw an animal over by the beech wood.

After watching it for a few minutes he went into the common-room for a telescope.

Felipe then had no difficulty in recognising a guanaco, and a fine specimen. He might have a chance of a good shot.

Vasquez and Moriz, whom he had just called, both hurried from the annex and joined him on the platform.

They all agreed that they must go in pursuit. If they were successful in bringing down the guanaco it would mean a supply of fresh meat which would be an agreeable change from their ordinary diet.

It was arranged that Moritz should take one of the carbines, leave the enclosure, and try, without being seen, to turn the animal, which was motionless, to drive it back towards the bay where Felipe would be waiting for it at the entrance.

"Anyhow, be very cautious, boys," Vasquez warned them. "Those beasts have sensitive ears and noses. As soon as that one scents or sights Moriz, it will be off so fast that you will be able

neither to shoot nor to turn it. In that case, let it bolt, for you must not go far away. Is that understood?"

"Quite," Moriz replied.

Vasquez and Felipe posted themselves on the platform, and through their telescopes ascertained that the guanaco had not stirred from the spot where it had first been seen. They fixed their attention on Moriz.

Moriz was making for the beech wood. He would be under cover there and might perhaps be able, without alarming the animal, to reach the rocks so as to take it from behind and drive it towards the bay.

His comrades were able to watch him until he reached the wood, in the thickness of which he disappeared.

About half an hour went by. The guanaco was still motionless, and Moriz ought now to be within range for his shot.

Vasquez and Felipe waited therefore for a report to ring out and for the animal to fall more or less badly wounded, or else take to flight at full speed.

But no shot was fired, and to the immense astonishment of both Vasquez and Felipe, the guanaco, instead of scampering off, lay stretched out upon

the rocks with legs hanging limp and body collapsed as if all its strength were spent.

Almost at once Moriz, who had succeeded in gliding behind the rocks, appeared and rushed towards the guanaco, which did not move. He stooped over it, felt it with his hands, and then stood up abruptly.

Then, turning towards the enclosure, he made a signal which could not be mistaken. Plainly he was asking his comrades to come to him as quickly as possible.

"There's something strange the matter," said Vasquez. "Come on, Felipe!"

And they scrambled down from the platform and ran towards the beechwood.

It took them less than ten minutes to cover the distance.

"Well, what about the guanaco?" Vasquez asked.

"Here it is," said Moriz, pointing to the beast lying at his feet.

"Is it dead?" Felipe asked.

"Yes, dead," Moriz answered.

"Of old age, then?" Vasquez exclaimed.

"No: it has died from a wound."

"Wounded? It has been wounded?"

"Yes; a bullet in the flank."

"A bullet!" Vasquez echoed.

Nothing could have been more certain. After having been hit by a bullet and dragged itself as far as this spot, the guanaco had dropped dead.

"Then there are hunters on the island?" Vasquez said softly.

And he turned an anxious eye all round him.

CHAPTER IV

KONGRE'S BAND

IF Vasquez, Felipe, and Moriz had paid a visit to the western end of Staten Island they would have discovered that the coast line there was very different from that which lay between Cape Saint-Jean and Point Several.

It was composed entirely of cliffs rising to a height of some two hundred feet, perpendicular for the most part, running far down into deep water, and lashed unceasingly, even in calm weather, by a violent surf.

In front of these arid cliffs, the clefts and crannies and vaults in which gave shelter to myriads of sea-birds, were numerous banks of reefs, some of them reaching as far as two miles out to sea at low tide. Narrow canals wound between them, passages impracticable except to the lightest boats. Here and there were strands, carpets of sand, where a few scanty marine plants grew, strewn with shells broken to powder by the weight of the waves at high tide.

There were caves in plenty within these cliffs, deep, dry, dark grottoes with narrow mouths, the interior of which was neither swept by squalls nor flooded by the surf even in the formidable equinoxes. Access to them was gained over hills of stones and litter of rocks. Gorges difficult to scale gave access to the crest of the cliffs, but to reach the tableland in the heart of the island it would have been necessary to scale summits more than two thousand feet in height, and the distance would have been fifteen miles at least. Altogether the wildness and desolation were greater on this side than on the opposite coast line in which Elgor Bay opened out.

Although the western side of Staten Island was partly protected from the north-west winds by the highlands of Tierra del Fuego and the archipelago of Magellan islands, the sea broke there with as much fury as elsewhere around the island. So, even though a lighthouse had been erected on the Atlantic side, another would have been quite as necessary on the Pacific side, for vessels making for Lemaire Strait after rounding Cape Horn. It is possible that the Chilian government had it in contemplation to follow later the example set by the Argentine Republic.

However this may be, if works of this kind had

been undertaken simultaneously upon the two extremities of Staten Island, the fact might have seriously threatened the situation of a band of pirates who had found an asylum in the neighbourhood of Cape Saint Bartholomew.

A few years before, these miscreants had landed at the entrance into Elgor Bay. There they had discovered a deep cave hollowed in the cliff. This cave offered them a secure shelter, and as no ship ever put into Staten Island they were in perfect safety there.

These men, to the number of a dozen, had for captain an individual named Kongre, to whom a certain Carcante acted as lieutenant.

They all hailed from South America. Five of them were of Argentine or Chilian nationality. The others, probably natives of Tierra del Fuego, who had been recruited by Kongre, had merely had to cross Lemaire Strait to join the band on this island, which they knew already from having come there to fish during the fine season.

Carcante was a Chilian. It was not known in what town or village of the Republic he had been born, or to what family he belonged. Thirty-five to forty years of age, of medium build, lean, but all sinew and muscle and immensely strong, crafty

and false, he was a man who shrunk from no crime.

As to the captain of the band, nothing was known about his life. His nationality he had never told.

Was his name really Kongre? Even this was not certain.

What is certain is that that name was pretty widely known among the natives of Magellania and Tierra del Fuego. In the course of the voyage of the *Astrolabe* and the *Zélée*, Captain Dumont-d'Urville, putting in to Peckett harbour, in the Strait of Magellan, took a Patagonian of the same name aboard his ship. But it is questionable whether Kongre was of Patagonian origin. He had not the characteristic features of the men of that country, narrow above and broad below, nor their narrow retreating forehead, their elongated eyes, their flat nose, nor their stature, which is generally great. Moreover his countenance was very far from presenting the gentle expression which is found among most of those peoples.

Kongre's disposition was violent and energetic. This was immediately evident in his fierce features, only partly hidden by a thick beard already turning white, although he was only about forty years of age. He was a true pirate, a dangerous

rascal, fouled with every crime, who had been able to find no other place of refuge than this desert island of which the coast alone was known.

But how had Kongre and his companions succeeded in existing on the island since the day they had come there to look for an asylum?

This shall be very briefly explained.

When Kongre and his accomplice Carcante fled from Punta-Arenas, the principal port in the Strait of Magellan, after a series of crimes which would have meant hanging or the garotte for them, they succeeded in getting to Tierra del Fuego, where it was difficult to follow them.

While living there among the natives, they learnt that wrecks were very frequent upon Staten Island, which was not yet illumined by the Lighthouse at the End of the World. No doubt its shores were covered with wreckage of all kinds, some of which must be valuable. So Kongre and Carcante conceived the idea of organising a band of wreckers, selecting two or three scoundrels of their own kidney whom they had fallen in with in Tierra del Fuego, and adding to these ten natives of like character.

A native boat conveyed them to the other shore of Lemaire Strait. But although Kongre

and Carcante were both sailormen, and had sailed for years in the dangerous waters of the Pacific Ocean, they did not escape disaster. A gale of wind drove them back to the eastward, and the sea, which was very rough, broke their vessel up on the rocks of Cape Colnett, just as they were struggling to get into the smooth waters of Port Parry.

It was then that they came to Elgor Bay, on foot. They were not disappointed in their expectations. All the shore between Cape San Juan and Several Point was covered with wreckage old and new, bales of goods still unbroken, chests of provisions which would make the subsistence of the band secure for many a long month, arms, revolvers and guns, ammunition preserved from damage in its metal cases, bars of gold and silver of immense value from rich Australian cargoes, furniture, planks, boards, timber of every description, and here and there a few skeletons, but not one single survivor of the disasters of the sea.

This dangerous Staten Island was, of course, well known to all navigators. Every ship that was driven by storms upon its coast was inevitably lost there with all hands.

Kongre and his companions did not settle down in the centre of the bay, but right by its entrance,

which was more convenient for the bandit's plans, as he could keep an eye upon Cape San Juan.

He lighted quite by chance upon a cave which was large enough to accommodate all the band. The mouth of this cave was concealed by thick masses of sea-wrack and sea-weeds. Sheltered behind a buttress of the cliff on the north side of the bay, the cave was entirely protected from the winds blowing off the sea. Into it was carried everything found among the wreckage that was useful as furniture, bedding and clothing, with quantities of tinned foods, boxes of biscuits, and kegs of brandy and wine. A second cave, near the first, was used as a storehouse for the treasure trove of especial value, such as the gold and silver and jewels picked up on the beach.

If Kongre succeeded later on in luring a ship into the bay, he intended to fill it with all this loot and return to those Pacific islands which had been the theatre of his earlier piracies.

Up to now no opportunity had presented itself, and these miscreants had been unable to leave Staten Island. In the interval of two years, it is true, their wealth had steadily increased. Other wrecks had happened from which they had derived great profit. Often indeed, following the example

of wreckers on dangerous coasts of the old and new worlds, they brought about the catastrophe. At night, when the easterly hurricanes were raging, if a ship appeared within sight of the island, they lured her by lighting fires in the direction of the reefs, and if by some rare chance one of the shipwrecked sailors succeeded in escaping from the waves, he was murdered instantly.

But the band remained prisoners upon the island. Kongre had succeeded in wrecking several ships, but not in attracting them into Elgor Bay, where he would have tried to take possession of them. Moreover, no ship had come of its own initiative to find moorings in the heart of the bay, which was but little known to skippers.

Time passed by. The cave was fairly choked with immensely valuable loot from wrecks. The impatience and rage of Kongre and his men grew. Carcante and his captain talked continually of their hard fate.

"To be cast upon this island like a ship on a lee shore," Carcante said over and over again; "and when we have a cargo ready to put aboard worth more than a hundred thousand piastres!"

"Yes," was Kongre's answer; "we must get away, at any cost."

"When and how?" Carcante retorted.

But to that question no answer was ever forthcoming.

"Our provisions will give out in the long run," Carcante said again. "If the fish are never exhausted, the game may be. And then, think of the winters on this island! Heavens! When I think of the winters we shall still have to endure!"

What could Kongre reply? He was always a silent uncommunicative person. But he boiled with rage as he felt his own helplessness.

No, he could do nothing—nothing!

Failing a ship which the pirates might have surprised as it lay at anchor, if a Fuegian canoe had ventured to the eastern coast of the island Kongre would have had no difficulty in taking possession of it. And then, if not he himself, at any rate Carcante and one of the Chilians might have made use of it to get to the Strait of Magellan, and once there, would have found some opportunity to get on to Buenos Ayres or Valparaiso. With money, of which they had plenty, they could have bought a vessel of a hundred and fifty or two hundred tons, which Carcante, with the help of a few sailors, could have brought back to Elgor Bay. When the ship was safely in the creek, the crew could easily be disposed of. And then the whole pirate band would have gone aboard with

all their riches, and made for the Solomon Islands or the New Hebrides.

Matters were in this condition when, fifteen months prior to the opening of this story, the situation was suddenly changed.

At the beginning of October, 1858, a steamer, flying the Argentine flag, appeared off the island and manœuvred into Elgor Bay.

Kongre and his comrades at once recognised it as a man-of-war, upon which they dared make no attempt. After having removed all traces of their presence and hidden the openings into the two caves, they withdrew into the interior of the island to wait until the ship should go away.

She was the *Santa-Fé,* who had come from Buenos Ayres bringing the engineer commissioned to construct a lighthouse upon Staten Island, who had come to select the site.

The despatch-boat remained only for a few days in Elgor Bay, and then left without having discovered the lair of Kongre and his men.

However, Carcante, who had crept down to the creek by night, had been able to find out the object the *Santa-Fé* had had in putting in to Staten Island.

A lighthouse was to be built in Elgor Bay!

The gang had no alternative, it seemed, but to

leave its island stronghold, and that certainly is what would have been done if it had been possible.

So Kongre did the only thing there was to do. He already knew the western portion of the island in the neighbourhood of Cape Saint Bartholomew, where there were other caves which would give him shelter. Without a single day's delay, since the despatch-boat would soon be coming back with a staff of workmen to begin the works, he busied himself in removing over there everything that would be required for a year's stay, having every reason to believe that, at that distance from Cape Saint-Jean, he ran no risk of being discovered.

But he would not have had sufficient time to clear both the caves completely. He was obliged to content himself with removing the greater part of the provisions, tinned foods, drinks, bedding, and clothes, and also some of the more precious things, and then, carefully blocking up the mouths of the caves with stones and dry weed, he left the rest.

Five days after the scoundrelly band had gone the *Santa-Fé* reappeared in the morning at the entrance to Elgor Bay, and took up her former moorings in the creek. Workmen and materials were set ashore. The site was chosen and the work of building began forthwith.

Thus it came about that Kongre's band was obliged to take refuge at Cape Saint Bartholomew. They obtained all the water they required from a stream fed by the melting snows. Fishing and some little hunting enabled them to economise the provisions they had laid in before leaving Elgor Bay.

But it was with fierce determination that Kongre, Carcante, and the rest waited for the lighthouse to be completed and for the *Santa-Fé* to leave, not to return for another three months, when she would bring the relief.

Naturally Kongre and Carcante kept themselves fully acquainted with all that went on within the bay. They were easily able to keep tally of the state of the work and estimate when it would be finished. It was then that Kongre intended to put into execution a plan he had long meditated. For who could say whether, now that Elgor Bay would be lighted, some ship would not put in there, a ship which he might seize after surprising and massacring the crew?

The month of December arrived, when the installation of the lighthouse was to be completed. The lighthouse keepers would be left alone, and Kongre would be informed of the fact by the first beams that the lighthouse threw into the night.

During these last weeks, therefore, one or other of the gang always came to keep watch upon one of the peaks whence the lighthouse could be seen from a distance of seven or eight miles, with orders to return at once the moment the light should be lighted for the first time.

It was Carcante himself who brought the news to Cape Saint Bartholomew, on the night of the 9th of December.

A few days went by, and it was in the beginning of the following week that Carcante, while hunting near Port Parry, wounded a guanaco with a bullet. The animal escaped him and fell at the spot where Moriz saw it, at the edge of the fringe of rocks near the beech wood. And from that day forward Vasquez and his mates, knowing that they were no longer the only inhabitants of the island, kept a still stricter watch upon the neighbourhood of Elgor Bay.

The day came for Kongre to leave Cape Saint Bartholomew on his return to Cape San Juan. The pirates had decided to leave their stores in the cave. They would merely take sufficient provisions for three or four days' march, relying upon the stock laid in at the lighthouse. It was now the 22nd of December. By leaving at daybreak and taking a road they knew across the mountainous region in

the heart of the island, they would do a third of the journey the first day.

After the halt for the night, Kongre proposed to begin, even before sunrise next day, a second stage of about the same length. On the next day again a last journey would bring him to Elgor Bay, which he looked to reach in the evening of the third day.

Kongre reckoned easily to make himself master of the lighthouse. After that he would have ample time to fetch all the stores he had left at Cape Saint Bartholomew and replace them in the cave at the entrance to Elgor Bay.

Such was the plan mapped out in the mind of this dangerous pirate. That it would succeed was only too certain. But whether fortune would favour him afterwards was not so certain.

For afterwards, of course, he could not control matters. It was essential that some vessel should put in to Elgor Bay. That anchorage would be advertised to travellers after the voyage of the *Santa-Fé*. A ship, especially one of medium freight, might take refuge in the bay, which henceforth would be beaconed by a lighthouse, rather than run across an angry sea through the straight.

Kongre had determined that any such ship should fall into his hands, and furnish him with the chance

to make his escape across the Pacific, where he would be sure of escaping punishment for his crimes.

But it was necessary that everything should fall out before the return of the despatch-boat at the time fixed for the relief. If they had not left the island by that time, Kongre and his men would be compelled to go back to Cape Saint Bartholomew.

And then the circumstances would no longer be the same. When Captain Lafayate discovered that the three lighthouse keepers had disappeared, it would be impossible for him to doubt that they had been the victims of abduction or murder. Search would be organised throughout the island. The despatch-boat would not leave again until she had searched it from end to end. How could the gang avoid pursuit, and how could it manage to live, if that situation were prolonged? If necessary, the Argentine Government would send other ships. Even if Kongre succeeded in getting hold of a native boat—a very unlikely chance—the strait would be watched so carefully that he would no longer be able to cross it and find refuge in Tierra del Fuego. Would fortune favour these pirates then to the extent of allowing them to leave the island while there was still time?

In the evening of the 22nd Kongre and Carcante walked along the far end of Cape Saint Bartholo-

mew, talking after the fashion of sailors, studying the sky and sea.

The weather was fairly good. On the horizon clouds were gathering. A strong breeze blew from the north-east.

It was half past six in the evening. Kongre and his men were about to go back to their accustomed retreat when Carcante said:

"It is quite understood that we leave all our stores at Cape Saint Bartholomew?"

"Yes," Kongre replied. "It will be easy to fetch it later—when we are masters down there, and——"

He did not finish his sentence. His eyes were turned towards the open sea, and he stopped and said:

"Carcante, look! Look there! There—off the point!"

Carcante scanned the sea in the direction indicated.

"Oh!" said he. "There's no mistake—it's a ship!"

"Coming up to the island, by the look of it," Kongre went on, "and on the short tack, for she has the wind ahead."

So it was. A ship under full sail was tacking about, a couple of miles or so from Cape Saint Bartholomew.

Although she had the wind against her, the vessel

gradually made way, and it was obvious she would make the strait before night fell.

"She's a schooner," said Carcante.

"Yes; a schooner of a hundred and fifty or two hundred tons," Kongre replied.

It was obvious that the schooner wanted to make the strait in preference to doubling Cape Saint Bartholomew. The only question was whether she would get off it before it grew too dark. With the wind dropping, was she not in danger of being carried by the current upon the reefs?

The whole band of pirates gathered at the end of the cape.

It was not the first time they had seen a ship come so close to Staten Island. More than one such ship had been lured onto the rocks by moving lights.

Someone suggested now that the same device should be employed.

"No," said Kongre, "this schooner must not be lost! Let us try to get hold of her. The wind and the tide are both against her; it's going to be a dark night. It will be quite impossible for her to get into the strait. We shall find her still off the cape tomorrow, and we will see what is best to be done."

An hour later the vessel was lost sight of in the dense surrounding darkness, and no light betrayed her presence out at sea.

During the night the wind changed and shifted to the south-west.

Next day, at dawn, when Kongre and his men came down to the beach, they saw the schooner stranded on the reefs below Cape Saint Bartholomew.

CHAPTER V

THE SCHOONER "MAULE"

KONGRE had nothing left to learn about the sailor's business.

What ship had he commanded, and in what seas? Only Carcante, like him a sailor, and erstwhile his lieutenant in his roving life, as still on Staten Island, could have told. But Carcante did not tell.

Most certainly these two were pirates. They must have led that criminal life in the waters of the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides, where ships were often attacked at that period. And no doubt it was after escaping the cruisers equipped and despatched by the United Kingdom, France, and America to that part of the Pacific Ocean, that they had sought refuge in the Magellan Islands, and then on Staten Island, where they had exchanged the rôle of pirate for that of wrecker.

Five or six of Kongre's and Carcante's comrades had also sailed as fishermen or merchant-sailors, and consequently were trained to the sea. The Fuegians

would serve to complete the crew, if the gang succeeded in getting possession of the schooner.

Judging from the dimensions of her hull and masting, the approaching schooner was a hundred and fifty or a hundred and sixty tons burthen at most. A squall from the west had driven her during the night on a sandbank strewn with rocks upon which she might have broken up. But it did not look as if her hull were injured. Lying on the port side, with her stern turned obliquely towards the land she had her starboard side exposed to the open sea. In this position her deck could be seen from forecastle to poop. Her masts were intact, foremast, mainmast and bowsprit, with their rigging and her sails half clewed up, except that on the foremast the royals and tops were taken in.

On the evening of the previous day, when the schooner was sighted off Cape Saint Bartholomew, she had been battling with a pretty strong northeast wind, and, as close-hauled as possible, was trying to make the entrance into Lemaire Strait on the starboard tack. At the time when Kongre and his men lost sight of her in the darkness the breeze was showing a tendency to drop, and was soon too slight to give a ship appreciable pace. Without doubt she had drifted on the currents against the reefs, and had been too close to them to get out

into the open again when, in the course of the night, the wind had veered completely round with the suddenness characteristic of it in these waters.

The bracing of the yards showed that the crew had done all they could to get her up into the wind. But no doubt they were too late, since finally the schooner had run full onto the sand bank.

What had become of the captain and the crew could only be guessed. But probably, when they found themselves being carried by the wind and the tide onto a dangerous coast bristling with reefs they had taken to the boat, taking it for granted that their ship was doomed to break up against the rocks, and that they were in danger of perishing to the last man. It was an unfortunate notion. If they had remained on board all would have remained safe and sound. Now, there was no room to doubt that they had perished, since their boat could be seen keel uppermost, two miles away to the north-east, driven by the wind towards Franklin Bay.

To go aboard the schooner while the tide was still going out, presented no difficulty. From Cape Bartholomew it was possible to pass from rock to rock to the scene of the wreck, half a mile away at most.

Kongre and Carcante did this, accompanied by two of their men. The rest remained on watch at the foot of the cliff, to see if they could discover any survivors of the wreck.

When Kongre and his companions arrived at the sandbank, the schooner was high and dry. But as the flood would rise seven or eight feet at the next tide, there was no doubt that the ship would recover her sea-gauge if she were not injured in her bottom.

Kongre had not been wrong in estimating the schooner's tonnage at a hundred and fifty. He walked all around her, and on her stern plate he read the words: *"Maule, Valparaiso."*

So it was a Chilian ship that had run ashore on Staten Island during this night of the 22nd of December.

"This will do our trick," said Carcante.

"If she hasn't sprung a leak in her hull," one of the men objected.

"A leak, or any other damage, can be repaired," Kongre replied.

He then went to have a look at her bottom, on the side that was exposed to the open sea. The stem-post, driven a little way into the sand, seemed to be uninjured, and so did the stern-post, and the rudder was still properly fixed. That part of the

hull which was lying on the sand could not be inspected externally. Kongre would know what to do after a couple of hours' flood tide.

"Aboard!" he said.

