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Author: Miss Brightwell

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GEORGIE’S PRESENT; OR TALES OF NEWFOUNDLAND.

BY MISS BRIGHTWELL

Author of "Annals of Industry and Genius," etc. etc. [Blank Page]

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GEORGIE’S PRESENT;

OR,

TALES OF NEWFOUNDLAND.

CHAPTER I.

It was a beautiful May-day morning when George Green rose at an early hour; for it was his birthday, and he had not been able to sleep so long as usual, for counting of the joyful anniversary.

"Ten years old, are you indeed, my boy?" said his father, who found Master George eagerly awaiting him in the breakfast parlour. "Yes, papa; and I am to have a whole holiday, and mamma has promised to take me to spend the afternoon at Aunt Baker’s, and--but I must not tell you that now, for it is a secret!"

[Illustration]

The afternoon visit was evidently the great treat in George’s esteem; and pleased indeed did he look, as he started with his mother for the Parsonage-house in which his aunt lived. Mrs. Baker was the daughter of Mr. Ward, an excellent clergyman, who had for several years been a missionary in Newfoundland. After his death, his widow and daughter returned to England, and found a home in the country village where some of their family lived, and where Maria Ward soon married the clergyman of the parish, her widowed mother consenting to become one of her household.

Mrs. Ward was a charming old lady, lively and intelligent, and full of goodness. Her heart seemed always overflowing with love, and though no longer able to labour in the missionary field as she had done in the days of her early womanhood, she was at heart a missionary still, regarding with delight the progress of that great and glorious cause--the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom upon earth.

On the afternoon of the fair May-day, when little George and his mother paid their visit to the Parsonage, Mrs. Ward was sitting in her best bib and tucker, prepared to do honour to the occasion. Close by her side, upon the hearth, lay a splendid Newfoundland dog, which every now and then looked up at her with affectionate eyes that seemed to say, "How much I love you."

"Ah, Boxa!" said the old lady, fondly caressing the head of the animal, "I don’t know what you’ll say to me I have actually given away one of your pups: at all events, I have promised it, which is the same thing."

At that moment Master George popped his merry face in at the open window, and greeted Mrs. Ward with a shout of joyous laughter. "Dear Granny, you didn’t know you were talking aloud; and how indeed were you to guess that I was so close at hand to overhear you? Ah! how glad I am that you mean really to let me have the beautiful pup. I have chosen a name for it already: it shall be called Newfy, because its mother came from Newfoundland."

"Its grandmother you should say, my dear," replied Mrs. Ward; "Boxa’s mother came over with me from Newfoundland, and a wonderful animal she was for cleverness and beauty; but after all, she could not compare with dear old Box, her sire. He was a marvel of sagacity, and did feats which I really believe have never been surpassed."

While the old lady was speaking, her grandson had jumped in at the window, and was standing beside her, eagerly listening.

"You know, dear grandmamma," he said, "this is my birthday, and I have come to spend half of it with you and aunt; and, first, we are to have a walk, then to take tea together, and, to finish up, you will tell me all about Newfoundland and what you have seen there, ending with the history of the wonderful dog."

"Stay, stay, my love," said Mrs. Ward; "it is impossible that I should tell you all I have seen in Newfoundland. I can, however, give you an account of some of your dear grandfather’s missionary journeys, in which he met with many adventures, and, at the close of one trip, fell in with the good man to whom the wonderful dog Box belonged."

"That’s just what I should like," said George; and immediately he hastened to find his grandmother’s bonnet and shawl, in which she was quickly arrayed for the walk. [Illustration]

It was a bright sunshiny afternoon, and as the little party strolled

through the village street, they found half the women and children of the place, sitting in the doorways, or playing about on the roadside. By-and-by they came to the green, where there was a crowd of boys just turned out of school, a large knot of them clustering round a little Italian boy, who had found his way to the village with his hurdy-gurdy, upon which he was playing, while, tied to a string, he carried a little monkey, perched upon his shoulder. George was eager to join the group and see the antics of Jacko, who sat grinning and holding a little cap for money, into which a boy flung a halfpenny, and then asked the Italian where he came from. But the answer was unintelligible to him, for it was given in a strange tongue, and George was soon tired of listening to the music and watching the monkey.

In the meantime his grandmother had walked on, accompanied by her daughter, and they were now slowly crossing the common. A few minutes' brisk run brought George to their side, when he began chatting about the boy and his monkey.

