THE WRECK OF THE COD-SEEKER

By COLIN M'KAY

"HAVE you ever known fear, the stark fear of a slow, lingering, painful, abominable death?" remarked James E. Smith, Fishery-Guardian at Lower Shag Harbor, Shelburne County, Nova Scotia. "I have. Imprisoned in a capsized vessel, gnawed by hunger, tortured by thirst, steeped in a horror of helplessness, racked by a black, blind, bootless rage of resentment against fate, I knew fear, the fear that makes the hair bristle, the saliva in the mouth turn salt and bitter, the perspiration come out in clammy beads on the forehead, the heart almost stop beating." Then Mr. Smith told this tale:

On Wednesday, May 9, 1877, the schooner Cod-Seeker, bound from Halifax to Barrington, was running before an easterly gale. Her master was Philip Brown; her crew numbered fourteen hands all told.

A while before nine o'clock the lookout reported breakers ahead. Capt. Brown claimed that the white spaces seen were only the reflections of the Cape Light upon the waves; and he kept her going, though some of the older men criticized him sharply for doing so. I didn't like the look of things, but I was little more than a boy then.

The schooner stormed along, growing wilder in her motions, but as nothing happened I soon went down into the forecastle for a drink.

Before I could raise the dipper to my lips the schooner gave a wild lurch and flung over on her beam-ends, and I went sliding to leeward.

The schooner lay on her side, with her spars flat on the sea, and the water roared into her through hatchways and companions. Getting to my feet I hauled myself up toward the companion, and tried to get out. I might as well have tried to crawl through a sluice-gate. The rush of the water splayed my fingers apart. Soon the bows plunged downward, and the water whelming in with greater force swept me out of the companion.

I fell down on a heap of wreckage on the side of the ship, struck my head against something and was stunned for a space. When I got my wits I was standing up with my feet in the mouth of a berth and against the ship's side, and the water up to my armpits and a raffle of floating wreckage about me.

In a few seconds more I was struggling in a whirlpool of icy waters, beating my hands against the flotsam of the forecastle, unable to see anything or to get a footing. As the ship moved, the flood in the forecastle, rising rapidly, surged back and forth, and once I became entangled in some half floating blankets and nearly succeeded in drowning myself. Like all fishing vessels she had a large forecastle down in the bows of her, in the utter darkness I could not tell my whereabouts.

Imprisoned in Capsized Schooner.

For a time I was too frantic with fright to think of getting hold of anything. I only thought of keeping my head above water.

But presently the ship seemed to grow quiet for a little, and I thought of getting a grip on something. Striking out I ran against a wall with an under slope, felt around, realized that it was the deck and, as there was nothing to hold there, I turned about and swam to the other side.

I paddled about for quite a time. But at last, stretching my hands out of the water, I managed to catch hold hold of the edge of a board—the face-board of one of the weather bunks. As I held on, taking breath, the water rose and lifted my head and shoulders into the mouth of the berth. I hastily scrambled on to the inner side, then the top side, of the face-board.

While I waited appalled, for I knew not what, I became aware of a moaning sound, and cried out, "Who's that?"

It was Sam Atwood, a young fellow about my own age. He was lying on his stomach on the inner or top side of the face-board of what had been a lower bunk. When the schooner was hove down he had been asleep in his bunk, but somehow he had managed to cling to the face-board, though the mattress and bottom boards had been rolled out into the forecastle. A man can face death better with a friend near him. I grew composed and began to take stock of the situation.

The schooner had settled as the water got in her and, happily for us, the bows were the highest part of her. We learned afterward that she had drowned two men in the after cabin.

The way she lay, the round of the star-board bow was the highest part of her, and we were in the after tier of bunks, built against the bulge of the bow. But our position was precarious enough, and neither dry nor comfortable.

Sluggishly she rose and fell to the heave of the swell, and we were afraid she would sink or turn turtle altogether.

After a time she seemed to bring up against something with a violent jerk, and her head was dragged downward, while the water in the forecastle surged afterward.

Mightily alarmed we sat a-straddle on the face-boards, and pressed our noses against the skin of the ship in the angle made by the supporting knee of the deck beam. We found a little air imprisoned there after our shoulders and the backs of our heads were under water. But her bows continued to swoop downward and soon the water was over our faces. I thought it would soon be the end of us. I felt as if my head would burst with the intolerable pressure.