Although the angle at which the ship was lying made it easy to get aboard her from the port side, it did not allow of walking on the deck. They had to crawl along it, hanging on to the nettings. Kongre and the others crossed it by holding on to the chain-wales of the mainmast.

The shock of the actual stranding could not have been very violent, for, except for a few spars that were not made fast, everything was in place. As the schooner's lines were not unduly fine, and her floor timbers were rather flat, she had not driven very deep into her sandy bed, and it was certain that she would lift on the tide, provided, of course, she did not fill in consequence of any injury to a vital part.

Kongre's first business was to creep along to the poop, which was no easy matter. He found the captain's cabin, got into it by propping himself up against the walls, took the ship's papers from a drawer in a cupboard, and returned to the deck, where Carcante was waiting for him.

The two of them examined the muster roll and learned that the schooner *Maule,* of Valparaiso,

Chile, a hundred and fifty-seven tons burthen, Captain Pailha and crew of six men, had sailed in ballast on the 23rd of November for the Falkland Islands.

After rounding Cape Horn successfully, the *Maule* had been preparing to enter the mouth of Lemaire Strait when she was lost on the reefs of Staten Island.

Neither Captain Pailha nor a single one of his men had escaped from the wreck, for if there had been any survivor he would have found refuge at Cape Saint Bartholomew. But during the two hours that had passed since daybreak no one had appeared.

The schooner, it will be observed, carried no cargo since she was going to the Falkland Islands in ballast. But Kongre only wanted a ship in which he could leave the island with his plunder, and he would have one, if he could manage to refloat the *Maule*.

To examine the interior of the hold it would be necessary to shift the ballast.

This consisted of old iron in bulk. To have taken it all out would have required some time, and the schooner would be too much exposed if the wind freshened from the sea. The first thing to do was to tow her off the sand bank the moment she floated. The flood tide would set in soon, and in a few hours would be high.

Kongre said to Carcante:

"We will get everything ready to warp the schooner off directly she has enough water under her keel. It is possible that she is not badly injured and won't fill."

"We shall know that very soon," Carcante replied, "for the tide is beginning to run up. And what shall we do then, Kongre?"

"We'll warp the *Maule* off the reefs and tow her along the cape into Penguin Creek, in front of the caves. She won't touch bottom there, even at low ebb, for she only draws six feet of water."

"And then?" Carcante enquired.

"And then we will put on board her everything we have brought from Elgor Bay."

"And after that?"

"We'll see," Kongre answered simply.

They set to work so as to save all the next tide, for otherwise the refloating of the schooner would have been delayed for twelve hours. At all costs, she must be moored in the creek before noon. There she would remain afloat and would be in comparative safety if the weather held out.

As a beginning Kongre and his men took the anchor from the starboard bow and fixed it beyond the sandbank, letting the chain out to its full length. Thus it would be possible, directly the keel ceased to

rest upon the sand, to haul the schooner into deep water once more. There would be time to reach the creek before the tide began to ebb, and, during the course of the afternoon, to make a complete examination of the hold.

These steps were taken quickly, and were finished just as the first of the flood came up. The sandbank would be covered in a moment.

So Kongre, Carcante, and half-a-dozen of the men clambered on board while the rest went back to the foot of the cliff.

There was nothing to do now but wait. The sea breeze often freshens as the tide comes in, and that was the thing most to be feared now, for it might have driven the *Maule* deeper into and farther onto the bank. It was almost neap tide now, and the sea might not have got up far enough to free the schooner if she had drifted only another half cable's length further towards the shore.

Circumstances seemed to be favourable to Kongre's plans. The breeze quickened a little and veered to the south, assisting the *Maule* in her liberation.

Kongre and the others stayed forward in the bows, which must float before the stern. If, as there was reason to hope, the schooner could swing round, it would merely be needful to man the capstan

in order to make the stem cast off from the land, and then, warped up on her chain which was a couple of hundred yards in length, she would get to her natural element again.

The sea gained inch by inch. A quivering showed that the hull was feeling the action of the tide. The flood came up in long swells. Not a single wave broke out at sea. Better conditions could not have been desired.

But, although Kongre was now confident he could get the schooner off and bring her into safety in one of the creeks in Franklin Bay, one possibility still caused him anxiety. Had the *Maule's* hull been stove in on the starboard side, the one that was lying on the sandbank and could not be examined? If there were a leak there, there would be no time to find it beneath all the ballast, and stop it. Then the schooner would not leave her bed, but would fill, and there would be no alternative but to leave her where she was, for the first storm to complete her destruction.

With impatience Kongre and his men watched the progress of the tide. If any of the timbers were stove in, or any of the caulking had given way, the water would soon flood the hold, and the *Maule* would not even right herself.

But little by little they gained confidence. The

"Kongre and his men watched the progress of the tide . . . the deck resumed its normal position." (*Page 73*)

tide kept coming up. Every minute a little more of the hull was covered. The water rose along her sides without trickling within. A few jerks showed that the hull was intact, and the deck resumed its normal horizontal position.

"No leak! No leak!" Carcante cried.

"Man the capstan," Kongre ordered.

The winches were all ready. The men were only waiting for the order to turn them.

Kronge, leaning over the cathead, watched the tide, which now had been running up for two hours and a half. The stem-post was beginning to quiver, and the front part of the keel was clear. But the stern-post was still embedded in the sand, and the rudder did not move freely. Quite half an hour more would be required before the stern was clear.

Kongre then determined to hurry the operation of refloating the ship, and still remaining up in the bows, he shouted:

"Haul away!"

But the winches, though turned with fierce energy, could do no more than stretch the chain, and the stem-post did not turn away an inch from the shore.

"Hold on!" cried Kongre.

There was indeed a fear of the anchor getting atrip, and it might have been difficult to get it to hold again.

The schooner was now completely righted, and Carcante, going through the hold, satisfied himself that no water had got in. If any harm was done, at all events the timbers were not dislodged. There was good ground for hoping that the *Maule* had suffered no injury either at the time she ran ashore or during the twelve hours she had been lying on the sandbank. If so, her stay in Penguin Creek for repairs need not be a long one.

She could be laden with her cargo during the afternoon, and next day she would be fit to put to sea. It was very necessary to take advantage of the weather. The wind would be favourable to the *Maule's* progress, whether she went up Lemaire Strait or along the southern shore of Staten Island on her way to the Atlantic.

The tide would be slack about nine o'clock, and a neap tide is never strong. The comparatively small draught of the schooner being taken into consideration, there was good ground for believing that she would float again.

And soon after half past eight the stern began to rise. The *Maule* grounded, with no likelihood of damage in so calm a sea and on a bank of sand like this.

Kongre took stock of the situation, and decided that another attempt might be made to warp her

off under good conditions. At his order the men began to wind once more, and when they had brought in a dozen fathoms or so the *Maule's* bows were at last turned round toward the sea. The anchor had held fast. Its flukes were firmly wedged in a crevice in the rocks, and would have broken before yielding to the pull of the capstan.

"Haul away, boys!" Kongre shouted.

And all hands went at it, including Carcante, while Kongre leaned over the taffrail and watched the vessel's stern.

There came a few minutes' uncertainty, the after half of the keel still scraping the sand.

Keen anxiety still held all. The tide would flow for only another twenty minutes, and it was important that the *Maule* should be refloated before then, or she would be pinned to the spot until the following tide. And for yet another two days the height of the tide must diminish, and would not begin to increase again for forty-eight hours.

The time had come for a final effort. The rage of these men at their own powerlessness was great. To have beneath their feet the ship that they had coveted so long, that guaranteed them liberty and exemption from punishment for their crimes, and yet to be unable to wrest her from this sandbank!

Oaths and curses rang as the men panted at the

capstan, dreading every minute that the anchor might break or get atrip! In that event they would have to wait until the evening tide to drop the anchor again, and the other with it. And who could say what would happen twenty-four hours hence, and if the atmospheric conditions would be equally favourable?

As it was, a few rather heavy clouds were gathering in the north-east. If they were confined to that quarter the ship's position would not be rendered much worse, it is true, for the sandbank was sheltered by the high cliffs along the shore. But the sea might grow rough, and the surf accomplish what the stranding had begun the night before.

Then, again, these winds from the north-east, even when merely light breezes, would not be favourable to navigation in the strait. Instead of flying along with flowing sails, the *Maule* would be obliged to sail close to the wind for perhaps several days on end, and when it is a matter of navigation the consequences of any delay may always be serious.

The tide was almost slack now, and in a few minutes the ebb would make itself felt. The sandbank was completely covered. Only one or two points of reef appeared between wind and water. The point of Cape Saint Bartholomew was no longer to be seen, and on the beach high water mark had

been touched for a second by the flood and again was dry.

It was manifest that the tide was beginning to ebb slowly, and that the rocks around the sandbank would soon be exposed once more.

The men were fatigued and out of breath. They were on the point of abandoning a job which, it seemed, must be fruitless.

Kongre rushed up to them, foaming with anger, his eyes blazing. He seized an axe and threatened to kill with it the first man who forsook his post. They knew that he would not hesitate to keep his word.

So all went to the winches again, and under their united efforts the chain tautened to breaking-point, as it ran through the copper lining of the hawse-holes.

At last a sound was heard. The capstan pawl had dropped into the notch. The schooner made a slight movement toward the sea. The tiller, moving once more, showed that the rudder was gradually getting free from the sand.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted the men, feeling that the *Maule* was free. She was sliding along her bed. The winches revolved more rapidly, and in a few minutes more the schooner, hauled by her anchor, was afloat clear of the bank.

Kongre rushed to the wheel. The chain was eased, the anchor tripped and hoisted to its cathead. All that remained to do was to take her into the passage among the reefs and so to the creek in Franklin Bay.

Kongre had the standing jib set; that would be enough.

Half an hour later the schooner had rounded the last rock along the beach and was taking up her moorings in Penguin Creek, two miles from the end of Cape Saint Bartholomew.

CHAPTER VI

IN ELGOR BAY

THE task of refloating the ship had been successfully accomplished. But all was not finished. The schooner was by no means in perfect security in the little cove. She was too much exposed there to the rollers from the open sea and to the gales from the north-west. At the period of strong equinoctial tides she could not have remained at her present moorings for as long as twenty-four hours.

Kongre was quite aware of this. It was, therefore, his intention to leave the cove on the ebb next day.

Before this it was essential to complete the inspection of the ship, especially to examine the condition of her hull inside. Although she was not leaking, there was yet the possibility that her ribs, if not her planking, had been injured when she stranded. Thus it might be necessary to undertake repairs in anticipation of a voyage of any length.

Kongre set his men at once to shift the ballast which filled the hold up to the level of the floor timbers on the port and starboard. There would be no need to empty her of the ballast, and thus time and fatigue would be saved, and time especially had to be grudged in the far from secure position in which the *Maule* still was.

The old iron, of which the ballast consisted, was first shifted from the forward to the after part of the hold, to permit of examination of the fore portion of the outer planking.

This examination was carefully made by Kongre and Carcante, assisted by a Chilian named Vargas, who had worked formerly as a carpenter in the shipbuilding yards of Valparaiso and knew the trade thoroughly.

No injury was found in the part between the stempost and the step of the foremast. Floor timbers, ribs, and planking were all in sound condition; they were solidly bolted, and had not felt the shock of grounding on the sandbank.

The ballast was shifted forward again, and the hull was found equally free from injury between the fore and the main masts. The stanchions had been neither bent nor warped, and the ladder leading to the middle hatch had not been displaced.

Attention was then turned to the last third of the hold, from the end of the vault to the stern-post.

Here there was an injury of some importance. There was not actually a leak, but the ribs on the port side were stove in for about four or five feet. The damage might have been caused by collision with the point of some rock before the schooner had drifted onto the sandbank. Although the planking had not given way altogether and the oakum was still in place, which had prevented the water from getting into the hold, the injury was none the less serious.

Repairs were necessary before putting to sea. It seemed likely that these repairs would require quite a week, even supposing all the materials and tools required for the work were available.

When Kongre and his companions knew how matters stood, curses, justified by their present circumstances, succeeded to the cheers which had greeted the refloating of the *Maule*. Was the schooner going to prove useless? Would they be unable to leave Staten Island after all?

Kongre interrupted their lamentations.

"The damage is serious beyond doubt. In her present condition we could not trust to the *Maule;* she might part in heavy weather. And it is hundreds

of miles to the Pacific islands. There would be risk of sinking on the way. But this injury can be repaired, and we'll repair it."

"Where?" demanded one of the Chilians, who could not conceal his anxiety.

"Not here, anyhow," one of his mates declared.

"No," Kongre replied decidedly. "At Elgor Bay."

The schooner could, as a mater of fact, do the distance to the bay in forty-eight hours. She would only have to skirt the coast, either to the south or to the north of the island. In the cave where all the loot from the wrecks had been left, the carpenter would find ready to his hand all the wood and tools required for repairs. The fine season would last for another two months yet, and when Kongre and his gang left Staten Island they would do so on a ship which would offer them entire security.

Moreover, it had always been Kongre's intention, when he left Cape Saint Bartholomew, to spend some time in Elgor Bay. On no account would he have been willing to give up all that he had left in the cave when the building of the lighthouse had compelled the gang to take refuge at the other end of the island. So his plans were only altered in respect of

the time of the stay in the bay, which might be longer than he would have wished.

Confidence was restored, and preparations were made for starting at high tide next day.

The presence of the lighthouse keepers was not a matter that caused this gang of pirates any concern. Kongre explained his intentions about them in few words.

"Before this schooner turned up," he said to Carcante as soon as they were alone, "I had decided to take possession of Elgor Bay again. I have not altered by mind. Only, instead of coming up through the interior of the island and trying to escape being seen, we will come by sea quite openly. The schooner will take up her moorings in the creek; we shall be welcomed without any suspicion; and——"

A gesture which Carcante did not fail to understand completed what was in Kongre's mind.

And there really was every chance of success for the scoundrel's plans. Short of a miracle, how could Vasquez, Felipe, and Moriz escape the fate which threatened them?

The afternoon was spent in preparation for the start. Kongre had the ballast put back, and busied himself taking on board the provisions, arms, and

other articles brought to Cape Saint Bartholomew.

The lading was completed rapidly. Since they had left Elgor Bay more than a year ago, Kongre and his men had lived principally upon their reserves, and there was only a little left, which was put into the ship's store room. The bedding, clothes, utensils, gold and silver articles, and the crew's berths, were installed in the quarters and hold of the *Maule,* pending the taking on board of the stuff still stored in the cave at the entrance to the bay.

So much despatch was made that about four o'clock in the afternoon all this cargo was aboard. The schooner might have weighed anchor at once, but Kongre was not anxious to sail by night along a coast that bristled with reefs. He did not even know whether or not to go through Lemaire Strait in order to get off Cape San Juan. It would depend upon the direction of the wind. Whichever route he chose, he calculated that the voyage would not take more than thirty hours, including the time they put in for the night.

When evening fell there was no change in the weather conditions. There was not a trace of fog as the sun set, and so clear was the line of sky and sea that a ray of emerald light cut across space as the orb sank from sight below the horizon.

Every indication suggested that the night would be a calm one. And so it proved to be. Most of the men spent it on board, some in the berths, others in the hold. Kongre occupied Captain Pailha's cabin to the right of the ward-room, and Carcante the lieutenant's to the left of it.

Several times during the night they came on deck to take a look at the sky and the sea, to make sure that the *Maule* would not incur any risk even at high tide, and that nothing would delay the start next day.

The sunrise was magnificent. In this latitude it is not often that one sees it rise above a horizon so absolutely clear.

At daybreak Kongre went ashore in the boat, and crossing a narrow ravine gained the top of the cliff.

From this height he could look across a wide expanse of sea, over three quarters of the compass. On the east side alone the view was checked by the masses of mountains rising between Cape Saint Anthony and Cape Kemp.

The sea was calm to southward, but rather rough at the mouth of the strait, because the wind was freshening and beginning to blow strongly.

Not a sail or a trail of smoke was to be seen,

and it was pretty certain that the *Maule* would not encounter any other vessel during her short voyage to Cape San Juan.

Kongre's decision was instantly arrived at. Rightly fearing that it might blow a fresh gale, and desiring above all things not to overtax the schooner by exposing her to the sea in the strait, which was always heavy at the turn of the tide, he decided to run along the southern coast of the island, and reach Elgor Bay round Capes Kemp, Webster, Several, and Diegos.

Kongre came down the cliff again to the beach, and went to the cave, where he made sure that nothing had been overlooked.

It was a little after seven o'clock. The ebb, just beginning to run, would help the schooner out of the creek.

The anchor was fished and the fore-stay sail and stay-sail hoisted. These, with the breeze from north-east, would be enough to take the *Maule* outside the sandbank.'

Kongre took the helm while Carcante went on watch forward. Ten minutes sufficed to get clear of the reefs, and the schooner was soon rolling and tossing a little.

At Kongre's orders Carcante set the foresail and

the brigantine, which is the main sail in a schooner's rigging, and then hoisted the top-sail. With these hauled aboard and gathered, the *Maule* steered for the south-west with a full wind, so as to round the extreme point of Cape Saint Bartholomew.

In half an hour she had got round its rocks. Then she luffed and took an easterly course, getting close up into the wind. But it was in her favour, under the shelter of the southern coast of the island, which she kept three miles to the windward.

Meanwhile Kongre and Carcante were able to see that this small vessel behaved well in any trim. In the fine season certainly, there would be no danger in leaving the last islands of the Magellan archipelago behind and venturing in her into Pacific waters.

Kongre might perhaps have reached the entrance to Elgor Bay in the evening, but he preferred to stop at some point along the coast before the sun had set. So he did not crowd on sail, using neither the fore-topsail nor the mainmast pole, but resting content with an average of five or six miles an hour.

The *Maule* met no ship this first day, and night was falling when she came to her moorings to the east of Cape Webster, having accomplished about half her voyage.

Enormous rocks were piled up here, and the high-

est cliffs in all the island towered. The schooner anchored a cable's length from the shore, in a cove screened by the point; no ship could have been more snug in a harbour or even in a dock.

If the wind veered to the south the *Maule* might indeed have been greatly exposed at this spot where the sea, when disturbed by polar storms, is as violent as it is off Cape Horn. But the weather seemed likely to remain steady, with this north-easterly breeze, and chance continued to favour the plans of Kongre and his men. The night of the 25th of December was as calm as possible. The wind dropped about ten o'clock, but got up again at the approach of dawn about four o'clock.

At the first gleam of daylight Kongre prepared to weigh anchor. The sails, which had been kept upon the brails during the night, were set again. The anchor was fished, and the *Maule* resumed her voyage.

Cape Webster runs four or five miles out to sea, from north to south. So the schooner had to go back to get once more to the coast which runs eastward to Point Several, for a distance of about twenty miles.

The *Maule* resumed her voyage under the same conditions as the day before, as soon as she had

drawn near to the shore where she again had smooth water under the protection of the high cliffs.

The coast was hideous, more appalling even than that of the strait. It was a vast accumulation of enormous rocks, and many of these huge masses were scattered over the beach as far as high water mark. There was not a creek which was approachable, not a sandbank on which foot could be set. This was the gigantic rampart which Staten Island opposed to the awful surges that rushed on it from the Antarctic ocean.

The schooner was moving under half her canvas, less than three miles from the shore. Kongre did not know this coast, and wisely feared to get too close to it. On the other hand, being anxious not to try the *Maule* unduly, he was careful to keep well in the quiet water, which he might not have found farther out to sea.

About ten o'clock, however, when he reached the opening into Blossom Bay, he was unable to avoid the surf entirely. The wind was rushing up the gulf which is cut deep into the land, and it churned the sea up into long waves which caught the *Maule* athwart and made her groan.

Kongre let her stand off so as to turn the eastern point of the bay, and then, having got round it, he

came closer up into the wind and stood out to sea upon the port tack.

He had taken the helm himself, and was working as close to windward as possible, with sheets hauled taut. It was not until four o'clock in the afternoon that he thought he had got far enough up to windward to reach his destination on a single tack. Then he veered his ship and steered straight for Elgor Bay on the other tack, Point Several being at this moment about four miles to the north-west of him.

From this distance the whole expanse of the coast could be seen as far as Cape San Juan.

At the same moment, on the other side of Point Diegos, appeared the tower of the Lighthouse at the End of the World, which Kongre now saw for the first time. With the aid of a telescope which he had found in Captain Pailha's cabin, he could even distinguish one of the lighthouse keepers, who from his post in the gallery was keeping a look-out over the sea. As there were three hours during which the sun would still be above horizon, the *Maule* would certainly reach her moorings before night.

It was certain that the schooner would not escape the eyes of the lighthouse keepers. Indeed, her arrival in the waters of Staten Island was noted already. While Vasquez and his mates had seen her

heading out to sea, they must have thought that she was making for the Falkland Islands. But when she hauled close to the wind on the starboard tack they could not fail to understand that she wanted to make the bay.

But it mattered very little to Kongre that the *Maule* had been seen, or even that his intention to put into the bay was taken for granted. It would not affect his plans.

Much to his satisfaction, the end of his voyage was being made under very favourable conditions. The wind came a little more from the east; and the sails hauled flat, ready to be let fly, the schooner went back without having to tack in order to get round Point Diegos.

This was lucky. In the present state of her hull the ship might not have been able to stand a series of tackings about, which would have strained her, and a leak might easily have been sprung before she got into the creek.

This, indeed, did happen. When the *Maule* was no more than a couple of miles from the bay, one of the men who had just slid down into the hold came up again, shouting that water was leaking in through a crack in the planking.

It was at the place where the timbers had given under a blow from a rock. The planking had held until now, but it had just begun to part, although only to the extent of a few inches.

The damage was not really of very serious importance. By shifting the ballast Vargas managed without much difficulty to stop the leak with a plug of oakum.

But of course careful repairs would be necessary. In the condition into which she had been put by her grounding off Cape Saint Bartholomew, the schooner could not have braved the seas in the Pacific without inviting disaster.

It was six o'clock when the *Maule* arrived off the opening into Elgor Bay, a mile and a half distant. Kongre had the topsails taken in, for he could do without them now. The fore-topsail, jib-sail, and mainsail alone were left standing. Under this canvas the *Maule* would easily reach her moorings in the creek within Elgor Bay, under Kongre's control, for, as has been said, he knew the course perfectly and might have acted as pilot.

Besides, about half past six in the evening a pencil of luminous rays was projected over the sea. The lighthouse had just been lighted up, and the first ship whose course through the bay it was destined to light

was a Chilian schooner that had fallen into the hands of a band of pirates!

It was nearly seven, and the sun was sinking behind the high peaks of Staten Island when the *Maule* left Cape San Juan on her starboard. The bay opened out before her. Kongre came into it before the wind.