"I have no liking for those animals," said Mrs. Ward; "indeed, the very sight of a monkey makes me shudder with a feeling of aversion. I once saw a trick played by one of them which made a lasting impression upon my mind."

"Tell me about it, dear grandma," said George, "while you rest for a while under this warm hedge upon your camp-stool which I have brought for you."

"Well," she said, seating herself at her grandson's request, "it is a strange story, but quite true. It happened many long years ago, when I was a young married woman, voyaging to Newfoundland, in the good ship _Sarah Ann_, with your grandfather, who was then starting for the missionary station to which he had been appointed. We were drawing near to land; and after a long and weary voyage, you may imagine how eagerly all eyes were strained to catch the first sight of the yet distant shore.

"Among the passengers was one young lady, a sweet, gentle creature, who quite won my heart by her winning manners. She had with her her first-born child, an infant at the breast, and was going to Quebec to join her husband, a military man there. She had come with the rest of us on deck when the glad summons was heard, 'Land in sight!' and was seated upon a sofa, with the child in her lap. The captain very politely handed his glass to the ladies who stood near him, and directed them how to catch a glimpse of the shore, which they were just able to discern. When they had all had a peep, he turned to the young lady whom I have mentioned, and asked if she would like to look. She thanked him, and rose for the purpose, first cautiously laying her sleeping baby upon the sofa. She then advanced a few steps, and took the glass he presented to her; but scarcely had she raised it to her eye when a shout was heard from one of the sailors--'Stop him! stop the monkey; he's got the child!' Every eye was turned in the direction to which the man pointed; and there we saw the ship's monkey, a favourite animal with the sailors, of which they made a great pet, climbing up a rope which he held in one

hand, while with the other he hugged close to him the helpless infant! Up, up, to a towering height the wretched brute climbed, while we followed him with our eyes in breathless alarm. Suddenly a loud scream was heard: it was the voice of the poor agonized mother, who would have fallen senseless to the ground, had not one of the gentlemen caught her in his arms. She was carried down in a state of unconsciousness to the cabin, and left to the care of the stewardess."

[Illustration: desc. Ship’s rigging in night storm]

"No one on deck had moved an inch. Indeed, they scarcely seemed to breathe, so intense was the excitement felt in watching the movements of the animal. Presently, a faint cry was heard,--the child was evidently frightened; perhaps hurt by the pressure of the brute’s arm. At once the monkey paused: he seemed to perceive there was something amiss; for, taking his station in some part of the rigging, he tried to act the part of nurse, rocking the baby to and fro, and patting its back. In the meantime the captain was at his wits’ end to know what course was the best to pursue. At first he ordered one or two of the men to go aloft in pursuit. But this only increased the evil, for the animal, seeing itself chased, hastened to climb a still higher spar; and the terrible fear was suggested that, if driven too closely, he might drop his precious burden, in order thus to secure the use of both his arms."

"Oh, grandmamma, how shocking!" cried George, his interest evidently reaching a climax at this point of the tale.

"Shocking indeed," said Mrs. Ward; "the very idea was enough to make one’s blood run cold. What was to be done? There was, happily, present a very experienced old seaman, who now ventured to suggest a plan which he thought might possibly turn out successful: at all events, as he said, it could do no harm. His advice was, that everybody should be ordered to quit the deck, sailors and all, so that not a creature should be visible on board. The few men whose presence was necessary to manage the ship were alone suffered to remain at their post, and they were directed to keep quiet, and to conceal themselves as much as possible from view of the monkey. The captain determined to try this scheme, and his orders were immediately obeyed. We all hastened down accordingly, and waited the issue in suspense. For some minutes a profound silence reigned. By-and-by the captain, who had placed himself at a point where he could watch unseen what was going forward, announced that the monkey was descending cautiously from his perch. By his actions it seemed as though the creature felt at a loss to account for the unwonted solitude on deck. His curiosity was awakened, and he must needs come down and see what it meant.

"Slowly and cautiously he slipped from yardarm to yardarm, approaching nearer and nearer to the deck; at last he reached it, still carrying the child with a firm grasp. In a moment he was seized by two lusty sailors who were lying in wait behind a coil of rope; and the precious freight he carried was borne in triumph down to the cabin. What a scene it was! The poor mother was just recovering from the long death-like swoon in which she had lain, when the infant was placed in her arms, perfectly

uninjured, although cold, and its little face blanched as if with terror. At first it seemed as though the sudden revulsion of feeling was too much for her, and she appeared about to sink once more into a state of insensibility; but the next moment, feeling the little creature nestling close to her bosom, she clasped it to her, while the tears trickled down her cheeks."