But before either of us lost consciousness something snapped—I thought it was something giving way in my brain. The schooner's head rose swiftly, the water receded and we found ourselves able to breathe again. Oh, but the air was good! Trembling, dizzy, exhausted, we stretched ourselves along the face-boards and rested.

What had happened was this: When the schooner was hove on her side the anchor chain, stowed in a box on deck, went overboard, and presently, as she swept along with the tide, the end fouled the bottom and dragged her head under water. Then a miracle occurred; the big link in the shackle of the other end near the wid-lass broke and allowed her head to come up again.

The schooner wallowed on her side. She rose and fell to the heave of the swell, in a heavy, sickening way, but she did not roll much. Often we were ducked under; and the noises were frightful; roaring, snarling sounds of surf; blood-thirsty gurg-lings, the dull booming sound of things beating against the skin of the hold.

I was numb with cold, and awfully weary and before long, in spite of the noises, the fear of slipping off my perch, the horror of it all, I dropped off into a doze. And as I dozed I dreamed the schooner was hove down while I was on deck; dreamed that I saw my chum Will Kenney washed overboard and dived after him.

Thirst, Cold and Horror.

Then I woke up to find myself struggling under water. It was was still pitchdark and for a moment or so I had no idea where I was. As my head came above the water I struck something hard, and down I went again before I could get my lungs full of air. Half stunned I strug-gled up again, and rammed my head through a small opening, so small that I could not get my shoulders through. My mouth was just above water. When I tried to struggle through the opening, the thing resting upon my shoulders would lift a lit-tle and then press me down till I could not breathe. I struggled fran-tically, and the harder I strove to keep my mouth above water the more I seemed to be forced down.

I could not imagine what kind of a trap I had got into, and my imagina-tion was mighty active, just as they say of a drowning man. A moving picture of my whole life seemed to flash before me. Every deed of a sin-ful nature I had ever done seemed to rise up against me, crowding out all hope of salvation.

At the same time my mind was wildly searching for an explanation of my plight, and at last, when I was nearly done for, it struck me that the thing that was drowning me was the step-ladder of the forecastle-gangway. That was it; the ladder was floating, and I had got my head between the steps. I knew what to do then, but it was not easy to draw my head down and out, for the bevel of the steps held my head as in a trap.

But at last I managed it, and hook-ed my arms over the floating ladder till I got my wind.

I yelled for Sam, but got no answer. Of course I could not tell what part of the forecastle I was in, but I paddled around and finally, as a sea lifted me, I got hold of the bunk side-board and hauled myself up inside the bunk. At-wood was still sleeping. I touched him, but he did not wake. I got hold of some pieces of boards floating just below me, and propped them across the mouth of the berth so I would not fall through, and soon I guess I went to sleep again.

The Yankee Captain Volunteers.

When the schooner was flung on her beam-ends, one dory took the wa-ter right side up and somehow Capt. Brown, Nat Knowles the cook and John Smith managed to get into it. Whether they tried to row back and pick off any of the other men left clinging to the weather rail I don't know; probably it would have been madness to have tried it in the sea then running. Anyway, they drove before the gale for several hours, and then, after passing through a quarter of a mile of surf, landed on the south-ern side of Cape Island. How they managed to live through the surf has always been a mystery; but they did and were soon at the house of Pelick Nickerson telling their tale.

Nickerson soon carried the news to Clark's Harbor, and the hardy fisher-men of that place were roused from their slumbers to consider means of rescue. The American fishing schoon-er Matchless, Capt. Job Crowell, was lying in the harbor, where she had come for shelter from the gale, and when told of the disaster her skipper was quite as ready to go to the res-cue as the men of the port.

His crew was scattered, but there were plenty of men ready to volun-teer. So, by the first streak of dawn, the Matchless with a picked crew aboard was standing out to sea under double reefs, bound on a mission of mercy. Into the teeth of the gale, putting her bows under to the fore-mast every plunge, they drove her out to where they expected to find the wreck, and then for long hours they tacked back and forth, straining their eyes into the gloom of the flying mist.