As they passed in front of the caves Kongre and Carcante were able to assure themselves that the openings into them had not been detected behind the piles of stones and screen of brushwood that blocked them. So nothing had betrayed their presence in this part of the island, and they would find their harvest of plunder just as they had left it.

"That's all right," said Carcante to Kongre, just behind whom he was standing.

"And will be better still presently," Kongre answered.

Twenty minutes later the *Maule* had reached the creek where she was to drop anchor.

At the same moment she was hailed by two men who had just come down to the beach from the platform.

Felipe and Moriz were there. They were getting their boat out to take them aboard the schooner.

Vasquez was on duty in the watch room.

When the schooner reached the middle of the creek her mainsail and fore-topsail were already reefed, and she was carrying only her jib, which Carcante ordered to be struck.

Just as the anchor touched bottom, Moriz and Felipe jumped on the deck of the *Maule*.

Kongre made a sign, and instantly Moriz was struck on the head with an axe, and fell. Simultaneously two revolver shots stretched Felipe by his comrade's side. In a moment the two of them were dead.

From one of the windows in the watch room Vasquez had heard the shots and seen the murder of his comrades.

The same fate was in store for him, if they got hold of him. No mercy was to be looked for from these murderers. Poor Felipe, poor Moriz! He had been able to do nothing to save them. He stood aghast at the horrible crime that had been committed in a few seconds.

After the first moment of stupor he recovered his self-possession, and rapidly considered the situation. He must at all costs escape these murdering scoundrels. They might perhaps be unaware of his existence, but it was only to be supposed that, as soon as the work of coming to mooring was finished, several

of them would come up into the lighthouse with the intention of putting out the light and rendering the bay impracticable, at least until daylight.

Without a moment's hesitation Vasquez left the watch room and hurried down the staircase into the quarters of the ground floor.

There was not a second to lose. Already the sound of the boat sheering off from the schooner to bring some of the crew ashore could be heard.

Vasquez seized a couple of revolvers, which he slipped into his belt, crammed a few provisions into a bag, which he threw over his shoulder. He then came out of the quarters and ran rapidly down the slope of the enclosure, to disappear into the darkness undetected.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAVE

IT was a terrible night that loomed in front of poor Vasquez, a terrible position in which he found himself. His unfortunate comrades had been murdered and flung overboard; their corpses were floating even now on the ebb tide out to sea. He did not stay to reflect that if he had not been on duty in the lighthouse he would have shared their fate. His only thought was of the friends whom he had just lost.

"Poor Moriz! Poor Felipe!" he muttered. "They went in all confidence to offer help to the scoundrels, and were met with pistols! I shall never see them again; they will never see their country or their people any more! And Moriz's wife—who was expecting him in another two months—when she hears of his death——!"

Vasquez was overwhelmed with grief. It was a true affection that he felt for his two comrades. He had known them for so many years. It was on his recommendation that they had applied for employ-

ment in the lighthouse, and now he was alone, alone!

But whence had this schooner come, and what pirate crew had she on board? Under what flag was she sailing, and why had she put in thus to Elgor Bay?

Evidently the scoundrels knew the bay. What were they going to do there? Why had they extinguished the light the very moment they set foot on shore? Could it be that they wanted to prevent any ship from following them into the bay?

These thoughts came pouring into Vasquez's mind, but he could find no answer to them. He did not give a thought to the danger in which he stood himself. And yet the miscreants would soon find out that the quarters had been occupied by three men. Would they not then begin to hunt for the third man, and would they not find him ultimately?

From the spot on the shore of the bay where he had hidden down to the creek was less than two hundred yards. Vasquez saw lights moving, sometimes on board the schooner, sometimes in the enclosure of the lighthouse or through the windows of the quarters. He even heard the men talking to one another in loud tones, and in his own language. Were they compatriots, then, Chilians, Peruvians, Bolivians, or Mexicans, all of whom speak Spanish; or were they Brazilians?

At length, about ten o'clock, the lights were extinguished, and no further sound broke the silence of the night.

Vasquez could not remain where he was. He would surely be discovered there when day came again. No mercy was to be looked for from these villains. He must get out of reach of their hands.

Where should he turn his steps? Towards the interior of the island, where he would be in comparative safety? Or should he rather go down to the entrance of the bay, in the hope of being picked up by some passing ship? But, inland, or on the shore, how was he to live till the day when the relief expedition came?

His provisions would soon be exhausted. He would have none left when another forty-eight hours had gone. How was he to renew his supply? He had not even a line to fish with. And how was he to make a fire? Would he be reduced to living upon molluscs and shellfish?

At last his native energy triumphed. He decided to go to the beach by Cape San Juan and spend the night there. When day broke he would consider further.

So Vasquez left the spot whence he had watched the schooner.

No light or sound came from her now. The

scoundrels knew they were in safety in the creek, and there would be nobody on guard aboard.

Vasquez went along the north shore, by the foot of the cliffs. He did not hear a sound except the ripple of the falling tide and the occasional cry of a belated bird returning to its nest.

It was eleven o'clock when he stopped at the far end of the cape. The only shelter he could find on the beach was in a cranny and there he stayed till sunrise.

Before the sun had fully illumined the horizon Vasquez went down to the edge of the sea and looked to see if anybody was coming from the lighthouse or round the bend of the cliff at the point of Cape San Juan.

The entire shore was deserted, on both sides of the bay. There was no boat to be seen, although the crew of the schooner had now two at their disposal, the *Maule's* dinghy and the boat provided for the lighthousemen in their work.

No ship was in sight off the island.

It occurred to Vasquez how dangerous navigation would be henceforth in the approaches to Staten Island, since the lighthouse was not working. Ships coming in from the open sea would no longer be sure of their position. Expecting to sight the light fixed at Elgor Bay, they would take a westerly course boldly, and would be in danger of running

onto the perilous coast lying between Cape San Juan and Point Several.

"The scoundrels have put it out," Vasquez exclaimed, "and since it is against their interest to light it again, they won't light it!"

The extinction of the light was, indeed, a very serious matter, calculated to provoke disasters from which the miscreants might derive further advantage. They would not need to attract ships by lighting flares now, since ships would come without suspicion to get the bearings of the lighthouse.

Vasquez sat on a rock and thought over all that had happened the day before. He watched to see if the current was sweeping the dead bodies of his unfortunate comrades along with it. But no: the ebb had done its work already, and they were swallowed in the deep maw of the sea.

Then he saw the situation in all its dreadful reality.

What could he do?

Nothing: absolutely nothing, except wait for the return of the *Santa-Fé*. But there were still two long months before the despatch-boat would appear at the mouth of Elgor Bay. Even supposing he had not been discovered before, how would it be possible for him to support life all that time? He could always find shelter inside some cave in the cliff, and the fine season would certainly last until

the time the relief was due. But if it had been the depth of winter Vasquez could not have withstood the lowering of the temperature, which brings the thermometer down to thirty and forty degrees below zero. He would die of cold even before he died of starvation.

To begin with, Vasquez set to work to find a shelter. The men's quarters in the lighthouse had certainly shown the pirates that the lighthouse service was entrusted to three keepers. It was unquestionable that they would want to rid themselves at all costs of the third, who had escaped them, and they would lose no time in searching the neighbourhood of Cape San Juan.

Vasquez had recovered all his habitual energy. Despair could get no permanent grip upon his finely tempered character.

After looking about for some time he ultimately discovered a little cave with a narrow mouth, ten feet deep and five or six feet wide, quite close to the angle between the cliff and the beach at Cape San Juan. Fine sand covered the bottom of it, which was above the reach of the highest tides and sheltered from the full force of the winds blowing off the sea. Vasquez crept into this cave and deposited in it the few things he had brought from his quarters, with the few provisions that his bag contained. As to fresh water, a little stream, supplied by the

melting snows and trickling at the foot of the cliff down to the bay, secured him from danger of thirst.

Vasquez appeased his hunger with some biscuits and a piece of corned beef. He was just preparing to go outside to quench his thirst when he heard a sound near at hand, and stopped.

"There they are!" he said to himself.

Crouching down near the wall, so as to see without being seen, he looked out towards the bay.

A boat manned by four men was coming down on the tide. Two rowed in front. The other two, one of them holding the tiller, were in the stern.

It was the schooner's dinghy, not the lighthouse boat.

"What are they after?" Vasquez asked himself. "Are they looking for me? From the way the schooner navigated into the bay it is a sure thing that they knew it before, and that this isn't the first time they have set foot on this island. They haven't come here to look at the view! If it isn't me they want to get hold of, what are they after?"

Vasquez watched the men. The one who was steering the boat, the oldest of the four, he decided must be the chief, the captain of the schooner. He could not have said what his nationality was, but he felt pretty sure, from their type, that the others belonged to the South-American Spanish race.

The boat was now almost at the mouth of the

bay, along the north side of which it had just come, a hundred yards below the recess in which Vasquez was hiding. He kept his eyes on it.

The chief made a sign, and the oars stopped. A shove of the tiller, combined with the way on the boat, brought it to shore.

The four men stepped ashore, after one of them had fixed the grappling-iron in the sand.

Now Vasquez could hear them talking.

"Is this the right place?"

"Yes. The cave is over there. Twenty yards this side of the bend of the cliff."

"A precious lucky thing those lighthouse fellows didn't discover it!"

"Or any of the men who were building the lighthouse for those fifteen months!"

"They were too busy in the bay."

"And then the mouth is so thoroughly blocked up that it would have been difficult to see it."

"Come on," said the chief.

With two of his companions he went in a diagonal direction across the beach, which here was about a hundred yards wide to the foot of the cliff.

From his hiding-place Vasquez followed all their movements, listening so as not to lose a single word. The sand, strown with shells, crackled crisply under their feet. But this sound soon ceased, and all that

Vasquez could see was the man walking to and fro near the boat.

"They've got a cave over there," he said to himself.

It was impossible for Vasquez not to realise now that the schooner had brought a band of sea-rovers, robbers who were settled on Staten Island before the works had been begun. Was this the cave in which they had hidden away their plunder? And was it not their intention now to remove that plunder to the schooner?

Suddenly it occurred to him that there would be a store of provisions there, of which he might take advantage. It was like a ray of hope glancing into his soul. Directly the boat left to go back to the anchorage he would leave his lair, find the entrance into the cave, and take enough to live on until the despatch-boat came!

And if he were assured of mere existence for a few weeks, his next prayer would be that these scoundrels might not be able to get away from the island.

"Yes: may they still be here when the *Santa-Fé* comes back, and may Captain Lafayate give them all they deserve!"

But would that prayer be granted? Upon consideration Vasquez told himself that the schooner could only have put into the bay for two or three

days. As soon as she had had time to take aboard the cargo lying in the cave she would leave Staten Island, never to return.

Vasquez was soon to have precise information on this point.

After spending an hour inside the cave the three men reappeared and walked along the beach. From the little recess in which he was crouching Vasquez could still hear their loud talking, and learned something to turn to his own advantage almost at once.

"Well, they haven't robbed us during their stay, honest fellows!"

"And the *Maule* will have her full cargo when she sails."

"And enough provisions for her voyage, which relieves us of some difficulty."

"We certainly shouldn't have had enough to eat and drink till we got to the Pacific islands if we had only had what is in the schooner."

"Fools! Fancy their not finding our loot in fifteen months, or coming to hunt us out at Cape Saint Bartholomew!"

"Three cheers for them! It would not have been worth while to lure the ships onto the reefs, only to lose all the profit."

As he heard these words, at which the scoundrels roared with laughter, Vasquez became mad with rage, and was tempted to fling himself upon them

revolver in hand and shoot them all. But he restrained himself.

He felt no surprise when one of them added:

"As for the famous Lighthouse at the End of the World, let skippers come and look for it now! They might as well be blind!"

"And they'll continue to steer blindly for the island, where their ships will smash up at once!"

"I do hope that one or two will be wrecked on the rocks at Cape San Juan before the *Maule* leaves! We really ought to load our schooner up to the brim since luck has given her to us."

"Chance has favoured us handsomely! A stout ship comes to us at Cape Saint Bartholomew, and not a man of her crew, no captain or sailors—but we should have known how to get rid of them, anyway."

This explained to Vasquez how the schooner named the *Maule* had fallen into the hands of the gang at the western point of the island, and how several ships had been lost with all hands on the reefs of the island, lured there by the tricks of these wreckers.

"What are we going to do now, Kongre?" one of the three men asked.

"Go back to the *Maule,* Carcante," replied Kongre, in whom Vasquez had rightly recognised the captain of the band.

"Aren't we going to begin to clear the cave?"

"Not before the damage has been repaired; the repairs will certainly take several weeks."

"Then," said Carcante, "let us take a few tools in the boat."

"Yes; and come back if we must. Vargas will find everything here that he will want for the work."

"Don't let us waste time," Carcante continued. "The tide will soon be coming in. We'll take advantage of it."

"It's settled," Kongre replied, "that we will put the cargo aboard when the schooner is ready. We need not be afraid that she will be stolen from us."

"Well, Kongre, don't forget that there were three men in the lighthouse, and that one of them has escaped."

"That doesn't trouble me, Carcante. He'll be dead of starvation in a couple of days, unless he can live on cockles and mussels. Besides, we will close the mouth of the cave."

"Still," said Carcante, "it's annoying that we have to repair. The *Maule* might have been able to sail to-morrow. However, while we are here some ship may perhaps run onto the coast without our having to take the trouble to attract her. And what will be lost for her won't be lost for us!"

Kongre and his companions came out of the cave, bringing tools, and wood to repair the ribs of the

schooner. Then, after taking the precaution to stop up the mouth of the cave, they went down to the boat and got into her just as the flood tide was coming up into the bay.

The boat immediately put off, and soon disappeared behind a point of the shore.

As soon as there was no fear of being seen, Vasquez went down to the beach again. He knew now all that it concerned him to know: two important things among others; the first, that he could get provisions enough to last him for several weeks; the second, that the schooner had been damaged to such an extent that at least a fortnight, and perhaps more, would be required to repair her, but almost certainly not a long enough time for her to be still here when the despatch-boat returned.

As for delaying her departure when she should be ready to sail, how could Vasquez dream of doing that? But if a ship should pass close off Cape San Juan he would make signals to her, would jump into the sea if need be, and swim to her; once on board he would explain the situation to her captain, and if the captain had a large enough crew available, he would not hesitate to come into Elgor Bay and seize the schooner. If these miscreants took flight then into the interior of the island, it would be impossible for them to get away from it, and when the *Santa-Fé* came back Captain Lafayate would find

means to get hold of the pirates or destroy them to the last man!

But would any ship come off Cape San Juan? And if one did, would she see Vasquez's signals?

As to his own personal safety, Vasquez felt no anxiety, although Kongre was aware of the existence of a third lighthouse keeper. He would elude their search. As the essential thing for the moment was to know if he could make sure of his food until the despatch-boat came, he turned without delay towards the cave.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "MAULE" IN DOCK

THE business to which Kongre and his companions now applied themselves without any loss of time was that of repairing the damage done to the schooner, putting her into a fit condition for a long voyage across the Pacific, carrying on board the entire cargo stored in the cave, and sailing at the earliest possible moment.

The repairs to be done to the hull of the *Maule* constituted a rather heavy job. But the carpenter, Vargas, knew his trade and had plenty of tools and materials, and the work would be done under excellent conditions.

In the first place, it was necessary to remove the ballast from the schooner and then haul her up onto the beach of the creek, where she could be heeled over onto her starboard side so that the repairs could be done from the outside, replacing the timbers and planks of the hull.

This would probably take some time; but Kongre

had plenty of time, for he calculated that the fine season would last for at least two full months.

As to the arrival of the lighthouse relief, he knew what he had to expect.

The lighthouse log book found in the men's quarters had told him all that it mattered to him to know. Since the relief was only to be made every three months, the despatch-boat *Santa-Fé* would not return to Elgor Bay before the beginning of March, and it was still only the end of December.

The book also showed the names of the three lighthouse keepers, Moriz, Felipe and Vasquez. The furniture of the room had also shown that it was occupied by three men. So one of the keepers had been able to escape the fate of his unfortunate comrades. Where had he taken refuge? Kongre did not care very much. Alone, and without resources of any kind, the fugitive must soon succumb to want and starvation.

But nevertheless, if there was plenty of time for the repairs required by the schooner, possible delays had always to be reckoned with. In fact, at the very outset the work scarcely begun had to be broken off.

They had just finished unloading the *Maule,* which Kongre had decided to careen the following day,

when, during the night of the 3rd of January, there came a sudden change in the weather.

During that night masses of clouds gathered on the southern horizon. The barometer fell suddenly to storm, while the temperature rose to sixteen degrees. The sky was ablaze with lightning. Thunder roared. The wind raged with extraordinary violence. A furious sea swept full over the reefs and broke against the cliffs.

It was really fortunate that the *Maule* was anchored in Elgor Bay, which was well sheltered from this south-easterly wind. In such weather a ship of heavy tonnage, whether sailing ship or steamer, would have been in imminent peril of being driven onto the coast of the island. The danger was naturally greater for one of so slight a build as the *Maule*.

So tremendous grew the force of this hurricane, and the violence of the ocean out in the open, that the whole creek was flooded by a regular sea. At high tide the water rose to the foot of the cliffs, and the beach was completely covered, right up to the foot of the enclosure. Waves broke as far as the lighthouse quarters, and their spray was carried half a mile beyond the little beech wood.

Kongre and his companions had to exert all their

efforts to keep the *Maule* at her moorings. Several times she dragged her anchor and threatened to run ashore upon the beach. They were forced to put out a second anchor to support the first. Twice a complete disaster seemed inevitable.

But, while keeping watch night and day upon the *Maule,* the gang had taken up their quarters in the lighthouse annex, where they had nothing to fear from the storm. The bedding from the cabins and the crew's berths were taken up there, and there was plenty of room to accommodate these fifteen men. They had never had such quarters before during the whole of their stay upon Staten Island.

They had no ground for anxiety about provisions. The lighthouse stores contained enough and more than enough, even if there had been twice the number of mouths to feed. And besides, in case of need, they could have had recourse to the reserves kept in the cave. In a word, the victualling of the schooner could be provided for during a long voyage in the waters of the Pacific.

The bad weather lasted until the 12th of January. A whole week had been lost, for it had been quite impossible to do any work. Kongre had even deemed it prudent to replace part of the ballast in the schooner, which was rolling like a small boat. They already

had their work cut out to keep her off the rocks inside the bay, on which she would have broken up, just as at the mouth of Elgor Bay.

On the night of the 12th the wind shifted suddenly to west-south-west. On the Cape Saint Bartholomew side the sea became very rough, for a three-reef breeze was blowing. If the *Maule* had still been in the cove there she would certainly have been smashed to pieces.

One ship had passed off Staten Island during this week. This was in the day time. Consequently she had not required to take any note of the lighthouse, and could not observe that it had ceased to be lighted up between sunset and sunrise. She came from the north-east and entered Lemaire Strait under shortened sail, with the French flag flying at the peak.

Moreover, she passed quite three miles from land, and a telescope was necessary to make out her nationality. So if Vasquez did make any signals to her they could not be seen, and they were not seen, for a French captain would not have hesitated to lower a boat in order to pick up a shipwrecked man.

In the morning of the 13th the iron ballast was taken out of the *Maule* once more and laid in bulk on the sand, out of reach of the tide, and the inspec-

tion of the inside of the hold was carried out more effectively than had been possible at Cape Saint Bartholomew. The carpenter pronounced the damage to be more serious than had been supposed. The *Maule* had been severely strained during her voyage close to the wind again a rather heavy sea. It was then that she had sprung this leak in her stern. Obviously, the ship could not have prolonged her voyage beyond Elgor Bay. So it became necessary to haul her high and dry in order to put in two new floor timbers, three frames, and about six feet of edging.

As has been said already, there was no lack of materials, thanks to the articles of every kind collected in the cave. The carpenter, Vargas, helped by his men, had no fear of not being able to complete his work. If he were unsuccessful it would have been impossible for the *Maule*, not thoroughly repaired, to venture across the Pacific. It was fortunate that the masts, sails and rigging had not suffered any damage.

The first operation was to haul the schooner onto the sand in order to throw her over onto her starboard side. In the absence of the usual powerful dock appliances this could only be done at high tide. So now there was a fresh delay of two days, while they waited for the new moon's spring-tide,

which would enable the schooner to be drawn high enough up on the beach for her to remain high and dry during the whole time.

Kongre and Carcante took advantage of this delay to return to the cave, which on this occasion they did in the lighthouse boat, that being larger than the *Maule's* dinghy. It could take back some of the valuable articles, the gold and silver found among the plunder, jewels, and other precious things, which would then be placed in the store-rooms in the annex.

The boat started in the morning of the 14th. The ebb had been running two hours already, and the boat was to come back on the flood tide in the afternoon.

The weather was fair. The clouds, driven by a light southerly breeze, were parted by the rays of the sun.

Before starting, Carcante went up into the lighthouse gallery to scan the horizon, as he did every day. The open sea was deserted, and no ship was in sight, not even one of the native boats which sometimes ventured so far as to the east of the New Year Islands.

The island, too, was deserted, so far as the eye could see.

While the boat was coming down on the current,

Kongre carefully scrutinised both shores of the bay.

Where was the third lighthouseman, who had escaped the massacre?

Although it was not a matter of any great concern to him, Kongre would have preferred to get rid of him.

The shore was as barren of humanity as the bay. The only sign of life was the flight and cry of myriads of birds nesting in the cliff.

About eleven o'clock the boat touched the beach in front of the cave, the breeze as well as the ebb having been in its favour.

Kongre and Carcante landed, leaving two of their men on guard, and went to the cave, from which they emerged half an hour later.

Everything had seemed to them in the same state as they had left it. There was, indeed, such a litter of things there of every conceivable kind, that it would have been difficult, even by the light of a lantern, to discover if anything was missing.

Kongre and his companion brought out two chests carefully closed, which had come from an English three-master and contained a large sum of money, in gold, with many precious stones. They put them down in the boat and were about to start when Kongre announced his intention of going as far as

Cape San Juan. From that point he would be able to take a look at the coast line both to the south and the north.

Carcante and he accordingly went to the top of the cliff and so to the far end of the cape.

From this coign of vantage a view could be obtained on one hand over the shore to the rear, running towards Lemaire Strait for about a couple of miles, and on the other hand, as far as Point Several.

"Not a soul!" said Carcante.

"No: not a soul!" Kongre replied.

Then both returned to the boat, and as the flood tied was beginning to run, they went up with the stream. Before three o'clock they were back in Elgor Bay.

Two days later, on the 16th, Kongre and his companions proceeded, in the forenoon, to bring the *Maule* aground. The spring-tide would be at its height about eleven o'clock, and all arrangements had been made to suit. A hawser taken to the shore would permit of the schooner being hauled up to the beach directly there was a sufficient depth of water.