"I wonder whether they punished the monkey for playing such a trick," said George. "I really think, my dear," said Mrs. Ward, "that the mischievous brute escaped the flogging which he richly deserved: one thing is certain, he never had the chance of playing nurse to Mrs. Ray's baby again."

[Illustration]

CHAPTER II.

The rays of the evening sun were now sinking beneath the horizon, shedding a golden glory over the landscape, and speaking in fair promise of a fine day on the morrow. "It is time we went home again, before the dews begin to fall," said Mrs. Ward, as she rose from her seat; and then, pointing to the western sky, she added: "How beautiful!--'These are thy glorious works, Parent of good. Let us praise God, whose glory is shown in the works of His hands; for day unto day uttereth speech; night unto night showeth knowledge.' I hope you, my dear George, will never be one of those who have eyes that see not, and ears that cannot hear. Your dear grandfather was only a little boy when he began to think of the great things of another world, and at the age of fifteen he solemnly devoted himself to the service of God his Saviour."

"Dear Grandmamma, I should like to know more about him. You promised to tell me about one of his journeys in Newfoundland; and now here we are, home again, and tea is set out in readiness, as I can see through the open window." The little party was soon comfortably seated at the social meal, when Master George's health was pledged in the cup "that cheers but not inebriates;" and he regaled himself on choice plum-cake made by the dear old lady herself for that special occasion, taking care, every now and then, to break off a bit and throw it to Boxa, who sat by his side, wagging her tail, in evident expectation of tit-bits.

"Shall we have candles?" asked Mrs. Ward, when the tea-things were being removed, "or would you like best to sit in the twilight and watch the rising moon?"

"I vote for twilight and the moon," said George, placing his grandmother's arm-chair in a cozy nook, from which she could see abroad; and then, seating himself on the stool at her feet, he waited till she should begin the promised story.

"It was in the spring of the year, 1835, when your grandfather undertook a tour of visitation to the southern and western shores of Newfoundland, for the purpose of ministering to the scattered families in the remote settlements of that region. He left me at St. John's in the month of March, as travelling over the snow in the island is considered less difficult in that month than walking overland is at any other season of the year. When we parted I knew that he was going on a laborious and painful journey, but I had formed no idea of the dangers to which he would be exposed, or my heart would indeed have sunk within me. He took with him a guide to pilot him through the country; a man who was reckoned very skilful and experienced, and who had lived some time with the Micmac Indians, one of the aboriginal tribes. They had not advanced far on their way when they missed the route, and could only ascertain the points of the compass by observing the inclination of the topmost branches of the juniper or larch trees."

"How could they know by that means, grandmamma?"

"Because the juniper or larch always points to the east, thus affording them a secure indication, by means of which they regained the path some time after night-fall.

"This was rather a bad start, and as it turned out, seemed ominous of evil to the travellers. As they proceeded on their way, your grandfather stopped at various places to preach, administer the sacraments, and visit the sick; and, in many instances, the poor people received him gladly, being like sheep scattered without a shepherd in solitary places, far from the means of grace. In one house which he visited he was moved with compassion at the sight of the poor ailing mother of the family. 'Ah sir!' said she, 'if any of us be sick or sore, there is no one to come near us, or to care for our souls.'

"I doubt not you have often heard the saying, 'One half the world little knows how the other half lives;' and, indeed, we have but little idea of the shifts to which thousands of our fellow men are put, and of the discomforts and troubles of their daily life. These people lived, for the most part, in wretched cabins, which swarmed with men, women, and children, while every nook and corner not thus occupied was filled with pigs, fowls, sheep, or dogs; and the thick smoke, or, as the people emphatically call it, 'cruel steam,' is most distressing to the eyesight, which suffers greatly in consequence."

"But, why don't they make chimneys, and let it out grandma?"

"They have a sort of rude chimney constructed of upright planks stuffed between with moss; but the danger of the fire is great; indeed it is always a necessary to have buckets of water at hand ready to throw upon the flames. In some places the chimneys were fortified against this danger by being lined all the way up with a coating of tin, which is found to last some years."

"I should be very sorry to have to live with the Newfoundlanders if they have such houses as these; it seems more like what we read of the

savages in their wigwams."