When the Cod-Seeker was hove down, the line of men who had been on deck were left clinging on under the rail. They held on there for a while. But when she listed farther over they feared she would turn tur-tle. They got up on the side, and rove a lifeline between the fore and main chain plates to hold on by. In this position they were exposed to the scourge of the wind and spray, and now and then a heavier sea, making a clean breach of hulk, would stamp right over them. But they held on, and you may imagine that after day-light they searched the howling seas with eager eyes for sign of a sail.

As the morning wore on the buffet-ings of the seas, the numbing cold, began to tell on their strength, and along about noon a towering comber bursting over them swept one poor fellow, Crowell Nickerson by name, from the lifelines, and he was drown-ed before the eyes of his mates, pow-erless to help him. His body became entangled in some cordage, and hung to leeward.

Naturally this tragedy affected the spirits of the survivors. They watch-ed the towering surges rushing down upon them with a new fear in their hearts, each man thinking that per-haps the next big sea would sweep him to his death. But soon they learned the calmness and the courage of despair. Will Kenney, as a re-quiem to the dead man to leeward, be-gan to sing:

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

All the men joined in the good old song.

And then, just as they finished the last verse, Will Kenney cried: "Look! Look! A sail!"

The schooner sank into a trough. The men waited, their hearts in their mouths. And when she rose again all saw the sails of a schooner swing-ing out of the mist hardly half a mile to leeward.

Knew Nothing of Rescue.

It was the Matchless, and the men on her had already sighted the wreck. Tack by tack she beat up to windward and then her big seine-boat was manned. It dropped under the lee of the wreck, and the men were picked off by being hauled through the sea with a line about their waists.

The Matchless picked up her boat without mishap, and then, because it was blowing a gale of wind with a heavy driving mist making it impossi-ble to see any distance, she was hove to for the night.

Next morning, the weather having moderated, she made sail and at three o'clock in the afternoon stood into Clark's Harbor with the Stars and Stripes flying at her masthead as a sign to those on shore that she had accomplished her mission.

Meantime Atwood and I, inside the hulk, knew nothing of this rescue, and nobody suspected that we were alive.

As Thursday dragged along we be-gan to feel the pangs of hunger and thirst, and our flesh began to feel be-numbed, the result of our frequent cold baths. But we dared not move from our perches. In spite of it all I would fall asleep and dream of the disaster, or of home and loved ones—and then awaken with a start to a keener fear and horror of our plight.

The time dragged along and, as the thirst took a fiercer grip on us, we ceased to feel the pangs of hunger. Our tongues swelled and burned; grip-ing pains took us by the throat; our muscles ached as if pricked with hot pins. Having swallowed so much salt water, I suffered more than Atwood, and that afternoon I grew so wild I cut the ends of my fingers and sucked the blood. But that did me no good.

When Saturday morning came we were half stupefied with suffering. Several times we talked of dropping into the water and drowning ourselves. And always the temptation to drink the salt water was strong upon us. But we kept our heads; we hoped against hope that we would be res-cued, and determined to hold out as long as we could.

That afternoon the long swell began to subside. The schooner grew quiet-er, and ceased to duck us, and the fever of our bodies dried our clothes. The fact that the swell was going down brought us face to face with a new cause of fear—the fear that soon there would not be sufficient trough to the sea to cause the main hatch to blow, and give us fresh air.

But we did not worry greatly over the prospect of being stifled for lack of oxygen; we had about exhausted our capacity for fear; we were too sick and miserable generally to be much troubled by the appearance of a new peril.

After Saturday noon it was just suf-fering and endurance. We seldom talked; our parched throats and swollen tongues made speech painful and our voices sounded weird and un-natural. Nor did we think much. Most of the time we lay as in a stupor. Now and then we dreamed of beautiful ships all around us, all coming to our res-cue, and would awake with a start to wonder if we were going mad. We lived as in a nightmare, lost count of time, felt as if we had suffered through eternity. We were growing light-headed.

The Spook of the Derelict.

On Sunday afternoon the schooner Ohio of Gloucester, Capt. Edward O'Dor, was standing up for the Cape Shore when she sighted something black floating upon the waves. Some of her crew took it for a dead whale; others said it was a wreck; and a heated argument ensued. To settle it, the captain hauled up to investi-gate. Seeing that it was a vessel bot-tom-up he sent a boat to try to find out her name, and see if they could salvage anything.