In itself there was nothing difficult or dangerous about the operation. The tide had to do all the work.

The moment the tide was slack the hawser was laid and the *Maule* was hauled as far up the beach as possible.

After that they had nothing to do but wait for the ebb. About one o'clock the rocks that were nearest the cliff began to show clear of the water, and the *Maule's* keel touched the sand. At three o'clock she was entirely dry, and lying on her starboard side.

It was now possible to get to work upon her. But as it had not been practicable to bring the schooner right up to the foot of the cliff, the work would perforce be interrupted for a few hours every day, since the ship would be afloat at the return of high tide. On the other hand, since, after to-day, the height of the tide would be less on every occasion, the off time would diminish gradually, and for a fortnight the work could be carried on without interruption.

So the carpenter set to work. If he could not count upon the Patagonians in the gang, at any rate the others, including Kongre and Carcante, could help him.

The damaged part of the planking was easily removed after the copper sheathing had been taken out. That left bare the frames and the floor timbers, which had to be renewed. The timber, planks, and

knees brought from the cave would be sufficient for this purpose.

In the course of the following fortnight Vargas and the rest, favoured by the weather, which remained fine, had accomplished good work. What caused them most trouble was the removal of the floor timbers and the ribs to be removed. These were copper-fastened and secured by tree-nails. The whole thing was stout, and there was no doubt this schooner, the *Maule,* had come out of one of the best ship-building yards in Valparaiso. Vargas had no small trouble in finishing this part of his job, and had it not been for the carpenter's tools collected in the cave, he certainly could not have brought it to a satisfactory conclusion.

During the first few days, of course, the work had to be stopped at the time of high tide. After that the tide fell so much that it hardly came up to the edge of the beach. The keel was continuously free from the water, and work could be carried on inside and outside the hull simultaneously. But it was important that the planking at least should be replaced before the tide began to gain strength again.

As a matter of prudence, without going so far as to remove all the copper sheathing, Kongre had all the seams examined below the water line. Their

caulking was thoroughly renewed with pitch and oakum taken from the wreckage.

The work went on thus until the end of January, almost without interruption. The weather continued to be favourable. There was some rain, sometimes heavy rain; but it did not last long.

In the course of time two ships were observed in the waters of Staten Island.

The first was an English steamer that came from the Pacific, and, after going up Lemaire Strait, went away in a north-easterly direction, most likely bound for some European port. She passed off Cape San Juan at midday. She came into sight after sunrise, and disappeared before sunset, so her captain had no occasion to notice the extinction of the light.

The second ship was a large three-master whose nationality could not be ascertained. Night was coming on when she appeared off Cape San Juan to run along the eastern coast of the island as far as Point Several. Carcante, who was in the watch room, saw only her green starboard light. But the captain and crew of this sailing ship, if they had been at sea for some months, could not have known that the construction of the lighthouse was completed at this date.

This three-master passed sufficiently near along

the coast for her men to have been able to see any signals, a fire, for instance, lighted at the end of the cape.

Did Vasquez, perhaps, try to attract their attention?

However that may be, at sunrise this ship too had disappeared in the south.

Other sailing ships and steamers were also sighted on the far horizon, making, most probably, for the Falkland Islands. They could not even have observed Staten Island.

On the last of January, at the time of the strong tides accompanying the full moon, the weather underwent a great change. The wind had gone back into the east and blew direct upon the entrance into Elgor Bay.

Fortunately, although the repairs had not yet been completely finished, at any rate the frames, floor timbers, and planking were renewed, rendering the hull of the *Maule* perfectly water-tight. There was no longer any fear of water getting into the hold.

This gave cause for self-congratulation, since for forty-eight hours on end the sea rose to the far end of the hull and the schooner actually righted herself, although her keel did not get free from its sandy bed.

Kongre and his men had to take great precautions to prevent fresh damage which might have delayed their departure very considerably. By a most fortunate circumstance the schooner continued to hold her ground. She rolled from one side to the other with some violence, but she was not in danger of being thrown onto the rocks in the creek.

Moreover, from the 2nd of February, the tide began to fall again, and the *Maule* was once more left immovable on the beach. It was then possible to caulk the hull in its upper parts, and from sunrise to sunset the sound of the mallet never ceased.

Besides, the *Maule* would not be delayed in getting away by the shipping of her cargo. The boat made frequent trips to the cave with the men who were not being employed by Vargas. Kongre went with them sometimes, sometimes Carcante.

On every trip the boat brought back some of the things which were to have room found for them in the schooner's hold. These were all placed for the time being in the storerooms of the lighthouse. Thus the lading of the ship would be effected with greater ease and with greater method than if the *Maule* had taken the cargo aboard in front of the cave, at the entrance into the bay, where the operation might have been impeded by bad weather. There was no other shelter than this little creek at

the foot of the lighthouse the whole length of the coast of Cape San Juan.

A few days more, and, with her repairs completed, the *Maule* would be ready to put to sea again, and her cargo could be put on board.

On the 12th the last seams in the deck and hull had received a thorough caulking. It had even been possible, with a few pots of colour found among the carcasses of some of the wrecked ships, to repaint the *Maule* from bows to stern. Kongre took advantage of the opportunity to change the name of the schooner, which he christened *Carcante* in honour of his lieutenant. Further, he had altered her rigging and made some slight repairs to her canvas.

So the *Maule* would have been ready to be taken back to her moorings in the creek on the 12th of February, and her loading up might have been proceeded with, had it not been that, much to the vexation of Kongre and his companions, who were most impatient to get away from Staten Island, it was necessary to wait for the next spring-tide in order to get the schooner back into the water.

This tide occurred on the 14th of February. On that day the keel was lifted from the bed it had cut in the sand of the beach, and the schooner slid easily down into deep water. Now there was only the cargo to be attended to.

But for unforeseen contingencies the *Carcante* would be able to weigh anchor in a few days now, leave Elgor Bay, go down Lemaire Strait, and scud under all sail on her south-west course towards the waters of the Pacific.

CHAPTER IX

VASQUEZ

EVER since the schooner had come to her moorings in Elgor Bay Vasquez had lived on the shore near Cape San Juan. He was reluctant to move far away. If any ship should put into the bay he would at least be able to hail her as she passed.

Then he would be picked up, would warn the captain of the danger to be incurred in going up towards the lighthouse. If the captain had not a sufficiently large crew to capture the rascals or drive them into the interior of the island, he would have time to stand out to sea again.

But why, unless she was driven there, should a ship put into a bay which was hardly known to navigators?

The happiest contingency might be for such a ship to be making for the Falkland Islands, a few days' voyage only, in which case the English authorities could speedily be informed of what had taken place

on Staten Island. A man-of-war could perhaps come at once to Elgor Bay, arriving before the *Maule* had left again, to destroy Kongre and his gang to the last man and put the lighthouse into operation once more.

"Shall I have to wait for that until the *Santa-Fé* comes back?" Vasquez kept on asking himself. "Two months! Between now and then the schooner will be miles away, and how can she be found among all the islands of the Pacific?"

The loyal Vasquez thought less of himself than of his comrades who had been pitilessly murdered, of the chance that these murders might escape punishment entirely, and of the serious dangers that threatened navigation in these waters since the extinction of the lamps in the Lighthouse at the End of the World.

His visit to the pirates' cave had considerably reassured him as to his own situation, provided his retreat were not discovered.

This huge cave was burrowed deep into the cliff. The pirates had found shelter there for several years. In it they had heaped up all the wreckage of value picked up on the shore at low tide. In it Kongre and his men had spent many a long month, living, at first, upon the provisions in their possession

when they landed, afterwards on what had been forthcoming from many wrecks, several of which they had brought about.

From these provisions Vasquez took only what was absolutely necessary, so that Kongre and the others might not detect the loss: a small box of sea-biscuit, a barrel of corned beef, a little stove which enabled him to make a fire, a kettle, a cup, a woollen blanket, a change of shirts and stockings, oilskins, a couple of revolvers and a small supply of cartridges, a tinder box, lantern, and some tinder. He also helped himself to a couple of pounds of tobacco. He knew that the repairs to the schooner would take several weeks, and he would be able to renew his supplies during that time.

Finding that the narrow cave he occupied was too near to the pirates' cave, he had looked about for another shelter a little further off and more secure.

He had found one five hundred yards away, on the far side of the shore beyond Cape San Juan, just by the edge of the strait. Between two lofty rocks buttressing the cliff a little cave was hollowed out, with a masked opening. To get into it he had to crawl through the intermediate crevice, which was hardly distinguishable among the pile of rocks. At high tide the sea came up almost to their foot, but

it never rose high enough to flood the little cave, the fine sand in which was unmixed with shells and showed no trace of damp.

One might have passed in front of this cave a hundred times without suspecting its existence, and it was quite by chance that Vasquez had discovered it a few days before.

It was thither he had moved the various things he had taken from the pirates' cave.

Seldom did Kongre or any of his men come to this part of the shore. The only time they had done so, after a second visit to their cave, Vasquez had seen them when they stopped at the end of Cape San Juan. Crouched down in the bottom of his crevice he remained hidden.

He never ventured outside without the most minute precautions, by choice in the evening, especially when going to the cave. Before turning the corner of the cliff at the entrance to the bay he made sure that neither the dinghy nor the boat was moored along the shore.

How long the time seemed to him in his solitude, and how bitter were the reflections that haunted his memory! He saw again and again the scene of carnage which he had escaped, and Felipe and Moriz falling under the murderers' blows. His heart was

gripped by an irresistible longing to meet the captain of the band face to face, and with his own hands to wreak vengeance for the death of his unfortunate comrades.

"No, no," he said to himself over and over again; "they will be punished sooner or later! God will not allow them to escape their punishment! They will pay for their crimes with their lives!"

He forgot on how slight a thread his own life hung while the schooner lay in Elgor Bay.

"I hope the rascals will not go away! Oh I hope they will still be there when the *Santa-Fé* comes back! May heaven prevent them from going away!" he prayed.

Would his desire be fulfilled? There were more than three weeks yet before the despatch-boat could be sighted off the island.

On the other hand, the length of the schooner's stay here did not fail to astonish Vasquez. Were the injuries so serious that a month had not been long enough for them to be repaired? The lighthouse log must have informed Kongre of the date when the relief would arrive. He could not fail to understand that he must put to sea before the early days of March.

It was now the 16th of February. Vasquez, con-

sumed by impatience and anxiety, was at a loss to know what to make of it all. So when the sun had set he went to the entrance of the bay and walked along the north bank towards the lighthouse.

Although the darkness was already intense, he was in great danger of being met, if any of the gang came along this side. So he crept along the cliff with caution, peering through the gloom and pausing to listen for any suspicious sound.

He had about three miles to go to reach the heart of the bay. It was in the opposite direction to that he had taken when escaping after the murder of his comrades. As on that evening, he was not seen now.

About nine o'clock he stopped a couple of hundred yards away from the lighthouse enclosure, and from there saw several lights shining through the windows of the annex. An involuntary threatening gesture escaped him, at the thought of these scoundrels being in those quarters instead of the murdered men and himself who had so narrowly escaped.

From the spot where he was Vasquez could not see the schooner, which was wrapped in darkness. He had to come a hundred yards closer. The whole gang were shut within the quarters. It was not likely that anybody would come out.

Vasquez drew nearer still. He crept right down to the beach of the little creek. The schooner had been hauled off the sandbank at high tide the day before. Now she was afloat, made fast by her anchor.

Ah, how gladly he would have stove in her hull and sunk her to the bottom of the creek!

Her damage had been repaired. But Vasquez noticed that although afloat, she was at least two feet above her water line. That showed that she had not yet her ballast or cargo in her. It was possible therefore that her departure might still be delayed for a few days. But that would certainly be the last delay, and in another forty-eight hours perhaps the *Maule* would weigh anchor, round Cape San Juan, and disappear below the horizon for ever.

Vasquez had now only a small supply of provisions left. So, next morning he went to the cave to lay in a fresh supply.

It was barely daylight: but, telling himself that the boat would come again that morning to take away all that was to be put aboard the schooner, he hurried on, taking the greatest possible care not to be seen.

As he came round the cliff he saw nothing of the boat, and the shore was quite deserted.

So Vasquez went into the cave.

He found a great many things there still, things of no value with which Kongre no doubt did not want to cumber the hold of the *Maule*. But when he looked about for biscuits and meat, Vasquez's disappointment was great.

All the eatables had been removed, and in another forty-eight hours he would have no provisions at all!

He had no time to indulge in bitter meditation. At this moment the sound of oars became audible. The boat was coming, with Carcante and two of the other men on board.

Vasquez hurried to the mouth of the cave and stretching his head outside took a good look.

The boat was grounding even then. He only just had time to rush back inside the cave and hide himself in the darkest corner, behind a heap of sails and spars which had been put aside as bulking too largely for the space available.

Vasquez was fully determined to sell his life dearly if he were discovered. He would use the revolver which he always carried in his belt. But he was one against three!

Two men only came through the entrance, Carcante and the carpenter Vargas.

Carcante held a lighted lantern, and, with Vargas behind him, picked out various things to complete the lading of the schooner. As they looked about they talked. The carpenter said:

"Here we are at the 17th of February. It is time we slipped our cables."

"Well, we're going to," Carcante answered.

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow, I think, since we're all clear."

"It will still depend upon the weather," Vargas remarked.

"Of course, and it looks a bit threatening this morning. But that will clear off."

"If we were kept here for another week or ten days——"

"Ah!" said Carcante, "that would mean a pretty considerable risk of running into their relief."

"Not that! Not that!" Vargas exclaimed. "We're not strong enough to carry off a man of war."

"No, she would carry us off—at her yardarms most likely," Carcante replied, with an appalling oath.

"H'm!" the other grunted. "I'd give a good deal to be a hundred miles out at sea."

"To-morrow, I tell you, to-morrow!" Carcante

insisted. "Unless it blows enough to take the horns off a cow!"

Vasquez listened to what they said, immovable, scarcely breathing. Carcante and Vargas moved to and fro, lantern in hand. They moved things about, picking out some and laying others aside. Sometimes they came so close to the corner where Vasquez was crouching that he would only have had to stretch out his hand to put his pistol to the heart of one or other of them.

The visit lasted half an hour, and then Carcante called the man who had stayed by the boat. He hurried up and lent a hand to carry down the packages.

Carcante cast a final glance around the cave.

"It's a pity to leave them!" said Vargas.

"We must," said Carcante. "Ah, if only the schooner were three hundred tons! But we are taking all that is worth most, and I've got an idea that we shall still have pretty good hunting."

Then they went out, and soon the boat, with the wind behind her, disappeared beyond a point of the bay.

Vasquez came out in his turn, and got back to his retreat.

In forty-eight hours he would have nothing left

to eat, and when they went Kongre and his men would certainly take away all the stores from the lighthouse!

How would Vasquez manage to live until the return of the despatch-boat, which, even supposing it were not delayed, would not arrive before the end of a fortnight?

The situation was as serious as it well could be. Neither Vasquez's courage nor his energy could do anything to improve it, unless he could support himself on roots dug up in the wood or fish caught in the bay. But he could not hope to do that until the *Maule* had left the bay finally. If anything compelled her to remain a few days longer at her present moorings, Vasquez must die of starvation in his cave on Cape San Juan.

As the day wore on the sky became more threatening still. Masses of dense and livid cloud gathered in the east. The wind increased in force as it veered to the sea. The flaws that fleeted rapidly over the surface of the sea changed into long waves crested with foam, which soon were breaking with a roar upon the rocks of the cape.

If this weather lasted, the schooner certainly would not be able to leave with the tide next morning.

When evening came there was no change in the weather conditions. On the contrary, they got worse. This was no thunderstorm likely to be over in a few hours. A gale was getting up. It could be seen in the colour of the sky and sea, in the tattered clouds which fled with ever increasing speed, in the tumult of the waves crossed by the tide, in their roaring as they broke upon the reefs. A sailor like Vasquez could not be mistaken about it. In the lighthouse quarters the barometer must certainly have dropped below the storm point.

But despite the raging wind, Vasquez had not stayed within his cave. He was pacing the beach, his eyes fixed upon the gradually darkening horizon. the last rays of the sun, sinking to its bed, had not faded before Vasquez caught sight of a black mass moving out at sea.

"A ship!" he cried. "A ship, and seemingly making for the island!"

It was a ship, coming from the eastward, either to get into the strait, or to pass to the southward.

The storm now raged with tremendous violence. It was no longer a mere gale. It was one of those irresistible hurricanes which destroy the most powerful ships. When they have not room to run, that is,

when they have land to windward, it is seldom that they escape shipwreck.

"And the lighthouse that those brutes keep darkened!" Vasquez exclaimed. "That ship is looking out for it, and won't see it! She won't know that there is land only a few miles ahead of her. The wind is bringing her right onto it, and she will be smashed upon the reefs!"

Yes, a disaster was imminent, and it would be due to Kongre and his men. From the top of the lighthouse they must certainly have seen the ship, which was not able to lie to, but had to run before the wind over a raging sea. It was only too certain that, being unable to guide her course by the light for which the captain was vainly looking in the west, she would fail to get round Cape San Juan, to run into the strait, or to get round Point Several to pass to the south of the island. In less than half an hour she would be hurled on the reefs at the mouth of Elgor Bay without even having had a suspicion that land was ahead of her, since she could not have sighted it in the evening.

The storm was now at its height. The night threatened to be an awful one, and after the night, the next day too, for it did not seem possible that

the hurricane could blow itself out in twenty-four hours.

It did not occur to Vasquez to go back to the shelter of his cave, and his eyes never left the sea. Although he could not distinguish the ship now in the midst of this profound darkness, he caught sight of her lights every now and then as she yawed under the shock of the waves to one tack and another. In her present trim it was impossible that she should answer freely to her helm. Probably she was past steering. She might even be disabled, part of her rigging gone. Anyhow, it was practically certain that she was under bare poles. In a war of the elements like this a ship could hardly have kept her storm-jib.

Since Vasquez only saw green and red lights, the ship must be a sailing ship; a steamer would have shown a white light at her fore-stay. She had no engines to help her in her fight against the wind.

Vasquez tramped to and fro upon the beach, in despair at his powerlessness to prevent this shipwreck. What was wanted was that the lighthouse light should pierce the darkness. And Vasquez turned back towards Elgor Bay. He shook a useless fist in the direction of the lighthouse. The lamps would not be lighted to-night any more than they

had been lighted on previous nights for the last two months, and this ship was doomed to perish with all hands upon the rocks of Cape San Juan!

Then an idea came to Vasquez. Perhaps this sailing ship might still avoid the land if she knew it was there. Even supposing it was not possible for her to lie to, she might perhaps alter her course a little and manage to avoid running onto this coast, which is little more than eight miles long from Cape San Juan to Point Several. Beyond that she would have open sea in front of her.

Upon the beach there was wood, bits of wreckage and fragments of skeleton hulls. Could he not take some of these pieces to the point, build up a beacon, shove handfuls of seaweed into it, set light to it, and trust to the wind to blow it into a flame? And would not the flames be seen by the ship? Even if she were only half a mile from the coast, she would still perhaps have time to avoid it.

Vasquez set to work at once. He collected several pieces of wood and carried them to the far end of the cape. There was plenty of dry seaweed, for although it was blowing so hard no rain had fallen yet. Then when the fire was ready he tried to light it.

Too late! A huge mass appeared in the midst of

the darkness. Lifted up by the gigantic waves, it was hurled down with appalling force. Before Vasquez could stir a finger, it fell like a tremendous waterspout upon the barrier of reefs.

There was an appalling crash, and a few cries of distress, speedily stifled. Then nothing was to be heard but the whistling of the wind and the roaring of the sea as it crashed upon the shore.

CHAPTER X

AFTER THE WRECK

WHEN the sun rose next day the storm was still raging with undiminished fury.

The sea was one vast white sheet, right to the edge of the horizon. At the point of the cape foaming waves rose to a height of fifteen and twenty feet, and their scattered spindrift flew in the wind far over the cliffs. The outgoing tide came into terrific collision with the squalls as they met at the mouth of Elgor Bay. No ship could possibly have come in, and no ship could possibly leave the bay. The still threatening look of the sky indicated that in all likelihood the storm would last for several days yet.

It was evident, therefore, that the schooner would not leave her moorings that morning.

Such, then, was the situation of which Vasquez took stock when he rose at break of day and faced the whirling sandstorm.

And this is what he saw:

Two hundred yards away to the northward of the cape, and consequently outside the bay, the wrecked vessel was lying. She was a three-master of about five hundred tons burthen. Of her masts nothing was left but three stumps broken off nearly level with the deck, having either been cut away by the captain's orders or fallen at the moment she struck. No wreckage could be seen floating on the surface of the water, but it was possible that the strong wind had driven the débris into Elgor Bay.

If that were so, Kongre knew by this time that a ship had just been lost on the reefs of Cape San Juan.

So Vasquez had to be careful, and he did not go forward until he had satisfied himself that no members of the gang were at the mouth of the bay as yet.

In a few minutes he reached the scene of the disaster. As the tide was out he was able to walk all round the stranded vessel, and on her stern plate he read, *"Century, Mobile."*

So she was an American sailing ship, belonging to the capital of the State of Alabama, in the south of the Union, on the Gulf of Mexico.

The *Century* had gone down with all hands. No survivor of the wreck was to be seen, and of the ship nothing was left but a shapeless carcase. The shock

had broken her hull in half. The surf had swept away her cargo. Fragments of planking, ribs, spars and yards were scattered on the reefs, which were uncovered now despite the violence of the squalls. Chests and bales and barrels were strewn along the cape and on the beach.

As the *Century's* hulk was high and dry, Vasquez was able to get inside.

The havoc there was complete. The waves had demolished everything. He went right down to the bottom of the hold, but found no dead bodies. The unfortunate men had either been swept away by a wave or else drowned when the ship broke on the rocks.

Vasquez returned to the beach, and satisfied himself once more that neither Kongre nor any of his men were coming towards the scene of the wreck. Then, in spite of the terrific wind, he went to the far point of Cape San Juan.

"Perhaps I may find one of the *Century's* men alive still," he thought, "and may be able to save him."

He looked in vain. Going down to the shore again, he began to examine the wreckage of all kinds that had been cast up by the waves.

"It's not impossible," he thought, "that I might

find some case of stores which would keep me alive for two or three weeks."

And in a very short time he did pick out a barrel and a case which the tide had thrown between the reefs. What they contained was written on the outside. The case held a supply of biscuit, the barrel one of corned beef. It was a sufficiency of bread and meat for at least two months.

Vasquez carried the case first up to his cave, which was not more than a couple of hundred yards away, and then he rolled the barrel there.