"Well, George, your grandfather fell in with some of these people, a party of Indians from Canada; and, as it was late at night when he reached their wigwams, the guide begged to be allowed to pass the night with them. This they courteously permitted, and showed every hospitality to their unexpected guests. It was a curious sight, the whole party, men, women, and children, lying around the fire in the middle of the tent, upon spruce boughs, spread like feathers, to form the couch. The softest and cleanest deer skin was most courteously offered to the guest, and he passed the night very comfortably, truly thankful for the accommodation thus afforded him, and without which he must have suffered greatly from exposure to the weather, for the snow fell fast during several hours."

At this point of her narrative Mrs. Ward rang for a candle, and desired the servant to bring her writing desk. "I shall find there," she said, "the original MS. given me by my dear husband on his return from this journey. He wrote it amid much difficulty, for very frequently the ink would freeze in spite of all the precautions he took. Paper, too, was very scanty, and had it not been for boxes, containing a supply of this article, which had been washed on shore from different wrecks, he would have found it impossible to procure enough for the purpose. Anxious, however, to preserve a diary of each day's proceedings, he persevered to the best of his power, and the result was this scroll, now discoloured by age, and some of the leaves a good deal torn, but the hand is clear and legible throughout. I think you will like to have me read you a short extract, giving an account of a very dangerous part of his expedition. But, in the first place, I should mention that, when travelling into the interior, he was obliged to walk in Indian rackets, or snow-shoes, a very difficult matter to one unaccustomed to their use."

"Why difficult, grandma? I thought snow-shoes kept you from slipping, and made it much easier to walk in winter."

[Illustration]

"The snow-shoes of which I speak, my dear, are very different from anything you have ever seen; nor could you imagine it possible to travel in them if you had a pair now before you. The racket is a machine consisting of a sort of net-work stretched upon ledges made of very hard wood. They are about two feet and a half long, and fourteen inches broad; and in the middle is fitted a kind of shoe, lined with wool or hair, which is tied on to the ankle. By means of these strange snow-shoes, the feet are prevented from sinking into the soft, deep snow. Even the Indians, shod in this fashion, occasionally meet with heavy falls, especially when descending very steep hills; and a foreigner feels terribly awkward and at a loss when first he attempts to use them. They are exceedingly fatiguing, too, as they become very heavy when wet; and the wearer is compelled to walk with long and rapid strides, in order to prevent the rackets from striking against each other. Sometimes, when the day's journey was a long one, the faithful terrier

which accompanied your grandfather throughout the whole route would howl for very exhaustion; and whenever his master stopped to look about him, or to set his compass, the poor brute would scratch about and make himself a bed for a few minutes' rest in the soft snow."

"Poor Doggy!" said George, "I can pity him for I remember once when I walked some miles through the snow, and my shoes got clogged up, I was so tired, what Uncle Tom called 'dead beat,' that I could not help crying the last mile before I reached home."

"Imagine, then, your grandfather starting and making the best of his way over the snow-clad country until the afternoon began to warn him that he must make a halt. At about four o'clock the traveller has to begin his preparation for the night's lodging, and this he does by clearing away the snow (which is sometimes ten feet deep) from a square space; for which purpose he makes a rude shovel, cut out of the side of some standing tree; and, as snow does not adhere to wood as it does to iron, this is the best thing to be used in removing the snow. When the ground is quite cleared, the wood for the fire is laid in the centre, about a foot of loose snow being left round the space in which it is to be kindled. Upon this, the spruce or fir branches, which easily break off when bent sharply backwards, are laid all one way, with the lower part of the bough upwards. Thus the bed is made. The excavated snow forms a lofty wall round the square; and here the traveller lies, with no covering from the weather, nor any other shelter than the walls of snow on each side of his cavern, and the surrounding trees, may afford."

"I wonder," said George, "how they got a light to make the fire with; perhaps by rubbing two pieces of wood together."

"Your guess, though ingenious, is not correct, my dear," said Mrs. Ward, "there is a certain yellow fungus which grows on the hazel tree that supplies tinder to the Indian, who is never without flint and steel; and he has a very expert method of rapidly whirling moss and dry leaves and bark in his hands, so as to cause a draught, and in a wonderfully short time he succeeds in making a cheerful blaze."

"And what has he to eat?"