So presently I thought I heard some unusual noises, and roused myself from my lethargy to listen. In a few minutes I heard a sound like the clang of iron on iron; a man cutting at the lanyards of the forerigging with an ax had hit the iron strap of the deadeye.

"There is somebody outside," I said, shaking Sam.

But he showed no interest.

"It's only something washing about the hold," he answered.

"Let's shout, anyway," I said, and yelled as hard as I could:

"Help! Help! Help!"

Over my head there was an answer-ing yell of startled fright, then foot-steps pounding aft and a voice cry-ing:

"She's haunted. Get into the boat, for — sake!"

And that chap so frightened the others that they piled into the boat and started to pull away. But, after recovering from their fright and as-tonishment, they grew ashamed of themselves and came back.

Meantime I had got hold of a stick and was rapping against the side. Soon I heard raps on the outside. I gave three raps and there were three raps in answer. We kept that up for a few minutes. Then we heard a man walking forward on the outside, and soon a voice called:

"In the name of God, are you ghosts, living men or the devil?"

We shouted that we were living men, and asked them to get us out, or we would not be living men very long. The voice asked no questions for a few minutes as if incredulous, and then some of them got to work with axes over our heads, while the boat went back to the Ohio for more men and axes.

They worked like Trojans, and cut right through a frame bolt to make a hole to get at us. When they broke through, the eruption of imprisoned air acted like a whirlwind, and the water leaped through the hole in a solid stream fifty feet into the air. Small sticks which had been floating in the forecastle whizzed by our heads. One man was knocked over as if by an explosion. They told us af-terward that the released air gave off a sickening stench.

The schooner settled two or three feet, lurching as if she would turn tur-tle completely, and the men chopped away with redoubled energy. They soon had a hole about nine inches by eleven inches.

Rescue at Last.

Atwood, being slim, was pulled through without trouble, but when I got my head and one shoulder through, I stuck. Four men got hold of me and pulled, and at last when I thought I would be pulled apart I came through, minus my vest and sev-eral strips of skin.

The schooner which four days be-fore had been taut and trim was now almost bottom-up, lying with her keel six feet above the water and her weather rail nearly a wash. Her mainmast was broken off and, far be-low the surface, I could see a faint shadow of canvas. We thought then we were the only survivors.

Was it any wonder I thanked God for my deliverance?

Capt. O'Dor said, "Come, my boy, let me help you to the boat," and took me by the arm. I thought I could walk, took a step and went tumbling. If it hadn't been for the captain I would have slid into the sea.

Aboard the Ohio they had made ready for us. The cabin table was loaded with everything to eat. But we weren't interested in food; we wanted water by the bucketful. They gave us a teaspoonful, and that only put an agonizing edge on our thirst. We pleaded wildly for more.

But they had realized our condition, and kept us waiting for about fifteen minutes, and then only gave us an-other spoonful. After what seemed ages of raging agony they began to give us a spoonful every five minutes.

Needless to say, when I was carried home my parents were beside them-selves with joy. As they expressed it, I was as one risen from the dead. The news of our rescue spread up and down the shore, and was generally re-ceived with unbelief. Many people would not believe we had managed to live so long in the capsized vessel, and hundreds came long distances to see us.

After I reached home I developed a high fever and my feet began to pain me. I had no desire for food; in fact I scarcely touched food for two days. But I was still raging with thirst. I wanted water all the time—milk or tea was no good. I was allowed a glass of water every half hour, but it was four days from the time we were rescued before I got over that awful thirst.

But my sufferings were not over then. My feet pained me terribly, and I couldn't sleep without a narcotic, and then only for a short time. Dr. Clark who attended me said ten drops of the narcotic would kill the devil, but I was so crazy with pain and lack of sleep that I used to cry for a big dose every few hours.

And one afternoon, when mother was out and the spasms of pain were wracking me, I crawled on my hands and knees, got up on a chair, took the bottle of narcotic from the shelf and drank half the contents. Then I navi-gated my way back to the lounge, crawled half-way up on it and went to sleep. That was the deepest, the best, most blessed sleep I ever had. The doctor and everybody thought I had gone to sleep for good and all, but I came round in twenty-six hours, feel-ing fresh and fine. But I continued to suffer great pain in my feet for two weeks, and it was a month before I could walk.