He next returned to the end of the cape to have a look over the bay. He assumed that Kongre knew of the wreck. While it was still light on the previous day he could have seen from the summit of the lighthouse the ship running towards the land. And now, since the *Maule* was held up in the creek, the pirates would certainly hurry to the mouth of Elgor Bay to take their share of the wreck. If there were any fragments to be gathered up, it might be valuables, were these thieves likely to let so good an opportunity slip?

As he came to the bend of the cliff Vasquez was amazed at the force of the wind rushing into the bay.

It would have been quite impossible for the

schooner to make way against it, and even if she had succeeded in getting off Cape San Juan she would never have gained the open sea.

At that moment, in a brief lull, cries were audible: a piteous appeal uttered by a faint voice.

Vasquez hurried towards the voice which came from the direction of the first little cave where he had found shelter, near the pirates' cave.

He had not gone more than fifty yards before he saw a man lying stretched at the foot of a rock. His hand was moving, as if asking for help.

In a second Vasquez was by his side.

The man was about thirty to thirty-five, and of sturdy build. He wore sailor's clothes, and lay on his right side, his eyes closed, drawing sobbing breaths and shaking convulsively. He did not appear to be wounded, for there was no blood upon his clothes.

This man, possibly the sole survivor of the *Century,* had not heard Vasquez approaching. But when the latter laid his hand upon his breast he made a vain effort to raise himself, and then, being too weak, sank back upon the sand. But his eyes opened for an instant, and the words "Help! help!" escaped his lips.

Vasquez kneeling by his side, propped him carefully against the rock, and spoke gently to him.

"Poor chap! Poor old chap! I'm here. Look at me. I'll save you."

All the poor fellow could do was stretch out his hand before he lost consciousness.

His utter weakness rendered immediate attention imperative.

"God grant there's still time!" Vasquez muttered.

The first thing to do was to get away from the spot. Any minute the pirates might arrive in the boat or the dinghy, or even on foot along the shore. What Vasquez had to do was to carry this man to the little cave, where he would be safe, and that is what he did.

After a journey of a couple of hundred yards or so, which took him a quarter of an hour, he crept into the crevice between the rocks, bearing the inert sailor on his back, and laid him down on a blanket with his head on a bundle of clothes.

The man had not recovered consciousness, but he was breathing. Although he had no wounds that could be seen, it was possible that he had broken his arms or his legs as he was rolled over the reefs. That was what Vasquez feared, for he would not have known what to do in such a case. He felt the

sailor all over, and moved his limbs, and thought that the body was unbroken.

Vasquez poured a little water in a cup, mixed a few drops of brandy that still remained in his flask with it, and managed to get a sip of it between the sailor's lips. Then he rubbed his arms and chest, having first taken off his wet clothes and put on some of the things he had found in the pirates' cave.

It was out of his power to do anything more.

At length he had the satisfaction of seeing that the patient was coming to himself. He even managed to raise himself, and, looking at Vasquez, who was supporting him in his arms, he said in a stronger voice:

"Drink: give me something to drink!"

Vasquez gave him the cup of brandy and water.

"Better?" he asked.

"Yes, yes," the shipwrecked sailor answered.

And then as if trying to piece together things still vague in his mind, he clasped his rescuer's hand feebly and asked:

"This place? You? Where am I?"

He spoke in English, and Vasquez, who could speak that language, replied:

"You are in a safe place. I found you on the beach, after the wreck of the *Century*."

"The *Century!* Yes; I remember."

"What is your name?"

"Davis; John Davis."

"Captain of the ship?"

"No; first mate. And the others?"

"All lost," Vasquez answered; "all of them! You are the only one who has escaped from the wreck."

"All of them?"

"All."

John Davis seemed to be stunned by the news. He was the sole survivor! And how had it come about that he had survived? He understood now that he owed his life to this stranger who was leaning over him so anxiously.

"Thanks, thanks!" he said, and a big tear trickled from his eyes.

"Are you hungry? Would you like something to eat: a little biscuit and meat?" Vasquez went on.

"No, no: something more to drink."

The cold water diluted with brandy did John Davis a great deal of good, for he was soon able to answer questions.

This, briefly, was his story.

The *Century,* a sailing ship of five hundred and fifty tons, from the port of Mobile, had left the American coast three weeks before. Her crew con-

sisted of Captain Henry Steward, John Davis the first mate, and twelve men, including a cook and a boy. She was carrying nickel and cheap goods to Melbourne, Australia. Her voyage was prosperous until she reached the fifty-fifth degree of southern latitude in the Atlantic. Then the violent storm which had been raging here since the day before overtook her. At the very outset the *Century* was caught by the squall and lost her mizzen-mast and all her after canvas. Shortly afterwards an enormous wave broke right over her port side, swept the deck, demolished part of the poop, and carried away two of the sailors.

Captain Steward's idea had been to look for some shelter behind Staten Island, in Lemaire Strait. He felt certain of his position in latitude, as he had taken his observations during the day. And he rightly thought this the better course for rounding Cape Horn and then going up towards the Australian coast.

At night the violence of the gale increased. All sails were taken in except the foresail and the foretopsail, single-reefed, and the ship ran before the wind.

At this moment the captain supposed himself to be still more than twenty miles from land. He saw

no danger in bearing on until he should pick up the lighthouse light. If he then left it well away to the south he would not run any risk of getting onto the reefs at Cape San Juan and would make the strait easily.

So the *Century* continued to run before the wind, Harry Steward never doubting that he would see the light in less than an hour, since it had a range of ten miles.

But he did not see the light. Then, while he still thought that he was a good distance from the island, there was an appalling shock. Three sailors, busy aloft, disappeared with the foremast and the mainmast. At the same moment the waves broke over the hull, which split, and the captain, first mate, and survivors of the crew were all flung overboard into the midst of a surf from which nobody could hope to escape.

So the *Century* had perished with all hands, save only the first mate, John Davis, who had escaped death, thanks to Vasquez.

And now Davis could not understand on what coast the three-master had been lost.

He asked Vasquez again:

"Where are we?"

"On Staten Island."

"Staten Island?" John Davis echoed, dumbfounded at the reply.

"Yes, Staten Island," Vasquez repeated: "at the mouth of Elgor Bay."

"But the lighthouse?"

"It wasn't lighted!"

John Davis, whose face evinced the most profound astonishment, was waiting for Vasquez to explain, when Vasquez rose suddenly and listened intently. He thought he had heard suspicious sounds, and wanted to satisfy himself that the pirates were not prowling anywhere near.

He crawled through the crevice between the rocks and cast his eye over the shore as far as the end of Cape San Juan.

Not a soul was visible. The hurricane blew as wildly as ever. The waves still broke with astounding fury, and clouds even more threatening than before drove towards the horizon, foul with mist and fog.

The noise that Vasquez had heard proceeded from the breaking up of the *Century*. The wind had forced the stern portion of her hull right round, and the gusts, rushing into the inside, were driving it further forward onto the beach. It was rolling like an enormous cask that had been stove in, and

finished up by crashing into the corner of the cliff. Only the bow half of the three-master was left at the spot where she had run aground, which was strewn with wreckage.

So Vasquez went back and stretched himself out on the sand by John Davis's side. The *Century's* first mate was recovering some of his strength. He would have got up and gone down to the beach, leaning on his companion's arm. But Vasquez restrained him, and it was then John Davis asked him why the lighthouse lamps had not been lighted that night.

Vasquez told him of the terrible events that had taken place at Elgor Bay seven weeks before, and spoke in moving tones of the murder of his comrades.

"Poor fellows!" John Davis exclaimed.

"Yes! My poor comrades!" Vasquez answered, all his grief revived by the painful recollection.

"And what about you?" John Davis asked.

"I was up in the gallery. I heard my mates cry out, and realised what had happened. The schooner was a pirate ship. We were the three lighthousemen. They had killed two, and did not bother about the third.

"How did you manage to escape them?" John Davis asked next.

"I ran down the lighthouse staircase," Vasquez replied, "rushed into our quarters, snatched a few things and a little food, ran away before the crew of the schooner had come ashore, and came and hid on this part of the coast."

"The villains! The villains!" John Davis exclaimed. "So they are masters of the lighthouse, and don't light it up now. It was they who caused the wreck of the *Century,* and the death of my captain and of all our men!"

"Yes, they are masters of it," Vasquez said; "I overheard a conversation their captain had with one of his men, and I learned their plans."

John Davis then heard how these robbers had been settled on Staten Island for several years and had lured ships there and murdered all the survivors of the wrecks, and how all the proceeds which had any value had been stored in a cave against the time when Kongre should manage to get hold of a ship. Then followed the building of the lighthouse, with the result that the pirates had been compelled to foresake Elgor Bay and find refuge at Cape Saint Bartholomew, where nobody had any idea of their presence.

When the lighthouse was finished they came back, some seven weeks ago now, but they were then in

possession of a schooner which had run ashore at Cape Saint Bartholomew, and the crew of which had perished.

"But how is it that the schooner had not left yet with their cargo?" John Davis asked.

"She has been detained until now to undergo important repairs. But I have found out for myself, Davis, that the repairs are finished, and the cargo got aboard, and she ought to have sailed this very morning."

"Where for?"

"For the Pacific islands, where these murdering thieves think they will be safe and will carry on their pirate trade."

"But the schooner can't put to sea while this storm lasts."

"Of course not," Vasquez replied, "and from the look of the weather it is possible that she may be delayed for quite a week longer."

"And as long as they are there, Vasquez, the light won't be lighted?"

"No, Davis."

"And other ships will be in danger of being lost as the *Century* was?"

"That's only too true."

"Wouldn't it be possible to warn sailors of the coast when they come near it by night?"

"Yes, perhaps, by lighting fires on the beach, at the end of Cape San Juan. That indeed is what I tried to do to warn the *Century*. I wanted to light a fire with pieces of wreckage and dry seaweed. But the wind was blowing so hard that I couldn't do it."

"Well, Vasquez, you and I together will do what you were not able to do," John Davis said firmly. "There won't be any lack of wood. The broken bits of my poor ship and of many others will furnish plenty. For if the schooner is delayed and the Staten Island light is not picked up by ships standing in from sea, who can say if there won't be more wrecks?"

"Anyhow," Vasquez remarked, "Kongre and his gang can't prolong their stay on the island, and I'm perfectly certain the schooner will sail the very minute the weather allows her to put to sea."

"Why?" John Davis asked.

"Because they know the lighthouse keepers are to be relieved quite soon."

"Relieved?"

"Yes; at the beginning of March, and it is the 16th of February now."

"A ship is to come then?"

"Yes, the despatch-boat, *Santa-Fé,* is due from Buenos-Ayres about the 10th of March, and perhaps sooner."

The thought that had come into the mind of Vasquez came into Davis's mind too.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "that alters everything! Then I hope to heaven the bad weather may last till then, and may heaven grant that these scoundrels are still here when the *Santa-Fé* drops her anchor in Elgor Bay!"

CHAPTER XI

THE WRECKERS

THEY were there—a dozen of them, with Kongre and Carcante—all drawn by their instinct for plunder.

The day before, just as the sun was sinking below the horizon, Carcante, from the gallery of the lighthouse, had seen the three-master coming from the eastward. Kongre, whom he called, thought that the ship, which was running before the storm, was trying to get to Lemaire Strait and so to shelter behind the western coast of the island. As long as light allowed he watched her movements, and when night fell he made out her lights.

He speedily discovered that the ship was partly disabled, and he hoped that she would run aground on the land which she did not perceive. If Kongre had lighted the lighthouse lamps, all danger would have been removed. But he was particularly careful not to do so, and when the *Century's* lights were extinguished he took it for granted that the ship had

been lost with all hands somewhere between Cape San Juan and Point Several.

Next day the hurricane still raged furiously. It was hopeless to think of taking the schooner out to sea. A delay was imperative, a delay possibly of several days, which was a serious matter in face of the constant menace of the arrival of the lighthouse relief. Kongre and his men were vexed and disappointed, but they had to wait. But, after all, it was still only the 19th of February. The storm would surely have blown itself out before the end of the month. At the very first break in it the *Carcante* would weigh anchor and put to sea again.

Meanwhile, since a ship had just run aground, was this not an opportunity to derive some benefit from the wreck, to select from the wreckage anything that seemed worth having, and so increase the value of the schooner's cargo?

The boat was got ready at once and a dozen of the men, with their captain, boarded it. They had to row hard against the raging wind which was blowing the tide back into the bay. It took them a good hour and a half to get to the farthest point of the cliff; but they could get back quickly with the help of the sail.

The boat put in on the north side of the bay,

opposite the cave. All the men jumped ashore and hurried to the scene of the wreck.

It was then that their shouts interrupted the conversation between John Davis and Vasquez.

Vasquez immediately crawled to the mouth of his cave, taking care not to be seen.

A moment later John Davis had crept to his side.

"You?" Vasquez exclaimed. "Leave me by myself. You need rest."

"No," John Davis replied. "I am all right now. And I want to have a look at this gang of pirates."

He was a bold, energetic fellow, the first mate of the *Century,* every bit as resolute as Vasquez, one of America's iron-tempered sons.

Moreover, he was a fine sailor. He had served as first mate in the United States navy before entering the mercantile marine, and on the return of the *Century* to Mobile, when Harry Steward was to have retired, the owners had decided to give him the command of the ship.

He had here another motive for anger and hatred. Of the ship of which he was soon to have been captain he now saw nothing but a shapeless hulk delivered over to the tender mercies of a gang of wreckers.

If Vasquez needed his pluck to be revived, here certainly was the man to do it!

But resolute and brave as they both were, what could they have done against Kongre and his men?

Hiding behind the rocks, Vasquez and John Davis cautiously watched the shore as far as the end of Cape San Juan.

Kongre, Carcante, and the others stopped first at the corner where the hurricane had driven half of the hull of the *Century*, a broken mass piled up at the foot of the cliff.

The pirates were less than two hundred yards from the little cave, and their features could easily be distinguished. They wore oilskins, tightly belted in so as to offer no resistance to the wind, and sou'-westers firmly fastened under the chin. It was easy to see that they were hard put to it to stand up against the driving squalls. Sometimes they had to prop themselves up against a piece of wreckage or a rock, to save being blown right over.

Vasquez pointed out to John Davis those of them whom he knew from having seen them on their first visit to their cave.

"The big man," he said, "standing near the stem-post of the *Century* is the one they call Kongre."

"Their captain?"

"Yes."

"Who is the man he is talking to?"

"That's Carcante, his lieutenant, and, as I saw distinctly from the top of the lighthouse, one of the men who killed my mates."

"And you would be glad to smash his head in for him?" John Davis suggested.

"His, and his captain's too, as if they were mad dogs!" Vasquez replied.

The best part of an hour went by before the robbers had finished their inspection of this part of the hull. They searched every nook and corner of it. The nickel, which formed the bulk of the *Century's* cargo, was of no use to them, and they decided to leave it on the beach. But it was possible that among the general cheap wares shipped on the three-master there were things which would be useful. As a matter of fact, they were seen to carry off two or three cases and as many bales, which Kongre made them put into the boat.

"If the rascals are looking for gold or silver or costly trinkets or piastres, they won't find any," John Davis remarked.

"That's what they prefer, of course," Vasquez replied. "There were some in their cave, and the ships that have been lost on this shore must have had

a lot of stuff aboard them. So the schooner must have a valuable cargo now, Davis."

"I understand their anxiety to get away to a safe place," Davis answered. "But perhaps they won't have the chance!"

"In that case the bad weather would have to last for another fortnight," Vasquez demurred.

"Or we should have to find a way——"

John Davis did not complete his sentence. And indeed, how would it be possible to prevent the schooner from putting out to sea as soon as the storm had exhausted itself, and the weather became tractable and the sea calm?

The pirates now left this half of the ship and moved towards the other, on the spot where she had run aground, at the far end of the cape.

Vasquez and John Davis could still see them, but at a little greater distance.

The tide was going out, and, although it was driven back by the wind, the surface of the rocks was largely exposed. Thus it was easy to get to the hulk of the three-master.

Kongre and two or three more got into it. The ship's store-room, John Davis told Vasquez, was in the stern under the poop.

Very probably the store-room had been ransacked

by heavy seas. But it was possible that some portion of the stores was still intact.

In point of fact, several of the men brought out cases of preserved food, and several barrels and kegs which they rolled along the sand towards the boat. Some bales of clothing were also taken out of the wreckage of the poop and carried thither.

The search lasted for about two hours; then Carcante and two of the men appeared, armed with axes, and began to attack the taffrail which, owing to the angle at which the ship was heeled over, was only two or three feet above the ground.

"What are they up to now?" Vasquez asked. "Isn't the ship broken up enough as it is? Why the deuce do they want to finish her off?"

"What they want, I reckon," John Davis answered, "is that no trace should be left of her name or nationality. It's in order that it may never be known that the *Century* was lost in this part of the Atlantic."

John Davis was right. A few minutes later Kongre came out of the poop with the American flag which he had found in the captain's cabin. He tore the bunting into a thousand ribbons.

"Ah! The scoundrel!" cried John Davis. "That flag! The flag of my country!"

Vasquez only clutched him by the arm just in time to prevent him rushing down to the beach.

When the work of pillage was finished, and the boat was well laden, Kongre and Carcante walked up to the foot of the cliff. As they paced to and fro they passed two or three times in front of the crevice between the rocks at the end of which lay the little cave. Vasquez and John Davis were able then to hear what they were saying.

"It will be impossible to get away to-morrow either."

"Yes. I'm rather afraid that this bad weather may even last for several days more."

"Well, we shan't have been losers by the delay!"

"No doubt, but I hoped we should have found something more worth having in an American of that tonnage. The last one we drew onto the reefs was worth fifty thousand dollars to us."

"One wreck follows another, but no two are alike," Carcante replied philosophically. "We've had beggars to deal with, that's all."

In his exasperation John Davis drew his revolver, and in his wrath would have blown out the brains of the captain of the band if Vasquez had not restrained him once more.

"Yes, you're right," John Davis admitted. "But

I can't contain myself at the idea of these scoundrels getting off scot free. And if their schooner does succeed in leaving the island where shall we find them again, where shall we go to look for them?"

"There's no sign of the storm blowing over," Vasquez observed. "Even if the wind shifts back, the sea will be heavy for several days yet. They're not out of the bay yet, take my word for it."

"That's so Vasquez, but didn't you tell me that the despatch-boat wasn't due here before the beginning of next month?"

"She may come sooner, Davis: who knows?"

"God grant it, Vasquez, God grant she may!"

It was abundantly clear that the storm was abating none of its fury as yet, and in this latitude even in the summer season atmospheric disturbances of this kind sometimes last for a fortnight. If the wind veered to the south it would bring up the fogs from the Antarctic ocean, where the winter would soon be setting in. The whalers must already be thinking of leaving polar waters, for in March the new ice is forming in front of the ice-floes.

Yet there was always the chance that in four or five days' time might come a lull of which the schooner would take advantage to put to sea.

It was four o'clock when Kongre and his men got

into the boat again. The sail was hoisted, and in a few minutes the boat had disappeared along the north shore of the bay.

In the evening the squalls became more violent than ever. A cold driving rain fell in torrents from clouds coming up from the south-east.

Vasquez and John Davis were unable to leave their cave. The cold was bitter, and they were obliged to light a fire to keep themselves warm. A little fire was lighted at the end of the narrow passage, and, as the shore was deserted and the darkness profound, they had nothing to fear.

That was a dreadful night. The sea lashed the foot of the cliff. It seemed as if a tidal wave were rushing on the east coast of the island. An appalling sea was running right to the inner heart of the bay, and Kongre would have all his work cut out to keep the *Carcante* at her moorings.

"I hope she'll be broken to bits," John Davis kept on saying, "and her pieces drift out to sea with the next tide!"

As for the hull of the *Century*, nothing would be left of that next day but the pieces wedged among the rocks or spars upon the beach.

Had the tempest reached its maximum force?

That was what Vasquez and his comrade hurried to observe at earliest dawn.

Far from it! The fury of the elements was greater than ever. The waters of heaven were blent with the waters of the ocean. And it remained the same all that day and the following night. During those forty-eight hours no ship was sighted off the island, and it was easy to understand that ships would try at all hazards to keep away from these dangerous shores near the Strait of Magellan, on which the storm was breaking directly. It was not in the Strait of Magellan nor yet in Lemaire Strait that they would have found shelter from such a hurricane as this. Safety for them lay in flight, and they needed a free expanse of ocean in front of their bows.

As John Davis and Vasquez had anticipated, the hull of the *Century* was utterly demolished, and the whole beach right up to the foot of the cliff was covered with countless fragments.

Fortunately Vasquez and his comrade had no occasion to worry about the question of food. With the help of the stores derived from the *Century* they could have supported themselves for a month and more. In the meantime, perhaps in the next ten or twelve days, the *Santa-Fé* would have reached the island. The dirty weather would be over by that

time, and the despatch-boat would not be afraid to approach Cape San Juan.

It was of the despatch-boat, which they were waiting and watching for so anxiously, that the two men talked most often.

"What we want is that the storm should last long enough to prevent the schooner from getting away, and end so as to let the *Santa-Fé* get in," Vasquez exclaimed ingenuously.

"Ah!" John Davis replied. "If we could control the winds and the waves, the thing would be done."

"Unfortunately, it's only God who can do that."

"He won't allow these villains to escape the punishment for their crimes," John Davis declared, adopting the same words as those used by Vasquez a little time before.

They concurred in that thought because both had the same object for their hatred, and the same thirst for revenge.

On the 21st and 22nd there was no appreciable change in the situation. The wind evinced a slight tendency perhaps to shift to the north-east. But after an hour's uncertainty it shifted back again, and brought all the terrible squalls charging onto the island once more.

Kongre and his men had not reappeared. They

were no doubt busy protecting the schooner from harm in the creek which the tides, swollen by the hurricane, must have filled to overflowing.

In the forenoon of the 23rd the weather conditions showed a slight improvement. After some indecision the wind seemed to be settled in the north-north-east. Rifts appeared in the clouds over the southern horizon, few and far between at first, but gradually larger. The rain stopped, and although the wind still blew with violence the sky grew clearer by degrees. The sea indeed remained wild, and the waves broke madly upon the shore. So the mouth of the bay was still not practicable, and it was quite certain that the schooner would not be able to put to sea either to-day or to-morrow.

Would Kongre and Carcante take advantage of this slight lull to come to Cape San Juan in order to have a look at the state of the sea? It was possible, even probable, and precautionary measures were not forgotten.

In the very early morning, however, they need not be expected. So John Davis and Vasquez ventured out of their cave, which they had not left for the last forty-eight hours.

"Will the wind hold over there?" Vasquez enquired.

"I'm afraid so," John Davis answered, and his sailor instinct seldom played him false. "What we wanted was ten days more bad weather—ten days! —and we're not going to have them."

He stood with folded arms looking at the sky and the sea.