"Plenty of venison, for there are large flocks of deer in the country. You will wonder where these creatures find pasture; I will tell you. At the time when your grandfather travelled, the whole land was covered with snow, excepting on the tops of some of the hills, from which the snow had melted. These lofty, bare spots are called 'naps,' and they resemble island meadows in an ocean of snow. Upon these, the deer were grazing leisurely, like cattle, in numerous herds. They go in quest of food from one of these naps to another, in places near water, which after long frost becomes exceedingly scarce; in the interior, the tracks of the deer were as thick as of cattle in the snow in a well-stocked farmyard. There were, beside, plenty of ptarmigan, which abounded on these hills, searching for a species of cranberry, a food of which they are very fond."

"Vension and grouse! dainty dishes, indeed, dear granny; after all, that is not quite a land of barrenness."

"Nay, child! there is provision made in all places of our heavenly Father's dominions for the supply of the necessities both of man and beast. But I must hasten on, or you will be weary of my tale."

[Illustration]

CHAPTER III.

"In addition to the first guide, your grandfather now engaged one of the Indians with whom they had passed the night, to accompany him. The three cheerfully proceeded on their route, and for the first few days enjoyed very brilliant weather, and made so much progress upon the hard snow, that I believe they had nearly traversed a third of their destined route across to St. George's Bay.

"But now they began to suffer severely from the state of their eyes which became exceedingly painful, and no wonder; for by day they were exposed to the full glare of the sun upon the wide expanse of snow, and all night to the red glare of the fire, together with the pungent wood-smoke, which proved a constant trial to the sight. At length they became almost blind, and to add to their distress, provisions began to fail them. They had counted on securing plenty of game as they went along, and no one ever thinks of carrying provisions for more than a day or two into the interior with them. Now, unhappily, this resource was at an end; for not one of the three could see well enough to use a gun, or, indeed, bear to look upwards.

"What follows is very sad; it is touchingly told in the journal, and I will read the account as it is there given:--'The atmosphere now became so thick, that, had we not been troubled with snow-blindness, we could not have seen more than a few yards, and could not possibly have made our way in an unknown country.

"'These Newfoundland fogs are fearful things; they surpass, indeed, the imagination of Europeans. You seem to be actually in cloud-land; for nothing but cloud is visible above, around, and beneath. This state of things lasts often for days; now it is a bright white, as though the day were struggling through; now it becomes shaded, and now almost night. Sometimes there are little openings, and you catch a clean vista between two walls of vapour, but it is presently shut out by the rolling masses of fog. I could compare it to nothing but ghost-land; nothing is real except the danger!"

"Were you ever in such a fog as that, grandmamma?" asked George.

"Yes, George; once at sea we were overtaken by a most fearful and

prolonged fog; never in my life did I experience such feelings of awe and alarm as during that weary week.

"But I must tell you of that another time. Your grandfather often used to recall his emotions when travelling in that thick cloud. One day they rested in the icy chamber they had dug for the night's resting-place, and he said, 'That was indeed an oratory;' and fervently did we pray, 'Give us our daily bread,' and 'Lighten our darkness we beseech Thee, O Lord.'

"The tears dropped fast when he thought of my anxiety on his account, and of the probability that his usefulness was at an end, and that we should meet no more on earth.

"At length he came to the resolution to retrace his steps, hoping to make the scanty supply of biscuit which still remained hold out until they could regain the spot where the Indians had encamped, and where they had buried some venison. Of the three travellers, he suffered least from snow-blindness, which he thought was owing to the fact that he had kept a black gauze veil over his face at mid-day, and had resolutely adhered to his purpose of not rubbing his eyes. He was, therefore, best able to guide his companions. He thus describes the plan on which he proceeded:--'Maurice, the Indian, would open his eyes now and then to look at my compass;--we could not see for fog more than one hundred yards; he would fix on some object as far as the eye could reach, and then shut his eyes again, when I would lead him up to it. On reaching it he would take another look, and we then started for the next point. It was literally a case of the blind leading the blind.

"In this manner, by forced marches, we were enabled to reach, by seven or eight in the evening, the same spots at which we had halted on our outward march at four each day. Thus we were spared the labour of digging and clearing away the snow, to which, in our enfeebled condition, we were quite unequal. The stint of food was now so small that I advised my companions not to eat any quantity at a time, but to take a piece the size of a nutmeg when hunger was most craving. We gathered also each day, on our return, about as many partridge berries as would fill a wine glass apiece, and these we found both refreshing and nutritive. They had ripened in the autumn, and had been buried under the snow all the winter, so that they resembled preserved fruit in flavour, and reminded me of a rich, clarety grape.