CANDLESS' CANDIDACY

By HENRY BERLINGHOFF.

"Then you may get the senator-ship?" asked Marion. Candless gave a little laugh.

"It ought to be better than that," he declared. "This investigation will attract attention all over the country. It might even be good for the gover-norship."

"But you won't get the senatorship this election, will you?" persisted the girl. Candless shook his head.

"We are only fairly getting under way," he explained patiently. "I sus-pect the committee will sit after Christmas."

"But I thought you were the whole investigation," she persisted. "What has the committee to do? Can't you hurry it up?"

"I am only one of a committee of five," he said. "I am doing most of the work, but these things cannot be hurried."

"You know now that they all stole," she persisted.

"But the facts must be legally set forth. We cannot rush it through."

"I wish you could," she whispered. "Then we could be married at once."

"I know it, dear," he answered ten-derly. "I would give anything to hur-ry it up, but we must wait."

Harrington, strolling across the ball-room floor, heard and smiled as he asked Candless for a ten-minute chat. The younger man went off, proud to be seen in conference with the man who really ruled the destinies of his party. Three months before Candless would have shouted at the suggestion that he might be sent to the senate from his state. He was merely a young attorney whose cleverness had gained for him a place in the state legislature. Then had come the water front investigation. He had been placed on the committee because the leaders supposed him to be "safe." To the surprise of everyone he had developed an ingenuity at cross-examination which had dragged out, bit by bit, the whole miserable story of the steal of the water front by the Cadiz and Southwestern.

It had been no part of the leaders' intentions that the story should come out, but it was too late now to call off the investigation. The public had been aroused.

To Candless it had seemed as if he were very near his goal, for he was to make Marion his wife when he had made his way. Surely his future was assured. If only the investigation had ended in time to run for the senator-ship!

He wondered as he followed Har-rington into the conservatory whether it were too late. An hour later, with sparkling eyes, he emerged from the conference and sought the girl.

"Is it good news, Hugh?" she asked as he led her toward the library.

"It couldn't be better," he cried ex-ultingly. "I'll give you three guesses."

They were inside the library now and the girl faced him. "Is it the sena-torship?" she half whispered.

Candless nodded as he seized her about the waist and waltzed her across the floor to the library sofa. He was like a boy in his exuberance.

"Tell me all about it," she demand-ed as she curled herself upon the sofa. "Was that what Mr. Harring-ton wanted of you?"

"Nothing less," exulted Candless. "It has been decided that I am the most available candidate. They will run me for the state senate with the assurance that I shall be sent on to Washington."

"You'll be awfully busy with the campaign and the investigation," she lamented. "I'm afraid I will not see anything of you at all."

"Harrington has fixed all that," he explained. "They realize that I can-not handle both, so Varrick will take over the investigation. I wanted to keep on, but Harrington pointed out that I could not do both and that this was too good a chance at the senate to be lost."

"And are you going to give up the investigation?" she gasped. "Give up all that has been gained?"

"Varrick can carry it on," he said impatiently. "We have to make some sacrifices."

"And you are going to give up the fight before you have fairly begun?" she repeated. "You are going to turn your back on the investigation and let that fall through that you may go to Washington?"

"I told you Varrick would take my place," he said irritably. Marion turn-ed and faced him.

"Hugh," she said simply, "do you really think that Mr. Varrick will take your place?"

"Why not?" he asked. This was so different from what he had anticipated.

"I heard Mr. Colqhoon talking to father last night," she explained. "He said that the investigation was a com-plete surprise to both parties; that they had supposed there would be the usual whitewashing, and that you had made it a real investigation."

"What of it?" demanded Candless.

"He said," went on Marion, "that he wondered how they would bribe you off; that he did not think money could do it. I was proud of you, then, Hugh."

"Why not now?" he asked crossly. "Is it any disgrace to be elected to congress?"

"It is a disgrace when you turn your back on the people who look to you to right an evil—when you sell your honor for the nomination."

"But I am not selling my honor," he insisted. "I am simply obeying my party's call. I am doing, as I am told, for the best good of the party."

"You mean in running for congress, but the good of the party means dropping the investigation."