But Vasquez had moved a few paces away, and Davis followed him along the cliff.

Suddenly he struck his foot against something half buried in the sand near a rock, something which gave a metallic ring when it was struck. He stopped and saw the case which contained the ship's store of gunpowder for the muskets and also for the two four-pounder carronades which the *Century* used in signalling.

"We've got no use for it," he said. "Ah, if it were only possible to set light to it in the hold of the schooner with those pirates in her!"

"It's no good thinking of that," Vasquez answered with a shake of his head. "But never mind: I'll pick up the case as we come back and put it under cover in our cave."

The continued their way along the beach, making towards the cape, the far end of which, however, they could not hope to reach, so furiously were the waves still breaking there at this time of high tide,

when Vasquez caught sight in a crevice of rock of one of the little pieces of ordnance which had tumbled there, with its gun carriage, after the *Century* had struck.

"This is your property," he said to John Davis, "and so are the few cannon balls the sea has rolled there."

And as before, John Davis said again:

"We've got no use for it."

"Who knows?" Vasquez retorted. "Since we've got something to load this carronade with, the opportunity to use it may come along."

"I doubt it," his companion answered.

"But why shouldn't it, Davis? Since the lighthouse is not lighted up, couldn't we signal with guns if a ship came along at night under the same conditions as the *Century* did?"

John Davis looked at his companion with an odd intentness. An entirely different thought seemed to be passing through his mind. All he said in answer was:

"Is that your notion, Vasquez?"

"Yes, Davis, and I don't think it is a bad one. Of course the reports would be heard in the bay. They would betray our presence at this part of the island. The pirates would begin to hunt for us.

Perhaps they would find us, and that would be the end of us! But think of the number of lives we might have saved at the cost of our own, and besides, we should have done our duty!"

"Perhaps there is another way of doing our duty," John Davis said softly but he did not explain his meaning.

However, he raised no further objection, and, as Vasquez suggested, the carronade was dragged up to the cave; then the gun carriage was taken there, and finally the cannon balls and the case of powder. It was a most laborious business, and took a long time. When Vasquez and John Davis went back to have something to eat, the height of the sun above the horizon showed that it must be about ten o'clock.

They were barely out of sight before Kongre, Carcante, and the carpenter, Vargas, came round the corner of the cliff. The boat could not have made headway against the wind and the tide, which was beginning to come in, and so they had come on foot along the shore. This time plunder was not their object.

As Vasquez had anticipated, the favourable change in the weather that morning had brought them out to take a look at the state of the sea and

the sky. They recognised the fact that the *Carcante* would run great risk in trying to get out of the bay, and that she could not possibly make headway against the huge waves breaking outside. Before she could get into the strait, where, on a westerly course, she would have the wind behind her, she would have to round Cape San Juan, and would incur no little danger of running aground, or at least of shipping a heavy sea.

Kongre and Carcante were of that opinion. Halting near the scene of the wreck, where nothing now remained save a few broken pieces of the *Century's* stern, they had difficulty in standing up against the wind. They talked animatedly, gesticulating, and pointing to the horizon, sometimes retreating a little when a white crested wave broke upon the point.

Neither Vasquez nor his companion lost sight of them during the half hour they spent watching the mouth of the bay. At last they went away, turning round several times to look back. They disappeared at the bend of the cliff, and went back to the lighthouse.

"They're gone," said Vasquez. "I'd give untold gold for them to come back the next few days running to take a look at the sea off the island."

But John Davis shook his head. It was only too

obvious to him that the storm would be over in forty-eight hours. And then the sea would have fallen, if not to a calm, at any rate sufficiently for the schooner to be able to get round Cape San Juan.

Vasquez and John Davis spent part of that day upon the shore. The change in the weather became more pronounced. The wind seemed settled in the north-north-east, and a ship need not have lingered to let out reefs in her foresail and fore-topsail to get into Lemaire Strait.

When evening came Vasquez and John Davis went back to their cave. They appeased their hunger with biscuit and corned beef, and quenched their thirst with water mixed with brandy. Vasquez was just preparing to roll himself in his blanket when his comrade stayed him.

"Before you go to sleep, Vasquez, just listen to a proposal I have to make."

"Go ahead, Davis."

"Vasquez, I owe my life to you, and I would not do anything which you might not approve. Here is an idea I want to put before you. Consider it, and then tell me what you think, without fear of offending me."

"I'm listening, Davis."

"The weather is changing, the storm is over, the

sea will soon be calm. I expect the schooner will weigh anchor in forty-eight hours at latest."

"Unfortunately, that's only too likely," Vasquez answered, finishing his comment with a gesture that seemed to say, "we can't do anything!"

John Davis went on:

"Yes, before another two days are up she will appear at the lower end of the bay, will come out of it, double the cape, disappear in the west, and go down the strait, and will never be seen again, and your mates, Vasquez, and my captain and mates on the *Century* will never be avenged."

Vasquez had bowed his head; now he raised it and looked at John Davis, whose face was lit up by the expiring flames of the fire.

Davis went on:

"There is only one thing which could prevent the schooner from going away, or which could at least delay her until the despatch-boat arrives; and that is some injury which would compel her to put back into the bay. Well, we've got a cannon, powder, and balls. Let us put the gun on its carriage in a corner of the cliff, load it, and when the schooner passes, fire full into her hull! It's quite possible that we shan't sink her, but her crew will never dare to start on the long voyage they've got in front of them

with a fresh injury. The scoundrels will be obliged to come back to their moorings to repair her. They'll have to take the cargo out of her. That will take quite a week; and between now and then the *Santa-Fé*——"

John Davis stopped; he took his comrade's hand and pressed it.

Vasquez answered him unhesitatingly with the simple words:

"We'll do it!"

CHAPTER XII

LEAVING THE BAY

AS often happens after a very violent storm, the horizon was veiled in mist in the forenoon of the 25th of February. But the wind had dropped as it went back, and there were plain indications of a change in the weather.

It was decided that the schooner should leave her moorings that day, and Kongre made all his preparations for weighing anchor in the afternoon. The sun would by that time probably have dispered the fog that had gathered when it rose. The tide was due to fall at six o'clock in the evening, and would be favourable for leaving Elgor Bay. The schooner would get off Cape San Juan about seven o'clock and the long twilight in these latitudes would enable her to round the cape before night.

She might have left with the morning ebb if it had not been for the fog. Indeed, everything was cleared aboard, the cargo was completed, and there were victuals in abundance, drawn from the *Century*

and also from the lighthouse stores. In the annex of the lighthouse nothing was left but the furniture and utensils, with which Kongre did not want to encumber the hold, already quite full enough. Although part of the ballast had been taken out of her, the schooner was several inches below her usual water line, and it would not have been wise to increase her draught still further.

Shortly after noon, while they walked together in the enclosure, Carcante said to Kongre:

"The fog is beginning to lift, and the sea will soon be clear before us. With mists like these, the wind generally drops and the tide falls more quickly."

"I think we really shall get out this time," Kongre replied, "and that nothing will interfere with our voyage as far as the strait."

"Or beyond, I hope," Carcante said. "But it'll be a dark night, Kongre. It's barely the moon's first quarter, and she will set almost at the same time as the sun."

"That doesn't matter much, Carcante; I don't need moon or stars to find my way along the island. I know the whole of the north coast, and I expect to round New Year Islands and Cape Colnett quite far enough away to clear their rocks."

"We shall be a long way off to-morrow, Kongre,

with this north-east wind, and the wind on our quarter."

"To-morrow we shall be out of sight of Cape Saint Bartholomew and I hope that by evening Staten Island will be twenty miles behind us."

"And none too soon, Kongre, considering how long we've been here."

"Do you regret it, Carcante?"

"Not now it's over, and since we shall have made our fortune here, and a good ship is going to take us away with all our wealth. But, confound it, I quite thought that all was lost when the *Maule*—no, I mean the *Carcante*—came into the bay with a leak! If we hadn't been able to repair the damage, who can say how much longer we might not have had to stay on the island? When the despatch-boat arrived we should have been compelled to go back to Cape Saint Bartholomew, and for my part, I've had my fill of Cape Saint Bartholomew!"

"Yes," said Kongre, his fierce face clouding, "and the position would have been serious in other ways. When he found the lighthouse without any of its keepers the captain of the *Santa-Fé* would have begun a search in earnest. He would have scoured the island, and who knows if he wouldn't have discovered

our retreat? And then, might he not have been met by that third lighthouseman who escaped from us?"

"There wasn't much fear of that, Kongre. We have never found a trace of him, and how could he have lived for nearly two months without any resources at all? For it soon will be two months since the *Carcante*—there, I haven't forgotten her new name this time—moored in Elgor Bay, and unless that worthy lighthouseman has lived all this time on raw fish and roots——"

"Anyhow, we shall be off before the despatch-boat comes back," said Kongre, "and that's the safer way."

"She can hardly be here in less than another week, if the lighthouse log is to be trusted," Carcante declared.

"And in a week," Kongre went on, "we shall be far from Cape Horn and well on our way to the Solomons or New Hebrides."

"That's so, Kongre. Well, I'm going up to the gallery to have a last look at the sea. If there is any ship in sight——"

"If there is, it won't matter to us!" said Kongre, shrugging his shoulders. "The Atlantic and the Pacific are free to everybody. The *Carcante's* papers are all in order. All that was necessary in

that respect has been done, you can take my word for it. And if the *Santa-Fé* herself met her at the mouth of the strait, she would return her salute, for one little attention deserves another!"

Kongre had no doubt about the success of his plans. And it really did look as if everything were conspiring to favour them.

While his captain returned towards the creek, Carcante went up the staircase and stayed in the gallery for an hour, watching.

The sky was wholly clear now, and the horizon line could be seen distinctly a dozen miles away. Although the sea was still troubled, no white horses were breaking on it, and the swell, though heavy, would not incommode the schooner. Besides, as soon as she had entered the strait, she would find still water and would sail along as if on a river under the shelter of the land and with the wind behind her.

Out at sea the only vessel was a three-master, which, about two o'clock, appeared for a moment in the eastward, so far away that without a telescope Carcante could not have made out her rigging. She was making northwards. Her destination could be nowhere in the Pacific, and she was soon out of sight.

An hour later, however, Carcante saw something

to make him anxious, and he wondered whether he ought not to ask Kongre's advice.

He saw smoke in the north-east, a long way off as yet. That meant a steamer coming towards Staten Island, or towards the coast of Tierra del Fuego.

This smoke was quite enough to make Carcante seriously uneasy.

"Can it be the despatch-boat?" he wondered

It was still only the 25th of February, and the *Santa-Fé* was not due until the beginning of March. Could she have started early? If it was she she would be athwart Cape San Juan in two hours, and all would be lost. Would they be obliged to give up the idea of liberty just as they were recovering it, and go back to the horrible existence at Cape Saint Bartholomew?

Just below him Carcante saw the schooner swaying gracefully, for all the world as if she were mocking him. All was cleared aboard her. She had nothing to do but weigh anchor and get under way. But with the wind against her she could not have stemmed the tide which was just beginning to come up, and the tide would not be slack before half past two.

Thus it was hopeless to think of getting out to sea before this steamer arrived, and if it were the despatch-boat——!

Carcante muttered an oath. But he did not want to disturb Kongre, who was very busy with the final preparations, until he was quite sure of his fact, and he remained alone in the lighthouse gallery watching.

The vessel drew near rapidly, both tide and wind being in her favour. Her captain smoked vigorously, for dense smoke poured from her funnel, which Carcante could not yet see as it was hidden behind the tight-stretched sails. The ship was also heeling far over to starboard. If she kept on at this pace she would very soon be athwart Cape San Juan.

Carcante never took his eye from his telescope, and his anxiety increased as the steamer came nearer. She was soon only a few miles away and her hull became partly visible.

Carcante's fears suddenly vanished, at the very moment that they were at their worst.

The steamer had just borne away a little, showing that she wanted to get into the strait, and the whole of her rigging was exposed to Carcante's view.

She was a steam-ship of twelve or fifteen hundred tons, and could not be the *Santa-Fé*.

Carcante, like Kongre and the other men, knew the despatch-boat well, having seen her often during her long stay in Elgor Bay. He knew that she was

schooner-rigged, and the steamer that was approaching was three-masted.

It was an enormous relief to Carcante, and he congratulated himself on not having needlessly disturbed the equanimity of the gang. He stayed for another hour in the gallery, and watched the steamer pass to the northward of the island, but three or four miles away from it, too far, that is, for her to be able to report her number—a signal which would have remained unacknowledged, in any case.

Three quarters of an hour later, the steamer, which was making at least twelve knots an hour, disappeared beyond Cape Colnett.

Carcante came down, after having satisfied himself that there was no other vessel in sight.

It was now near the turn of the tide. That was the moment fixed for the departure of the schooner. All preparations were complete, and the sails were ready to be hoisted. As soon as these were brought aboard and stretched they would get the wind, which had shifted and was well settled in the east-south-east, athwart, and the *Carcante* would scud out to sea with full canvas.

At six o'clock Kongre and most of the men were aboard. The dinghy brought the others, who were

waiting at the foot of the enclosure, and was then hoisted to the davits.

The tide was beginning to recede very slowly. Already the spot where the schooner had been grounded during the repairs was bare. On the other side of the creek the rocks showed their sharp points. The wind came through the cuttings in the cliff, and a light surf was dying away along the shore.

The time to start had come, and Kongre gave orders for the capstan to be manned. The chain grew taut, and ground through the hawsehole, and as soon as it was apeak the anchor was fished, ready for a long voyage.

The sails were then trimmed, and under foresail, mainsail, topsail, topgallantsail, and jibs, the schooner gathered way and began to move towards the sea.

With the wind blowing from the east-south-east the *Carcante* would have no difficulty in rounding Cape San Juan. There was, moreover, no danger of grazing this very perpendicular part of the cliff.

Kongre knew this. He knew the bay well. And so, standing at the tiller, he boldly let the schooner bear away a point so as to increase her speed as much as possible.

The *Carcante's* progress was anything but steady.

It slackened when the wind failed, and gathered way when the breeze came in livelier flaws. She outran the ebb, then, leaving a flat track behind her which spoke well for her lines and was of good augury for the voyage.

At half past six Kongre was not more than a mile from the end of the point. The sea spread before him to the far horizon. The sun was sinking, and soon the stars would be shining overhead.

Carcante came up to Kongre at this moment.

"Well, we're out of the bay at last!" he said, with much satisfaction.

"In twenty minutes I'll ease the sheets," Kongre replied, "and put the helm to port to get round Cape San Juan."

"Shall we have to tack when we're once in the strait?"

"I don't think so," Kongre answered. "Directly we're round Cape San Juan we'll change the tack, and I hope to stay on the port tack as far as Cape Horn. The season is getting on, and I think we can count on these easterly winds keeping steady. Anyhow, in the strait we'll tack if we must, and it's not likely that the breeze will lessen enough to oblige us to luff."

Just then one of the crew, stationed in the bows, shouted:

"Look out ahead!"

"What's the matter?" Kongre enquired.

Carcante ran to the man and leaned over the netting.

"Bear away! Bear away gently!"

The schooner was then just athwart the cave which the pirates had occupied for such a long time.

Here a part of the keel of the *Century* was drifting on the ebb out toward the sea. A collision might have had serious consequences, and there was barely time to clear the floating wreckage.

Kongre shoved the helm gently to port. The schooner bore away a point and slid along the piece of keel, which merely grazed her bottom.

The result of this operation was to bring the *Carcante* a little nearer the north shore, and then she was brought back to her course. Another fifty yards, and she would be past the corner of the cliff, and then Kongre would ease the tiller and take the northward course

At this precise moment a shrill whistling rent the air, and a violent shock made the schooner's hull tremble. There followed a loud explosion.

Simultaneously a whitish smoke rose from the

shore, and was carried on the wind towards the inner part of the bay.

"What's that?" yelled Kongre.

"We've been fired at!" Carcante replied.

"Take the helm!" Kongre ordered sharply.

He rushed to the port side, and, looking over the netting, saw a hole in the hull, about six inches above the water line.

The whole crew had rushed to the same spot.

An attack from the shore! The *Carcante* with a cannon ball in her side just as she was leaving. It would certainly have sunk her had it struck a little lower! Such an assault was at once astonishing and alarming.

What could Kongre and his men do? Let go the dinghy, jump into it, hurry to the spot whence the smoke had come, seize the men who had fired the shot and kill them, or at least dislodge them? But who could say if the aggressors were not the stronger party numerically, and was it not wiser to move out of range and first of all ascertain the amount of the damage?

This policy became more plainly imperative when the cannonade let fly a second time. Smoke curled up at the same spot. The schooner had a fresh shock. A second cannon ball struck her fair and

square, a few inches behind where the first had struck her.

"Helm to leeward! 'Bout ship!" roared Kongre, rushing aft to join Carcante, who hastened to obey the order.

Directly the schooner felt the action of the rudder she luffed and fell off to starboard. In less than five minutes she began to draw away from the shore, and very soon was out of range of the gun that had been trained upon her.

No other report came. The beach was deserted as far as the end of the cape. It was probable that the attack would not be renewed.

The most urgent business was to examine the condition of the hull. It would not have been possible to make this examination from inside, since that would have necessitated the shifting of the cargo. But there was not room for the smallest doubt that both the balls had pierced the outer planking and were lodged in the hold.

So the dinghy was lowered while the *Carcante* lay to, merely drifting on the tide.

Kongre and the carpenter got into the dinghy and examined the hull, to ascertain whether the damage could be repaired where they were.

They found that two four-pounder shot had hit

the schooner and gone right through the outer planking. However, no vital part was injured. The two holes were just at the beginning of the sheathing and exactly at the water line. Half an inch lower, and there would have been a leak which the crew might not have had time to stop. The hold would certainly have filled, and the *Carcante* would have sunk at the mouth of the bay.

No doubt Kongre and all the others could have got to the shore in the dinghy, but the schooner would have been a complete loss.

In short, the actual damage might not be of extreme gravity, but it would most certainly prevent the *Carcante* from venturing further out to sea. With the least list to port the water would get in. So it was imperative that the two holes made by the projectiles should be plugged before the voyage was resumed.

"But who is the blackguard who has served us this trick?" Carcante kept on asking.

"Perhaps the lighthouseman who escaped us," Vargas replied. "And perhaps, too, some survivor from the *Century* whom the lighthouseman rescued. For you can't shoot cannon balls if you haven't got a cannon, and that cannon didn't fall from the moon."

"Obviously," Carcante agreed. "There can be no doubt it came out of the three-master. It's exasperating that we didn't find it among the wreckage."

"We haven't got to worry about all that now," Kongre interrupted him curtly; "we've got to repair as fast as we can."

And certainly their first concern was to proceed with the necessary repairs. If absolutely necessary they could draw into the opposite shore of the bay at Point Diegos. One hour would be enough. But at that spot the schooner would have been too much exposed to the winds blowing in from the sea, and there was no shelter anywhere along the coast to Point Several. At the very first sign of bad weather she would have gone to pieces on the reef. So Kongre decided to put back in the evening into Elgor Bay, where the work could be carried on in perfect safety and with the utmost speed.

But the tide was running out, and the schooner could not have made headway against the ebb. It was necessary to wait for the flood, which would not be effective until three o'clock.

But the *Carcante* was beginning to roll pretty heavily in the swell, and the drift might have carried her onto Point Several, where there would have been considerable risk of her filling. Even now the sound

of water rushing in through the holes in the hull at each heavier roll could be heard. Kongre was obliged to submit to anchoring several cables' lengths from Point Diegos.

The position was a very disturbing one. Night was coming on, and the darkness would soon be intense. All Kongre's knowledge of these waters would be called upon to prevent the schooner from running onto one of the many reefs barring approach to the coast.

At last, about ten o'clock, the flood set in. The anchor was brought aboard, and before midnight the *Carcante,* though not without having run many serious risks, was back at her former anchorage in the creek in Elgor Bay.

CHAPTER XIII

THREE DAYS

THE utter exasperation of Kongre, Carcante and the other pirates can be imagined.

Held up by a final obstacle at the very moment they were definitely leaving the island! And in four or five days, perhaps less, the despatch-boat might appear at the mouth of Elgor Bay!

If the damage done to the schooner had been less serious, Kongre certainly would not have hesitated to seek anchorage elsewhere. He would have taken refuge in the harbour of Saint-Jean, for example, which is cut deep into the northern coast of the island on the outer side of the cape. But in the actual state of the vessel it would have been madness to attempt such a voyage. She would have been at the bottom before she could have got off the point. In the distance she would have been compelled to go before the wind, and she would soon have filled as she rolled from side to side. At the very least, the cargo would have been hopelessly ruined.

So there was no alternative but to go back to the creek, and Kongre resigned himself to the necessity.

That night there was little sleep on board. The men had to be on the watch and keep a keen look-out every minute. Who could tell if there would not be a fresh attack? Who could tell if a force, numerically superior to Kongre's band, had not been landed lately at some other point of the island? Who could tell if the presence on Staten Island of this band of pirates was not known at last at Buenos-Ayres, and if the Argentine Government was not trying to exterminate it?

Kongre and Carcante, seated aft, discussed all this, or rather the lieutenant talked, for Kongre was too absorbed to answer otherwise than in the briefest manner.

It was Carcante who had first suggested that soldiers might have been landed on Staten Island to pursue Kongre and his gang. But this was hardly the way in which regular soldiery would have proceeded. They would have attacked the position openly, or if they had not had time to do that, they would have had several boats waiting at the mouth of the bay to cut off the schooner and capture her, either by boarding her forcibly, or after making it

impossible for her to continue her voyage. Anyhow, they would not have run to earth, after a single brush with the pirates, as these unknown assailants had done, demonstrating their lack of strength by their caution.

So Carcante abandoned that hypothesis, and reverted to the suggestion Vargas had offered.

"Yes; the only object the men who fired had, was to prevent the schooner from leaving the island, and if there are several of them it means that some of the crew of the *Century* are alive; they must have met the lighthouseman, and he must have told them that the despatch-boat will soon be here. The cannon was picked up by them among the wreckage."

"The despatch-boat isn't here yet!" said Kongre in a voice that shook with anger. "Before she comes back the schooner will be miles away."

It was only a question of time: how many days would it take to repair the new damage?

There was no alarm during the night, and next day the crew set to work upon the job.

The first business was to shift the cargo from the port side of the hold. Quite half a day was required to bring all that stuff onto the deck. But it was not found necessary to land the cargo, or to haul the schooner up onto the sand. The holes made by the

cannon balls were a little above the water line, and could be plugged without much trouble from the dinghy brought alongside. The chief question was whether the ribs of the vessel had been damaged by the projectiles.