"One great privation in this winter travelling is the want of water. We were obliged to content ourselves with the supply gotten from the snow, melted by the smoky fire. This water, together with the wind, had the effect of parching and cracking my swollen lips to such a degree, that when, after an interval of eight days, I had an opportunity of surveying my face in a piece of broken glass, I was at a loss to recognise my own features. The most scorching heat of summer is not so injurious to the skin as the effect of travelling in the snow at this season.'

"After this tedious fashion, stage by stage, the wanderers slowly proceeded, until at length, by God's mercy, they reached the place where

the Indian wigwams had been left. During the latter part of their route they heard continually the noise of the woodpeckers upon the bark of the trees, which is considered a certain sign of approaching rain, a downfall of which they much feared. The weather was beginning to soften, and consequently the ice lost its firmness, and it became both difficult and dangerous to get so far as this place, but by great effort they accomplished it. Nor was your grandfather satisfied to trust to the imperfect shelter the tents afforded, but persevered in journeying on to the hut built for the winter crew, and which he knew was at no great distance from thence.

"Scarcely had he reached this spot when the rain fell in torrents, and truly thankful did he feel that he had a roof to protect him, instead of being in one of those miserable un-roofed snow-caves, which had for so many nights been his only retreat during all weathers. For a time he suffered greatly both in his eyes and from the smarting of his cold-blistered face, which, together with the fatigue he had endured, rendered it necessary that he should repose for some days before venturing on his journeyings again. I shall not trace his onward progress, which continued to be attended with much difficulty and danger. His nerves became at length so shattered by his great exertions, that, when travelling along the coast, where he had to pass over very lofty cliffs, the sight of these dizzy precipices would so affect him that he burst into tears, and experienced all the symptoms of fainting. Once when clinging by his hands and knees upon the edge of a steep cliff, he felt as though he must inevitably loose his hold, in which case the fall would have been certain death. Closing his eyes, he breathed an earnest ejaculatory prayer, and supported by an invisible arm, and strengthened with new vigour, he felt empowered to maintain his hold, and, gradually advancing, reached the bottom in safety."

[Illustration]

"Oh, how glad you must have felt when you saw him home again, safe and sound, dear granny."

"I did, indeed, my love, and with thankful heart acknowledged the goodness of our heavenly Father. Nothing but the strong sense of duty can sustain the heart under such anxiety as falls to the lot of the faithful missionary and his family. Love divine is the constraining and blessed principle that bears the fainting spirit up. 'We love Him because He first loved us.' Let that, my own dear boy, be your motto; and then if you lose your life in the service of your Lord, you will find it again in eternal joy."

CHAPTER IV.

After a short pause, Mrs. Ward said, with a smile, "You will be wishing to hear the story of Boxa's ancestor, a dog, as I have said, deserving

of renown. It chanced, in one of his official journeys, your grandfather visited a part of the coast peculiarly fatal to European vessels, especially to those outward bound to Quebec in the spring; the shore in the neighbourhood being very low, and the ledges of rock extending far out to sea. On one of the islands which he visited, he took up his abode in a neat cabin belonging to a planter, where he found welcome shelter, and a cheerful fire made from the wreckwood scattered abundantly upon the shore. There was a family of children, a merry group of boys and girls, who kept jingling in their hands some sort of playthings.

"What have you got there, my boys?' he asked. They showed him their treasures, which proved to be bunches of small desk and cabinet keys, that had been picked up from the wrecks--a melancholy kind of toy, he could not help thinking. By-and-bye the good wife spread the hospitable board, at which he was invited to take his seat. He looked with surprise at the plates which she placed upon the deal table. They were very beautiful old china ware, and several pieces of a modern elegant breakfast set of dragon china, which had been ranged upon the shelves of the cabin alongside of the most common earthen crockery. These also had been cast ashore by the waves in boxes. When he asked to wash his hands, a fine huckaback towel, neatly marked with initial letters, was handed him. On inquiry, he learned that it had come from a wreck in which there were several ladies.

"There was something inexpressibly painful to the sensitive heart of my dear husband, in being thus surrounded by tokens of calamity. He inquired, with a sigh, whether any efforts had been made to help the sufferers?