"Varrick will carry it on," he per-sisted.

"Not the way you would. Father said that if you kept on, Harrington himself would land in jail. Hugh, don't you see that they are bribing you, just as surely as though they put money in your hand?"

The girl watched him curiously as he sprang to his feet and began to pace the floor. For a quarter of an hour nothing was said, then he turned to her abruptly.

"Marion," he said gently, "you are right. In my joy at attaining so soon what I have so eagerly longed for I have blinded myself to the real mean-ing of Harrington's offer. I see now that he wanted to get me out of the way. I will go and tell him I will not run."

He tenderly bent and kissed her, then rose to his feet and left the room, while the girl buried her head in the pillows.

Harrington stormed and threatened, but Candless would not be moved, and in the end word passed through the rooms that the announcement that Candless would abandon the investiga-tion was premature.

Late that evening, after the guests had gone, Candless lingered in the library for a good night chat. "I'm sorry you are disappointed, Hugh," whispered Marion, "but we can wait, dear, until your honor comes without the taint of suspicion."

"Yes, he said quietly, "even though it may be a long wait, I will keep my hands clean."

"Hugh," said Major Sharpless, en-tering through the curtains, "I don't think you need to wait, my boy. You have your triumph in being willing to forego preferment for your duty. That is a far greater triumph than the winning of the senatorship. You may have Marion whenever you want her."

Hugh turned to the girl. "I want her now," he said quietly, "for my strength lies in her."

NEW LIGHT ON SCRIPTURES

Russian Writers Satisfied That They Have Found Proper Solutions to Biblical Parables.

Some years ago a Russian wrote a fantastic (but none the less interest-ing on that account) book in which he set forth that the intervening years between the boyhood of Jesus and his appearance at the age of thirty years were chiefly spent in India, and that it was there that he obtained a knowl-edge of which he made good use in his ministry. Another Russian, Nich-olas Morosow, a biblical critic, recent-ly published a book on the revelation of St. John, the sale of which has been interdicted by the Russian church. Morosow claims to have dis-covered all the mysteries in the Apocalypse. He avers that all the signs of the zodiac are discoverable in the book of Revelation; that the four cherubim are the four constella-tions; the twelve gated celestial city is the firmament. This author claims to have discovered the actual day in which the Christian prophet wrote Revelation; that the writer thereof was not the apostolic St. John, the beloved of Jesus, but St. John Chrys-ostom, "the golden-mouthed" patriarch of Constantinople and that the year of the writing was 395 A. D. In this Rus-sian's argument it is set out that the representation of the heavens in the Apocalypse corresponds exactly to what it appeared from the Isle of Pat-mos on the evening of September 30, 395, A. D., and the like appearance has never since been witnessed on this island.

Hunting the Hippopotamus.

As hippopotamus hunters the Shul-las of the Sobat region, North Africa, stand alone. A native hippo hunt is an exciting and dangerous sport. The hunters are in dugout canoes; two or three paddle while one manages the harpoon or barbed spear, to which is attached a stout rope and a float of ambatch. When the hippo comes to the surface to breath, an attempt is made to steal upon him with the harpoon; when this is accomplished the hunters make a hasty retreat from the enraged beast, and in turn engage his attention while attempts are made to spear him by those in the other canoes. When severely wounded a hippopotamus goes ashore to rest or to die, and not to attack his assail-ants, as has been so often reported. The native hunters wait for this and when the animal goes up out of the water a volley of spears is thrown into it, and slowly the huge beast bleeds to death. The hunters do not always escape. Sometimes the life or a limb of one of them is sacrificed to their daring. The hide of the hip-popotamus is cut into strips and dried to be sold to Arab traders who, in turn, sell it to the whipmakers of Omdurman and Egypt. Certain por-tions of the hide are much prized as shields. The flesh is cut into long, narrow strips and dried in the sun; its taste resembles that of coarse beef.—Southern Workman.

Not the Boss.

"Is the master of the house in?" in-quired the smooth-tongued book agent of the little boy who answered his ring.

"Nope," said the boy.

"Little boys should not tell false-hoods," said the book agent. "Isn't that your father reading the newspa-per there by the window?"

"Yep," was the answer, "that's pa, all right, but ma is out."