Kongre and the carpenter went down into the hold to investigate. They found that the two balls had only hit the planking, which they had pierced at almost the same level, and they discovered them when they shifted the cargo. They had merely grazed the frames and had not affected the strength of these. The holes, which were two or three feet apart, were both clean-edged as if they had been cut with a saw. They could be hermetically closed with tampions supported by pieces of wood inserted among the ribs, and covered with a sheet of copper sheathing.

The damage, in short, was not very serious. It did not affect the soundness of the hull, and could be repaired speedily.

"When?" Kongre demanded.

"I'm going to get the inside cross pieces ready now, and they will be fixed this evening," Vargas replied.

"And the tampions?"

"They will be made to-morrow morning and put in by the evening."

"So we shall be able to stow the cargo away in the evening and weigh anchor in the morning of the day after to-morrow?"

"Sure," the carpenter said confidently.

This meant that sixty hours would be enough for all the repairs, and the *Carcante* would not be delayed for more than two days.

Carcante then asked Kongre if he did not intend to go to Cape San Juan, either in the morning or the afternoon.

"Just to see what's going on there," he remarked.

"What's the good?" Kongre replied. "We don't know whom we've got to deal with. A lot of us, ten or twelve of us, would have to go together, and that would mean leaving only two or three men to guard the schooner. And who knows what might not happen while we were away?"

"That's true," Carcante agreed; "and besides, what should we gain by going? The men who fired at us can go and hang themselves! The main thing is to get away from the island, and as quickly as possible."

"Before noon the day after to-morrow we shall be at sea," Kongre declared positively.

If Kongre and his men had gone to Cape San Juan, they would have found no trace of Vasquez and John Davis.

During the afternoon of the previous day John Davis's suggestion had engaged the time and attention of both men until the evening. The spot chosen to place the carronade was the corner of the cliff. Between the rocks which littered this turning Davis and Vasquez found it quite easy to fix the gun carriage. But they had very great difficulty in getting the gun there. They had to drag it along the sand of the shore, and then cross a space simply bristling with pointed rocks, where it was impossible to drag it at all. The were compelled to raise the gun with levers, and that involved much time and labour.

It was nearly six o'clock when the gun was placed upon its carriage in such a position that it could be trained upon the mouth of the bay.

John Davis next proceeded to load it, introducing a powerful cartridge rammed home with a wad of dry seaweed, over which the ball was placed. The priming was then adjusted and it only remained to apply the match at the proper time.

John Davis said to Vasquez:

"I've thought about what we ought to do. What we don't want is to sink the schooner. For then all

these scoundrels would reach the shore, and we might not be able to escape them. The main thing is that the schooner should be obliged to come back to her moorings and to stay there some time for repairs."

"Of course," said Vasquez; "but a hole made by a cannon ball can be plugged in one morning."

"No," John Davis answered, "for they'll be obliged to shift the cargo. I reckon that will mean forty-eight hours at least, and it's the 28th of February already."

"And suppose the despatch-boat doesn't come for a week?" Vasquez objected. "Wouldn't it be better to aim at the masts rather than the hull?"

"Well, of course, Vasquez, if she lost her foremast or her mainmast—and I hardly see how they could be replaced—the schooner would be detained for a long time. But it's more difficult to hit a mast than a hull, and our shots must go home."

"Yes," Vasquez replied, "and if those fiends don't leave till the evening tide, which is probable, it won't be any too light. So do what you think, Davis."

Everything being ready, Vasquez and his comrade had nothing to do but wait, and they took up their position by the side of the gun, ready to fire directly the schooner came athwart them.

The result of their cannonade has been told al-

ready, and also the circumstances in which the *Carcante* had to return to her moorings. John Davis and Vasquez did not leave their position until they had seen her come back into the inside of the bay.

And now prudence required that they should seek another hiding-place on some other part of the island.

As Vasquez pointed out, Kongre and his men might come to Cape San Juan next day, and try to catch them.

They quickly decided what to do. They would leave their little cave and look for a fresh shelter, a mile or two away, whence they could see any ship coming from the northward. Captain Lafayate would send a boat, would fetch them aboard, and be informed of the situation—a situation which would be finally cleared up either by the schooner being still detained in the creek or by her having put to sea.

"God grant that mayn't happen!" said John Davis and Vasquez over and over again.

At midnight both set off, taking their provisions, arms, and store of powder. They followed the seashore for about six miles, going round Saint-Jean harbour. After some search they at last found, on the other side of that little gulf, a hollow which

would give them sufficient shelter until the arrival of the despatch-boat or the departure of the schooner.

Throughout the whole of that day Vasquez and John Davis remained on close watch. As long as the tide was rising they knew that the schooner could not weigh anchor, and did not trouble themselves much. But when the ebb set in they began to fear again that the repairs might have been finished during the night. Kongre would certainly not delay his departure for a single hour after it was possible. Of course he must be fearing the arrival of the *Santa-Fé* every whit as anxiously as John Davis and Vasquez were praying for it.

At the same time these two kept close watch upon the shore, but neither Kongre nor any of his men came into sight.

For, as has been explained, Kongre had decided not to waste any time in a search which very likely would have been unsuccessful. Hurry up the work and finish the repairs with as little delay as possible —that was the better course for him, and that was what he did. As the carpenter Vargas had promised, the cross-piece of wood was fixed between the ribs in the afternoon; the tampions would be made and fitted the following day.

So Vasquez and John Davis had no alarm during

the whole of this day of the 1st of March. But it seemed infinitely long to them!

In the evening, after having watched for the schooner to go out, and satisfied themselves that she had not moved from her moorings, they crouched down in the hollow and found in sleep some of the rest they so greatly needed.

Next day they were afoot at dawn.

Their first look was out to sea.

There was no ship in sight. There was no sign of the *Santa-Fé*, and no trail of smoke on the horizon.

Would the schooner put to sea with the morning tide? The ebb had just begun. If she took advantage of it, she would be round Cape San Juan in an hour.

As for renewing their attempt of the day before, John Davis could not think of doing that. Kongre would be on his guard. He would go past out of range, and it would not be possible to hit the schooner.

The restlessness and anxiety which racked both John Davis and Vasquez until the end of this tide can be imagined. At last, about seven o'clock, the flood began. After that Kongre could not weigh anchor before the next evening tide.

The weather was fine, with the wind steady in the north-east. The sea showed no effects now of the recent storm. The sun was shining, between light clouds floating very high above the breeze.

Another seemingly interminable day for Vasquez and John Davis! As on the day before, they had no alarm. The pirates had not left the creek. It seemed most unlikely that one of them would ramble far from it in the morning or afternoon.

"That shows that the scoundrels are intent on their job," Vasquez remarked.

"Yes, they're hurrying up," John Davis replied. "Those holes will be plugged very soon. Nothing will keep them back after that."

"And perhaps this evening, although the tide may be late," Vasquez went on. "It's true they know the bay well. They don't need a light to see their way about it. They came into it last night. If they go out of it to-night, the schooner will carry them off. Oh!" he wound up despairingly, "what a pity you didn't knock the sticks out of her!"

"Never mind, Vasquez," Davis answered; "we did all we could. The rest is in God's hands!"

"And he will help us!" Vasquez said between his teeth, suddenly seeming to arrive at a bold decision.

John Davis remained wrapped in thought, pacing

to and fro upon the beach, with his eyes fixed upon the northwards. Nothing on the horizon—nothing at all.

Suddenly he stopped. He came back to his comrade and said:

"Vasquez, suppose we go and see what they're doing over there?"

"In the bay, do you mean, Davis?"

"Yes; we should find out if the schooner is finished, if she is getting ready to sail."

"And how will that help us?"

"It'll help us to know, Vasquez," John Davis burst out. "I'm simply boiling with impatience. I can't stand it any longer. It's too much for me!"

And in sober truth, the mate of the *Century* was no longer master of himself.

"Vasquez," he went on, "how far is it from here to the lighthouse?"

"Three miles at most, if you go over the hills and direct to the middle of the bay."

"Very well, I shall go, Vasquez. I'll start about four—get there before six, and creep as far as I can. It will still be light, but no one will see me, and as for myself—I shall see!"

It would have been idle to attempt to dissuade John Davis. Vasquez did not try.

"You will stay here. You will keep watch on the sea. I shall be back in the evening. I'll go alone——"

"I'll come with you, Davis. I shouldn't mind having a walk about the lighthouse either."

So it was settled that they should go.

During the few hours that had to pass before the time came to start, Vasquez left his comrade alone on the beach and went by himself into the hollow which served as their refuge, where he employed himself in some mysterious business. Once Davis found him carefully sharpening his clasp knife upon a piece of rock, and another time tearing a shirt up into strips which he then plaited up into a kind of loose rope.

To all the questions put to him Vasquez returned evasive answers, promising to explain more fully in the evening. John Davis did not press him.

At four o'clock, after eating some biscuit and a bit of corned beef, the pair of them took their revolvers and set out.

A narrow gorge made the ascent of the hills quite easy, and they got to the top without much trouble.

Before them spread a wide and arid plain, where nothing but a few clumps of barberry grew. There

was not a single tree in sight. Few sea-birds flew by in small flocks, uttering piercing cries as they sped towards the south.

The road to Elgor Bay was clearly indicated.

"There!" said Vasquez, and pointing with his hand he showed the lighthouse, which rose less than two miles away.

"March!" was John Davis's reply.

Both walked fast. If they needed to take any precautions, it would be when they got near the creek.

They walked for more than half-an-hour before they paused, out of breath. But they felt no fatigue.

There was still half a mile to go. Caution was necessary now, in case Kongre or one of his men was on watch in the lighthouse gallery. From this distance they could be seen.

In the clear atmosphere, the gallery was quite visible. No one was in it at the moment, but it was possible that Carcante or one of the others was in the watch room whence, through the narrow windows facing the cardinal points of the compass, a wide view could be obtained over the island.

John Davis and Vasquez crept among the rocks which were scattered everywhere in chaotic disorder.

They moved from one to another, sometimes crawling across ground where there was no cover.

It was nearly six o'clock when they reached the last ridge of the hills surrounding the creek. They cast eager looks below them.

It was not possible for them to be seen unless one of the pirates should happen to come up the hill. Even from the top of the lighthouse they would not have been visible among the rocks.

The schooner was there, floating in the creek, masts and yards clear, rigging all trim and ready. The crew were busy replacing in the hold the cargo which had had to be laid on the deck during the progress of the repairs. The dinghy trailed at her stern, and the fact that it was there and not fastened to the port side meant that the work was done and that the holes made by the cannon balls were stopped.

"They're ready!" John Davis muttered, choking down his wrath that was ready to blaze out.

"Perhaps they mean to weigh anchor before the tide, in two or three hours from now?"

"And we can do nothing—nothing!" John Davis said again.

The carpenter Vargas has been as good as his

word. The work had been done expeditiously and well. No trace of the damage was left. The two days had been enough. With her cargo back in the hold and hatches battened down, the *Carcante* was almost ready to make another start.

But time went by; the sun sank, and disappeared; night came on, and still nothing indicated that the schooner was on the point of putting to sea. From their place of shelter Vasquez and John Davis listened to the sounds which rose up to them from the bay; laughter, shouts, oaths, and the grating of heavy articles being dragged along the deck. About ten o'clock they heard distinctly the sound of a hatch closing. Then all was silent.

Davis and Vasquez waited with beating hearts. Doubtless the work was finished and the moment had come to start. But no: the schooner was still swaying gently in the creek, the anchor was still out, the sails were still clewed up.

An hour went by. The *Century's* first mate gripped Vasquez's hand.

"The tide's turning," he said. "Here's the flood."

"They won't get away!"

"Not to-day. But to-morrow?"

"Not to-morrow, and not ever!" said Vasquez firmly. "Come!" he added, and he stepped out of the recess where they had been lying in ambush.

Davis, greatly puzzled, followed Vasquez, who moved cautiously towards the lighthouse. In a few moments they were at the foot of the knoll which formed the pedestal of the tower. There Vasquez searched for an instant, and then moved a rock aside, turning it round without any heavy effort.

"Creep inside," he said to Davis, pointing to the under side of the rock. "There's a hiding place here which I discovered quite by chance while I was at the lighthouse. I felt sure at the time that I should find it useful some day. It isn't a cave. It's only a hole which will hardly hold the two of us. But one might pass our front door a thousand times without guessing that the house was inhabited."

Davis obeyed the invitation and crawled inside the hollow where Vasquez immediately joined him. Pressed so closely against each other that they could scarcely stir, they talked in undertones, face to face.

"This is my plan," said Vasquez. "You are to wait for me here."

"Wait for you?" Davis echoed.

"Yes; I'm going to the schooner."

"To the schooner?" Davis echoed again in amazement.

"I'm determined that these scoundrels shall not get away!" Vasquez declared firmly.

He took two parcels and a knife from his pilot jacket.

"This is a cartridge that I've made with our powder and a piece of shirt. With another piece of shirt and the rest of the powder I've made a slow match; there it is. I'm going to put the lot on my head and swim to the schooner. I shall scramble up the rudder, and with this knife I shall cut a hole between the rudder and the stern-post. In the hole I shove my cartridge, I light my slow match, and I come back. That's my plan, and nothing in the world will prevent me from carrying it out!"

"It's marvellous!" John Davis exclaimed with enthusiasm. "But I won't let you run into danger like that alone. I'll come with you."

"What's the use?" Vasquez replied. "One man can get through better by himself, and one man's enough for what I want to do."

It was useless for Davis to insist. Vasquez was inflexible. The idea was his, and he meant to put it into execution by himself. Much against his will, Davis was obliged to give way.

When the night was at its darkest Vasquez stripped off all his clothes, crawled out of the hole, and descended the slope of the little hill. Reaching the sea he got into the water, and swam vigorously towards the schooner which was rocking gently a cable's length from the shore.

The nearer he drew to it, the blacker and more imposing did the mass of the vessel appear. Nothing was stirring on board. But a watch was being kept. Very soon the swimmer saw the outline of the man on watch distinctly. He was sitting on the forecastle, swinging his legs over the water, and whistling a sea song, the notes of which dropped clearly in the silence of the night.

Vasquez described a curve, and, approaching the ship from the stern, became invisible in the darker shadow thrown from her hull. The rudder curved out above him. He seized the slimy surface of it with both hands and by superhuman efforts managed to pull himself up, clinging to the iron bindings.

Succeeding in getting astride the after-piece, he gripped it between his knees, as a rider grips his mount. His hands were now free, and he was able to take the bag he had tied to the top of his head, and by holding it between his teeth, explore its contents.

"For a long time the sailor leaned over the rail —Vasquez felt his strength failing." (*Page 213*)

The knife began its work at once. Little by little the hole between the cross-piece of the rudder and the stern-post became wider and deeper. After an hour's work the blade of the knife came out on the other side. Into the hole, now big enough, Vasquez slipped the cartridge he had prepared. He adjusted the slow match and then looked for his tinder-box in the bottom of his bag.

At that precise moment his tired knees slackened their grip for a fraction of a second. He felt himself slipping, and to slip meant checkmate to his attempt. If his tinder once got damp, it would never give him a light. In the involuntary movement he made to get his balance again the bag swung, and his knife, which he had put back into it when it had done its work, slipped out of it and fell, splashing into the water.

The sentry's song stopped abruptly. Vasquez heard him get down from the forecastle, walk along the deck, and get onto the poop. He saw his shadow outlined on the water.

The sailor, leaning over the taffrail, was no doubt trying to find out what had caused the sound which had attracted his attention. For a long time he remained there, while Vasquez, with legs stiffened and

fingers contracted on the slimy wood, felt his strength failing him gradually.

At last reassured by the silence, the sailor moved away to the bows again, and resumed his song.

Vasquez took the tinder-box out of the bag, and struck the flint cautiously. A few sparks flashed. The slow match took fire and began to crackle cunningly.

Quickly Vasquez slid down the rudder, entered the water again, and with long silent strokes sped away towards the shore.

In the hiding place alone the time seemed endless to John Davis. Half an hour, three quarters of an hour, an hour passed slowly by. Davis could stand it no longer, and crawling out of the hole he looked anxiously out to sea.

What could have happened to Vasquez? Had his attempt failed?

He could not have been detected, for no sound was to be heard.

Suddenly, reverberated by the echo from the hill, a dull explosion broke the silence of the night. Immediately there followed a deafening uproar of trampling feet and loud shouts. A few minutes later a man, dripping with water and slime, rushed

up, thrust Davis back, slipped in with him to the bottom of the hole, and pulled down the stone which hid the entrance to it.

Hard on his heels men passed shouting. Their heavy shoes, clattering noisily on the rocks, were yet unable to drown their voices.

"Go it!" cried one. "We've got him!"

"I saw him as clearly as I see you!" said another. "He is alone."

"He isn't a hundred yards ahead."

"The devil! We'll have him!"

The noise diminished, died away.

"Have you done it?" Davis whispered.

"Yes," said Vasquez.

"Do you think you have succeeded?"

"I hope so," Vasquez answered.

At dawn a hubbub of hammers dispelled any uncertainty. Since they were working like that on board the schooner there must be serious damage done, which meant that Vasquez's attempt had succeeded. But how serious the damage was, neither one nor the other could possibly know.

"I hope to goodness it's bad enough to keep them another month in the bay!" exclaimed Davis, quite forgetting that, in that case, he and his comrade

would certainly die of starvation inside their hiding place.

"Hush!" whispered Vasquez, gripping him by the hand.

Men were coming near, in silence this time.

The sound of their heels ringing on the ground was all that could be heard.

Throughout the whole of that morning Vasquez and Davis heard tramping like this all round them. Squads of men were going by, all bent upon the capture of their elusive assailant. But as time passed by the pursuit seemed to be slackening. For quite a long time now nothing had broken the pervading silence, when, about midday, three or four men dropped a couple of paces from the hole in which Davis and Vasquez were crouching.

"Really and truly he isn't to be found!" said one of them, sitting down on the stone which actually covered the opening.

"Better give it up," said another. "The others are aboard already."

"We'll go aboard, too. All the more so as, after all, the villain missed his mark."

Out of sight, Vasquez and Davis thrilled, and listened more intently than ever.

"Yes," said a fourth voice. "D'ye see, he meant to blow up the rudder."

"The very vitals of a ship, what?"

"A nice state of affairs that would have been for us!"

"A lucky thing his cartridge expanded to port and starboard. The only harm done is a hole in the hull and an iron bolt torn away. As for the rudder, the wood is hardly as much as scorched."

"Everything will be put right to-day," replied the man who had spoken first. "And this evening, before the flood, it'll be 'man the capstan, lads!' After that the other beggar can die of starvation, if it please him!"

"Well, Lopez, have you rested enough?" a harsh voice broke in brutally. "What's the use of all this jabbering? Let's get back!"

"Let's get back!" echoed the other three, and they went on their way.

In the hole where they had gone to earth, Vasquez and Davis looked at each other in silence, overwhelmed by what they had just heard. Two big tears filled Vasquez's eyes and trickled down from his eyelashes. The rough sailor did not trouble to hide this testimony to his helpless despair.

So that was the result of his heroic attempt! Twelve hours' further delay—that was all the harm done to the band of pirates. That very evening, with all her injuries repaired, the schooner would move away over the vast ocean and disappear forever beyond the horizon.

The sound of hammers coming from the shore proved that Kongre was working feverishly to put the *Carcante* into trim again. Soon after five o'clock, to the despair of Vasquez and Davis, the sound abruptly ceased. They understood that the last hammer blow had completed the work.

A few minutes later the grinding of the chain as it scraped the hawse-hole confirmed them in their supposition. Kongre was hoisting the anchor. The moment had come to sail.

Vasquez could not stand it any longer. Swinging the rock round, he ventured a cautious look outside.

The setting sun was just touching the top of the hills which bounded the view. At this time of year, close upon the autumn equinox, it would not be an hour before it had set.

To east, the schooner was still at anchor within the creek. There was no visible trace of her recent injuries. Everything appeared to be in order

aboard. The chain, which as Vasquez had supposed, was still perpendicular, showed that a final pull would suffice to get the anchor atrip when required.

Vasquez, disregarding all prudence, was half way out of the hole. Davis, behind him, was leaning on his shoulder. Both watched, breathless with excitement.

Most of the pirates had already gone on board. But a few were still on shore. Among these Vasquez distinctly recognised Kongre, who, with Carcante, was walking up and down in the lighthouse enclosure.

Five minutes later they separated, and Carcante went towards the door of the annex.

"Take care," Vasquez said in a low tone. "He's most likely going up the lighthouse."

Both crept back again into their hiding place.

Carcante was making a final ascent of the lighthouse. The schooner was to start in a moment. He wanted to take another look at the horizon and see if any ship was in sight off the island.

The night would be a calm one, and the wind had dropped as evening fell, promising fine weather at sunrise.

When Carcante reached the gallery John Davis and Vasquez saw him very distinctly. He walked

all round it, turning his telescope to every point of the horizon.

Suddenly a howl of dismay burst from his lips. Kongre and the other men were looking up at him. In a voice which everyone could hear, Carcante yelled:

"The despatch-boat! The despatch-boat!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE "SANTA-FE"

THE excitement was indescribable.

That shout, "The despatch-boat! The despatch-boat!" had fallen like a clap of thunder, like sentence of death, upon these wretches. The *Santa-Fé* was justice come to the island, was punishment, which they could no longer elude, for all their many crimes!

But might not Carcante have been mistaken? Was the approaching vessel really the Argentine navy's despatch-boat? Was she really bound for Elgor Bay? Might she not be merely making for Lemaire Strait, or towards Point Several with the intention of passing to the south of the island?

Directly Kongre heard Carcante's shout he hurried to the top of the knoll, rushed to the lighthouse staircase, and was in the gallery in less than five minutes.

"Where is the ship?" he demanded.

"There; in the north-north-east."

"How far off still?"

"Ten miles, more or less."

"Then she can't reach the bay before dark."

"No."

Kongre had seized the telescope. He scanned the vessel closely, without saying a word.

There was no doubt about her being a steamer. The smoke could be seen pouring from her funnel in dense volumes.

And that this steamer really was the despatch-boat neither Kongre nor Carcante could doubt. They had seen the Argentine vessel many a time moving to and from the island during the course of the building operations.

Besides, this steamer was heading straight for the bay. If it had been her captain's intention to come into Lemaire Strait he would have steered a more westerly course, and a more southerly one if he had wanted to pass by off Point Several.

"Yes," Kongre said at last, "it's the despatch-boat right enough."

"What a cursed mischance that has kept us here till now!" Carcante exclaimed. "But for those rascals who have stopped us twice, we should have been well away in the Pacific by this time!"

"No good talking!" Kongre replied. "We've got to do something."

"What?"

"Put to sea."

"When?"

"At once."

"But before we're any distance the despatch-boat will be athwart the bay."

"Yes; but she'll stop outside."

"Why?