"'Oh, yes!' said his host, a worthy man, though rough in his address and appearance. 'Yes! we do our best, but it is very seldom our help comes in time to be worth much. Once or twice we have saved a solitary seaman by throwing a rope, or by sending in our dogs to drag others ashore; and some years ago there were seven men wrecked in the night, unknown to us. When the morning came, I was out early and discovered footmarks along the shore, which told me a tale I could read plain enough. I knew there had been a fearful gale some hours before, and my mind misgave me that these poor creatures, whose footsteps I saw, would perish of hunger in the interior, where they could find nothing to eat, and where there was not a solitary cottage at which they could get help.

"'Well; I determined to track them, and I called up my brother, who was a strong, active young fellow; and we followed them, and found them at last, just as they had given up all hope, and had laid down to die. For three days and nights they had tasted neither food nor drink. When first they caught sight of us, I shall never forget their faces. Haggard and starved, as they looked, they cried for joy, and kissed our hands, and bade God bless us!'"

"And would they really have died, do you think, grandmamma, if the two men had not overtaken them?" said Georgie, eagerly.

"No doubt, my love, such would have been their fate. After hearing this

tale, your grandfather retired early to rest, being weary with the fatigues of a long and exhausting day's journey. He slept soundly, and though the wind, which had blown a strong gale when he landed, increased during the night to a hurricane, his slumbers were undisturbed for several hours. At length he was aroused by a loud uproar, for which at first he could not account. When he had quite regained consciousness, he found that, in addition to the noise of a raging tempest, there were the shouts and cries of men outside the cabin, and loud talking in the chamber beneath.

"It was evident that something unusual had occurred to disturb the household. Hastily rising and dressing himself, he made the best of his way downstairs, and there he found the wife of his host busily engaged in chafing the hands and arms of a poor half-drowned lad who had just been brought into the cabin and laid upon the floor. He, it appeared, had been cast ashore by a heavy swell, but there were others beside him who were still in danger.

"'Could you manage, sir, to stand against the wind, perhaps you could carry this coil of rope; they may be wanting it,' said the woman. In another minute your grandfather was battling against the storm, making his way along the rugged shore in the direction of a small group of men who proved to be his host, with a younger brother and the two men who had manned the boat in which he had himself come to the island.

"It was a fearful sight. The sea was in a white foam, the whole air filled with spray, and the wind blowing heavily. Not far from shore was a boat with a part of the exhausted crew from a vessel wrecked in the offing. The breakers made it impossible that the poor fellows should effect a landing. A terrible death seemed their inevitable fate. Just at the moment your grandfather reached the point, he saw his host leap into the sea, his object being to give the men a rope. It was at the peril of his life he took that desperate leap. His favourite dog, Boxa, saw and instantly followed his master. The two rose in a moment, and were borne by the swell toward the boat. They had nearly reached it when it capsized. Moir--that was the name of the gallant man--seized one of the seamen, and, wonderful to tell, succeeded in bringing him safe to shore. In the meantime, Boxa, following his master's example, caught hold of another of the poor drowning creatures, and began to drag him along. It proved, however, that the dog's hold had fastened upon the seaman's south-wester cap, which came off in the water. The animal evidently was not aware of what had happened, and, not perceiving the diminution in the weight of his burden, was proceeding to make his way to land with the cap only.

[Illustration] "'The poor fellow is lost!' cried the bystanders on the point.

"But no! they presently saw the sailor clutch hold of the dog's tail,---it was a fine, handsome, large tail, George;--and in this manner he was towed to land in safety. Imagine how glad he must have been when he found himself on terra firma! His first act was to give thanks to God, and then he threw his arms around Boxa, caressing him again and

again, and loading him with fond epithets, part in English, part in Swedish. He was a young Swede, a fine, handsome youth, about twenty years of age. Without loss of time he was conducted to the house, where he shared the kind attentions of the mistress; but she had soon another and a more difficult case in hand.

"The master of the wrecked vessel, who was one of the boat's crew, was rescued from a watery grave by the further exertions of Moir and his companions, and was carried in a perfectly insensible state to the house. Some hours elapsed before he was conscious of anything that was passing around him. He seemed, indeed, so completely gone, that every one had given him over, when some faint symptoms of returning life appeared.

"In the meantime the day wore on, and your grandfather, feeling that he caused additional trouble to the family by his prolonged stay under such circumstances, was very desirous to leave the island as soon as possible. The state of the weather, however, continued such as to render it impossible he should attempt to put to sea, and he passed another night and a part of the following day with the friendly planter, whose heroic exertions on behalf of the shipwrecked crew had greatly exalted him in the opinion of his visitor.