"Because she won't be able to pick up the light, and she won't risk moving up to the creek in the dark."

This very reasonable argument which Kongre urged had occurred to John Davis and Vasquez also. They would not leave their retreat while they might be seen from the top of the gallery. And in their narrow hiding place they were expressing precisely the same thought that was in the mind of the pirate captain.

The lighthouse ought to have been lighted already, for the sun was on the point of disappearance. When he failed to see its light, although in all probability he had sighted the island, would not Captain Lafayate hesitate to come nearer? Unable to explain the extinction of the light, would he not spend

the night cruising about in the open? A dozen times already, it was true, he had come into Elgor Bay, but always by daylight, and without the light to show him the course he certainly would not venture across the dark bay. Besides, he must suppose that the island had been the theatre of tragic happenings since the lighthouse keepers were not at their posts.

"But if the commander had not sighted the land," Vasquez next suggested, "and if he keeps on, expecting every minute to see the light, mayn't what happened to the *Century* happen to him? Mayn't he run on the reefs of Cape San Juan."

John Davis's only reply was an evasive shrug. It was only too true that the contingency of which Vasquez spoke might occur. Of course, the wind was not blowing a gale, and the *Santa-Fé* was not in the same position as the *Century*. But none the less a catastrophe was quite possible.

"Let's run down to the shore," Vasquez went on. "We can get to the cape in a couple of hours. Perhaps there will still be time to light a fire to show where the land is."

"No," replied Davis. "It would be too late. In less than an hour the despatch-boat may be at the mouth of the bay."

"What are we to do, then?"

"Wait!" John Davis answered.

It was past six o'clock, and twilight was beginning to envelop the island.

Meantime the preparations for getting away were being rushed on board the *Carcante*. Kongre meant to weigh anchor at all hazards. Racked with anxiety, he had determined to leave his moorings at once. If he waited till the morning tide to do so, he ran a risk of meeting the despatch-boat.

When he saw the ship come out, Captain Lafayate would not allow her to pass. He would order her to lie to, and would interrogate the skipper. Most certainly he would want to know why the lighthouse had not been lighted. The *Carcante's* presence there would rightly seem suspicious. When the schooner hove to, he would come aboard, send for Kongre, inspect the crew, and, merely from the appearance of these fellows, would conceive legitimate suspicions. He would compel the ship to put about and follow him, and would detain her in the creek pending fuller information.

Then, when the commander of the *Santa-Fé* failed to find the three lighthouse keepers he would only be able to explain their absence by some attack of which they had been the victims. And would he not be inclined to believe that the authors of the outrage

were the men on this ship that was trying to escape him?

Then again, there might be another complication.

Since Kongre and his gang had seen the *Santa-Fé,* off the island, was it not probable, even certain, that these men who, on two occasions, had attacked the *Carcante* just as she was leaving the bay, had seen her too? These unknown enemies would have watched every movement of the despatch-boat, would be there to meet her at the creek, and if, as there was good reason to suppose, the third lighthouseman was one of them, Kongre and his men would no longer be able to escape punishment for their crimes.

Kongre had foreseen all these possibilities and their consequences. And so he had reached the only decision it was possible to make: to weigh anchor at once and, since the wind, which was blowing from the northward, was in his favour, to take advantage of the dark to get out to sea, crowding on all sail. Then the schooner would have the entire ocean in front of her. It was possible that the despatch-boat, being unable to pick up the light, and unwilling to come close to shore in the dark, was a fairly long way off Staten Island at this moment.

Kongre urged on the preparations for the start.

John Davis and Vasquez, correctly guessing the

pirates' plan, wondered how they could prevent it from succeeding, and were in despair as they realised their utter powerlessness.

About half past seven Carcante ordered aboard the few men who were still ashore. Directly the crew was complete the dinghy was hoisted in, and Kongre gave the order to hoist the anchor.

John Davis and Vasquez heard the rhythmical sound of the pawl while the windlass was bringing in the chain.

In five minutes the anchor was brought up to the cat-head. At once the schooner began to move. She had all sail standing, lower and topsails, so as not to lose a breath of the breeze, which was failing. Very slowly she moved out of the creek, keeping to the middle of the bay, the better to get the wind.

Soon, however, navigation became very difficult. As the tide was almost out there was no current to help the schooner, and in this trim, with the wind three points on her quarter, she was making hardly any way. She would not make any headway at all, and perhaps would even lose, when, in a couple of hours, the flood tide had set in. At best, she would not be off Cape San Juan before midnight.

But this did not matter much. Since the *Santa-Fé* was not coming into the bay Kongre was in no danger

of meeting her. If he could rely upon the next tide, there was no doubt he would be outside at daybreak.

The crew left absolutely nothing undone to hurry the progress of the *Carcante,* but they were helpless again the very real danger caused by the drift. Little by little the wind drove the ship back towards the south shore of Elgor Bay. Kongre did not know this shore well, but he was aware that it was very dangerous, with long ledges of reef flanking it. An hour after the start, indeed, he thought he was so near it that it seemed prudent to tack about in order to get further away.

In a breeze like this, failing more and more as night drew on, to change the tacks would be no easy job.

But the manoeuvre was urgent. The tiller was shoved down and the sheets tautened aft and were loosed forward. But from lack of way on her the schooner failed to luff and continued to drift towards the coast.

Kongre realised the danger. Only one means was left. He employed it. The dinghy was lowered, six men got into it with a hawser, and pulling hard, managed to bring the schooner round onto the starboard tack. A quarter of an hour later she was able to

resume her first course without fear of being carried onto the reefs to the south.

But there was not a breath of wind now; the sails were flapping against the masts. It would have been useless for the dinghy to try to tow the *Carcante* to the mouth of the bay. The most it could have done would have been to counteract the flood, which was making itself felt now. As for making headway against it, the idea was untenable. Would Kongre be obliged to anchor here less than two miles from the creek?

After the ship had weighed anchor, John Davis and Vasquez had got up and, going to the edge of the sea, had watched the schooner's movements. When the breeze died away altogether they realised that Kongre would be obliged to stop and wait for the next ebb. But there would still be time for him to get to the mouth of the bay before dawn, and he had a good chance still on getting away unseen.

"No! We've got him!" cried Vasquez suddenly.

"How?" John Davis asked.

"Come on! Come on!"

And Vasquez dragged his comrade rapidly towards the lighthouse.

He calculated that the *Santa-Fé* must be cruising

about off the island. She might even be quite close, for there would be no very great danger in that while the sea was so calm. It was almost certain that Captain Lafayate, astonished by the absence of the light, would be there under reduced steam, waiting for the sunrise.

Kongre thought so too; but he also thought that he had every chance of throwing the despatch-boat off his track. The moment the ebb began to run seawards again the *Carcante* would make another start, without needing wind to help her, and in less than an hour she would be in the open sea.

Once there, Kongre would not make farther out. There is never an entire absence of light flaws of wind, even on the most still night, and one of these would be quite enough to enable him with the help of the tide setting southwards to run safely along the coast, even in the middle of this very dark night. As soon as she got round Point Several, seven or eight miles away at most, the schooner would be under shelter of the cliffs and would have nothing more to fear. The sole risk was of being seen by the look-out men on the *Santa-Fé,* if the despatch-boat happened to be below the bay and not off Cape San Juan. For if

the *Carcante* were caught sight of as she was leaving the bay, Captain Lafayate most certainly would not allow her to get away before he had interrogated her skipper about the mystery of the lighthouse. With steam to aid him, he would overtake the runaway before she disappeared behind the southern heights.

It was then after nine o'clock. Kongre was obliged to cast anchor in order to withstand the tide, pending the time when the ebb should begin. But that would not be for nearly six hours. The tide would not be in his favour before three o'clock. So the schooner stemmed the flood, her bows turned seawards. The dinghy had been hoisted in. Kongre would not waste a minute getting away when the proper moment came.

Suddenly the crew sent up a shout that might have been heard all round the bay.

A long ray of light had just pierced the darkness. The light from the lighthouse tower was shining in its full brilliance, illumining the whole sea off the island.

"Ah, the scoundrels! There they are!" Carcante cried.

"Ashore!" roared Kongre.

To elude the pressing danger that now threatened

them there was, indeed, nothing else to be done. They must go ashore, leaving only a few men aboard the schooner, rush to the enclosure, force their way into the annex, hurry up the staircase of the tower, get into the watch room, fall upon the lighthousemen and his companions, if he had any, get rid of the lot of them, and put out the light. If the despatch-boat had already begun to move in towards the bay she would certainly stop; if she were there already she would try to get out, if she no longer had the help of the light to guide her to the creek. At the worst, she would drop anchor until daybreak.

The dinghy was got out. Carcante and a dozen of the men jumped into it with Kongre, all armed with guns, revolvers, and cutlasses. In another minute they were ashore and rushing towards the enclosure, only a mile and a half away.

It took them a quarter of an hour to cover the distance. They had not lost touch with each other. But for the two men left on board, the whole of the pirate gang was together at the foot of the platform.

Yes; John Davis and Vasquez were there. Running at the top of their speed, without the least concealment, since they knew very well they would

not meet anybody, they had scrambled up the knoll and got into the enclosure. What Vasquez intended to do was to light the light again, so that the despatch-boat would get into the creek without having to wait for daylight. What he was desperately afraid of was that Kongre might have destroyed the lenses and broken the lamps, and that the apparatus might not be in working order. In that case the schooner would in all probability get away without being seen by the *Santa-Fé*.

Both men rushed towards the quarters, got into the passage, pushed open the staircase door, which they shut behind them and bolted securely, ran up the steps and reached the watch room.

The lantern was in perfect order, the lamps all in their proper place, still fitted with wicks and filled with oil as they had been on the day when they were last extinguished. No! Kongre had not destroyed the apparatus of the lantern; he had only thought of stopping the working of the light during the time he was staying in Elgor Bay. And how could he possibly have foreseen the circumstances in which he would be compelled to leave it?

But now the lighthouse was throwing its brilliant light once more. The despatch-boat could come

back to her former moorings without any trouble at all.

Violent blows rang at the foot of the tower. The entire gang flung themselves against the door in their efforts to get up to the gallery and put out the light. Every man of them would risk his life to delay the arrival of the *Santa-Fé*. They had found no one on the platform, or in the men's quarters. The men who were in the watch room could not number more than two or three. They would very soon overpower them. They would kill them all, and the lighthouse should throw its dangerous rays through the darkness no more.

As has been said before, the door at the end of the passage was made of a thick sheet of iron. It was impossible to force the bolts which fastened it within, on the staircase side. It was no less impossible to break it down with handspikes and axes. Carcante soon found that out. After a few vain attempts he came back to Kongre and the others in the enclosure.

What was to be done? Was there any other way up to the lantern by the outside? If not, the pirates would have no alternative but to take flight into the interior of the island, to escape

falling into the hands of Captain Lafayate and his crew. As for going back to the schooner, what would have been the use of that? Besides, there was no time. In all probability the despatch-boat was in the bay already and coming towards the creek.

But if within the next few minutes the light could be extinguished, the *Santa-Fé* would not only be unable to keep on her way but would be obliged to go back, and the schooner might perhaps succeed in getting through.

There was just one way of reaching the gallery.

"The lightning conductor!" Kongre shouted.

A metal rod ran the whole length of the tower, fastened every two or three feet to the wall by iron braces. By climbing hand over hand up these it was certainly possible to reach the gallery and perhaps surprise the men who were in the watch room.

Kongre determined to try this last means of escape. Carcante and Vargas went in front of him. Both clambered onto the top of the annex, seized the conductor and began to climb up one after the other, hoping not to be seen in the midst of the darkness.

At length they reached the railing and clung on-

to the uprights. All they had to do now was climb over it.

At that instant revolver shots rang out.

John Davis and Vasquez were on the defensive.

The two pirates, shot through the head, let go and crashed down onto the roof of the annex.

Then shrill whistling was heard at the foot of the lighthouse. The despatch-boat was coming into the creek, and her siren made the welkin ring with its piercing sound.

There was barely time to run. In a few minutes more, the *Santa-Fé* would be at her former moorings.

Realising that there was nothing left to try, Kongre and his men rushed to the foot of the platform, and fled for safety to the interior of the island.

A quarter of an hour later, just as Captain Lafayate was dropping his anchor, the recovered lighthouseman's boat was brought alongside the man of war in a few strokes of the oar.

John Davis and Vasquez were aboard the despatch-boat.

CHAPTER XV

THE END OF THE STORY

THE despatch-boat *Santa-Fé*, with the Staten Island Lighthouse relief on board, had left Buenos-Ayres on the 19th of February. She made a very fine passage, both wind and tide being in her favour. The great storm which lasted nearly a week had not extended beyond the Strait of Magellan. Captain Lafayate had not been at all affected by it, and he arrived at his destination several days before his time.

Twelve hours later, and the schooner might have been already far away, and all idea of going in pursuit of Kongre and his band would have had to be abandoned.

Captain Lafayate did not allow this night to pass without acquainting himself with everything that had happened in Elgor Bay during the past three months.

Although Vasquez had come aboard, his mates, Felipe and Moriz, were not with him. Nobody

knew the man who was with him, or his name.

Captain Lafayate had them both brought to him in the ward-room, and his first words were:

"The light was lighted late, Vasquez."

"For nine weeks, sir, it hasn't been lighted at all," Vasquez answered.

"Nine weeks! What does that mean? Your two colleagues——?"

"Felipe and Moriz are dead! Three weeks after the *Santa-Fé* left there was only one keeper left in the lighthouse, sir."

Then John Davis broke in:

"What Vasquez forgets to tell you, sir," he said, "is that our two shots were nothing like sufficient. In spite of the holes we made in her hull, the *Maule* might have put to sea this very morning if, last night, Vasquez, at the peril of his life, had not swum out to her and fired a cartridge between her rudder and her sternpost. To tell the truth, he didn't get all the results he hoped for. The damage was not serious, and could be put right in twelve hours. But it was just those twelve hours that allowed you to find the schooner here in the bay. It's to Vasquez alone that that is due, and it was he, too, who, when he recognised the despatch-

boat, had the idea of running to the lighthouse and lighting again this evening the light that had been extinguished for so long."

Captain Lafayate shook hands warmly with John Davis and with Vasquez, who by their audacious interference had enabled the *Santa-Fé* to anticipate the departure of the schooner; then he told them of the circumstances in which, an hour before sunset, the despatch-boat had sighted Staten Island.

Captain Lafayate was quite sure of his position, having taken his observations in the morning. The despatch-boat only had to steer for Cape San Juan, which she sought to sight before dark.

And in point of fact, just as twilight was beginning to obscure the sky, Captain Lafayate distinctly made out the high hills behind the east coast of the island. He was then about ten miles away, and he quite expected to get to his moorings a couple of hours later.

That, of course, was the same moment that John Davis and Vasquez had seen the *Santa-Fé.* It was then, too, that Carcante, at the top of the lighthouse, pointed her out to Kongre who made his arrangements to weigh anchor with all speed

so as to get out of the bay before the *Santa-Fé* had got in.

Meanwhile, the *Santa-Fé* continued her course towards Cape San Juan. The sea was calm, almost unruffled by the dying sea-breeze.

Before the Lighthouse at the End of the World had been erected on Staten Island Captain Lafayate certainly would not have been rash enough to come so close to land at night, still less to Elgor Bay in order to reach the creek.

But the coast and the bay were lighted now, and he did not consider it necessary to wait until next day.

So the despatch-boat continued her southwesterly course, and when the night was quite dark she was less than a mile from the mouth of Elgor Bay.

She remained there under half steam, waiting for the light to flash out.

An hour went by. No light appeared on the island. Captain Lafayate could not be mistaken about his position. Elgor Bay opened out right in front of him. He was well within the range of the light. Yet the lighthouse was not lighted up!

What could they suppose on board the despatch-

boat, except that some accident had happened to the apparatus? Perhaps during some fierce storm the lantern had been broken, the lenses damaged, or the lamps put out of action. It could not occur to anybody that the three lighthousemen might have been attacked by a gang of pirates, two of them stretched dead at the murderers' feet, and the third obliged to take to flight in order to escape the same fate.

"I didn't know what to do," said Captain Lafayate. "The darkness was intense. I dared not move into the bay. So I should have to remain at sea until dawn. My officers and crew were mortally uneasy, and we all had a presentiment of disaster. At last, about nine o'clock, the light flashed out. The delay was only due to some accident, it seemed. I got up steam and steered for the mouth of the bay. An hour later the *Santa-Fé* was in it. A mile and a half from the creek I came across a schooner lying at anchor, seemingly abandoned. I was just going to send some men aboard her when shots rang out, fired from the lighthouse gallery. We realised that our lighthousemen were being attacked and were defending themselves, most likely against the crew of the schooner. I started blowing the siren, to frighten

the enemy, and a quarter of an hour afterwards the *Santa-Fé* was at her berth."

"In time, sir," Vasquez remarked.

"Which she would not have been," Captain Lafayate replied, "if you had not risked your life to light the light again. By this time the schooner would be at sea. We almost certainly should not have seen the schooner leaving the bay, and this band of pirates might have escaped us!"

All this story was immediately known all over the despatch-boat, and the warmest congratulations were showered on Vasquez and John Davis.

The night passed quietly, and next day Vasquez made the acquaintance of the three lighthousemen whom the *Santa-Fé* had brought to Staten Island to relieve him.

It is hardly necessary to say that during the night a strong detachment of sailors had been sent to take possession of the schooner. But for that, Kongre might certainly have tried to get aboard her again, and on the ebb he would soon have gained the open sea.

To ensure the personal safety of the new lighthouse keepers, Captain Lafayate must now purge the island of the pirates who infested it. Though

Carcante and Vargas were dead, they still numbered thirteen, including a captain reduced to desperation.

In view of the size of the island the chase might be long and even fruitless. How could the crew of the *Santa-Fé* expect to ransack every inch of it? Kongre and his men certainly would not be so foolish as to venture back to Cape Saint Bartholomew, since the secret of that retreat might have been discovered. But they had the whole of the rest of the island at their disposal, and weeks, months, might go by before the last of the gang was laid by the heels. Yet Captain Lafayate would never have consented to leave Staten Island until he had made the lighthousemen safe from the possibility of attack, and secured the regular working of the light.

What, of course, might bring about a speedier result was the destitution in which Kongre and his men would find themselves. They had no provisions left either in the cave at Cape Saint Bartholomew or in that at Elgor Bay. Led by Vasquez and John Davis, Captain Lafayate ascertained next day that in the latter place at any rate there were no stores at all, biscuit, salt provisions, or tinned food of any kind. All the food that was left had been taken

aboard the schooner. The cave only contained some salvage of small value, bedding, clothes, and utensils, which were deposited in the lighthouse quarters. Even if Kongre had returned by night to the former warehouse for his booty, he would have found nothing to help to keep his men alive. He would not even have at his disposal any weapons to hunt with, seeing the quantity of guns and ammunition of that sort which was found on board the *Carcante*. He would be reduced to living by fishing only. In such conditions he and his men would find themselves obliged to surrender, under penalty of dying of starvation very soon.

Nevertheless, the search was begun forthwith. Detachments of sailors went out under command of an officer or mate, some to the interior of the island, others along the shore. Captain Lafayate even went to Cape Saint Bartholomew, but found no trace of the band.

Several days passed by and not one of the pirates had been seen when, in the morning of the 10th of March, seven miserable Fuegeans arrived at the enclosure, wan, emaciated, exhausted and suffering agonies from hunger. They were taken on board the *Santa-Fé* and revived, and then securely locked up.

Four days later the lieutenant, Riegal, searching the southern coast near Cape Webster, discovered five dead bodies, amongst which Vasquez was still able to recognise two of the Chilians of the band. The scraps and rubbish found upon the ground by them showed that they had tried to keep themselves alive on fish and shellfish; but nowhere was there any trace of a fire, no cinders or ashes. They had obviously no means left of making a fire.

At last, in the evening of the following day, a little before sunset, a man appeared amongst the rocks at the edge of the creek, less than five hundred yards from the lighthouse.

It was almost the spot from which John Davis and Vasquez had kept watch upon the schooner, when they were afraid she was about to sail, the day before the despatch-boat arrived, that evening when Vasquez had determined to make a final supreme effort.

The man was Kongre.

Vasquez, who was walking in the enclosure with the new lighthousemen, recognised him at once, and cried out:

"There he is! There he is!"

At his shout Captain Lafayate, who was walking

up and down the beach with the lieutenant, hurried up.

John Davis and several of the sailors rushed up after him, and as they stood together on the platform all of them could see the robber chief, the sole survivor of the band he had led.

What did he want here? Why did he show himself? Did he intend to give himself up? He could be under no misapprehension about the fate that awaited him. He would be taken to Buenos-Ayres and would pay with his life for his long career of robbery and murder.

Kongre remained motionless on a rock that rose above the rest and against which the sea was breaking gently. His gaze travelled over the creek. Near the despatch-boat he could see the schooner which chance had so opportunely brought to him at Cape Saint Bartholomew, and which evil chance had taken from him again.

What thoughts must have crowded through his brain! And what regrets! But for the arrival of the despatch-boat he might long since have been in the waters of the Pacific, where it would have been so easy for him to elude pursuit and secure immunity from his crimes.

Captain Lafayate was naturally most anxious to get hold of Kongre.

He issued his orders and Lieutenant Riegal, followed by half a dozen sailors, crept out of the enclosure meaning to get to the beech wood, from which it would be easy for them to get up the barrier of rock and seize the pirate.

Vasquez guided the little force by the shortest way.

They were not a hundred yards from the platform when a shot rang out. A body was hurled into space and plunged into the sea in the midst of a fountain of foam.

Kongre had drawn a revolver from his belt and put it to his forehead!

The wretch had wrought justice on himself, and now the outgoing tide was carrying his corpse towards the main.

And that was the end of this drama of Staten Island.

It is unnecessary to say that since the night of the 3rd of March the light has never failed. The new lighthousemen had been shown everything by Vasquez.

Now not a single man of all the pirate band was left.

John Davis and Vasquez were both to embark on the despatch-boat which was returning to Buenos-Ayres; from there the former would be sent home to Mobile, where no doubt he would soon be given the command to which his energy, courage, and personal merit entitled him.

As for Vasquez, he would go to his native town to rest after all the hardships he had borne so bravely. But he would go back there alone: his poor comrades would not return with him!

It was in the afternoon of the 18th of March that Captain Lafayate, certain now that the new lighthousemen would be perfectly safe, gave the signal to start.

The sun was setting as he moved out of the bay.

At once, over there upon the shore, a light flashed out, its reflection dancing in the steamer's wake. And as the despatch-boat moved away over the darkling sea, she seemed to be taking with her some of the myriad rays that were shed anew from the Lighthouse at the End of the World.

THE END

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