"During the early part of the night the two sat up together, there being a dearth of sleeping accommodation, for the beds were all given up to the sailors; and for some hours they conversed together on topics of mutual interest.

"Moir was a pious man, and his early history had been one of striking adventure. As he sat by the fireside, quietly narrating various passages of his past life, his faithful dog crouched close beside him, dozing and evidently dreaming at intervals; for he made strange noises, and paddled with his fore-feet, as though he were still struggling with the waves. His master looked fondly on the animal, and said,--

"'You'd hardly credit, sir, the surprising sagacity of these dogs. Some of them are perfect wonders. They have more sense, really, it seems, than many so-called Christians, and I have sometimes thought they must reason.

"'Boxa is a fair specimen of the race, and I could tell you some of his doings which would make you ask--Is it possible? I have known him help to carry to shore some light spars which the captain of a vessel in the harbour desired him to convey to the land-wash, in order that a boat's crew might be saved the trouble of taking them. Another dog belonging to the same wharf, whether of his own accord, or being pressed into the service, took to helping him at this work for a time; he soon tired, however, and, in the middle of his second turn, thought proper to swim to shore without his spar.

"'When Boxa saw what he was up to, he quietly made his way to land with his own turn, and then went in search of the runaway, and gave him a sound thrashing; in short, his arguments were so unanswerable and

convincing that the culprit returned to his work, and without more ado, set to and persevered at it, till every spar that had been thrown overboard was rafted to shore by the combined labour of the two dogs.'

"'That was certainly a very sagacious and knowing proceeding,' said your grandfather, 'and I do not wonder you are so much attached to your dog.'

"'O sir, that's only a sample I give you of his sense and clever ways. What I value him so much for it his fidelity to myself, and his attachment to the whole family. As to the children, be they never so small, we can always leave them without fear in his charge for hours; and to crown his good deeds, I must tell you he saved the life of the youngest of the fry. The child was playing close to the water-side, and fell in. There was nobody near, and how the dog found it out we never could tell; he was some distance off, and a few minutes before, when my wife passed that way, she saw him lying asleep, to all appearance as sound as a church door. But he must have heard the little one cry; for, certain it is, he had dragged her out, and was licking her little face and hands when the mother came back from her errand. You'll not wonder after that to hear that we would one and all of us share our last crust with Boxa.'

"'I do not, indeed, my good friend,' said your grandfather; 'and I must say I should be heartily glad to possess a dog of the breed having the same admirable qualities; for I have just lost my good old terrier, a tried and faithful animal, which I brought with me from England. He died of old age, about a month ago, and sadly shall I miss him.'

"Moir made no answer at the time, but the next day, shortly before his guest departed, the worthy man made his appearance alongside the boat as it was pushing off, and handed in a hamper which, he said, contained a pup of the right sort, if his reverence would please to accept of it. This pup was no other than the mother of Boxa, and an excellent animal she proved to be--faithful, sagacious, and patient; in short, a worthy scion of such a stock.

"I need not, I am sure, by way of conclusion, sing the praises of Boxa herself, for you know as well as I can tell you her many good qualities; and therefore I have only further to say that I hope Newfy--as you have named him--will turn out all that could be wished."

"Thank you, thank you, dear grandmamma," said George, who had listened with such fixed attention to the last part of Mrs. Ward's narrative, that he had not once moved upon his stool; "I am so pleased with my pet, I shall not know how I can thank you enough. I think, if you please, I will run and fetch him out of the kennel, and put him into the basket I brought, hoping you would let me carry him home with me to-night."

[Illustration]

"Do so, George," said his mother, folding up the handkerchief she had been embroidering, "and in the meantime I will put on my bonnet, for it is time we were on our way home."

No sooner said than done. In five minutes George and Mrs. Green had said good-bye and were crossing the common in the direction of their own home.

"What a happy day it has been, mamma," said our little friend, "and how glad I am I have such a nice birthday present;" and he bent down to take a peep through the wicker-work of the basket.

"And I am so glad, dear boy, that you have enjoyed your treat," replied his mother. "May you see many happy, returns of this day; and may each succeeding year find you wiser and happier."

Here ends the story of Georgie's Present; but, as I think my young readers may like to know how the Newfoundland pup turned out, I will just tell them that he is now a full-grown, handsome young dog,--the great favourite and inseparable companion of my friend George, who assured me, not long ago, that of all his possessions there is none he prizes more highly than Newfy.

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