

The Wreck of the Lord Ashburton.

The Fearful Climb of "Jim and Dick."

(Written for the Journal.)

"Have you never heard the story?"
 "No, but come back from the edge of that cliff; it's enough to make one's head swim!"

The other stood smiling, looking sheer down, three hundred feet, to the cruel rocks and boulders below.

"I'll take your word for it," said his friend, stepping back. "But it's hard to believe that any human soul ever climbed up over that place."

"Really, have you not heard the story of the Lord Ashburton's dreadful wreck, or 'Jim and Dick?'"

"Nothing but stray, floating bits, that have made me eager to hear it as it happened."

"It was a dreadful winter, as far as I can ascertain; perhaps the worst in the history of the island. It was in '57, forty-seven years ago, the 19th day of January just past, one of those occurrences in a place that make its epochs and niches its history."

"Go on; I have always wanted to hear this story," said the other, stretching himself comfortably on the greensward, well back, pipe splendidly working.

"The European end of the tale I am not so familiar with, other than that the Lord Ashburton was one of the worst old death traps in Europe; and that 'Jim and Dick,' popularly called, two bright, well-put-together Scandinavian lads, were great favorites, in and out of the hundreds of ports along the Mediterranean's two thousand miles.

"What these two lads went through, while not of this story, would make mighty interesting reading.

"Crimea, you'll remember, in '54, was the world's huge theatre, where a terrible struggle to the death was on. Seamen were in good demand, and from all parts of Europe, village, town and city, hundreds of young men bade good-bye to fond mothers, wives and sweethearts, and hurried to the nearest seaport and signed articles.

"Among those who went, for the pure excitement that was in it, were our two young friends, Jim Larson, from Roune, Denmark, and Dick Sherman, from Sweden—I just forget the town. Both were romantic and venturesome to the limit. Throughout Mediterranean's length and breadth and on a hundred vessels they were known as 'Jim and Dick,' sought after by shipping officers and men alike, and either of them could have sailed the biggest thing in the fleet, with an easy master's hand. But, the romantic, good natured, dare-devil in the pair, found a more natural vent before the mast.

"The winter of '57 an Grand Manan, was, indeed, severe, and not readily forgotten. Great gales blew almost continuously from early fall till late spring.

"And as the pivotal part of the winter swung in, howling, blinding snow storms came with it, and settled away to a real arctic winter.

"For weeks at a stretch the roads were impassable, fences blocked out of sight, and small story-and-a-half houses creaked high. The winds moaned and screeched about the eaves with an indomitable melancholy and ominous reserve. I am told it was creepy; that the windows and doors, even the sturdy frames of the island's homes, shook until you'd think the poor things trembled from the cold blast.

"The few inhabitants, who then lived at North Head, did not venture out, unless absolutely necessary. There was little wood cut that winter, or much of anything else done.

"Human tracks were small them days" said an old native, speaking of that winter. "No fishing then as now. Water was alive with fish, but nobody about to catch them, nor no place to sell them. No living mortal could have faced the gales if there was."

"What a change! What is now Park street, Hillside avenue and the Ashburton Road, was then one long, winding, half-cut wood road. No such neat, charming homes, rare roadways, or choice bits of residential and natural scenery.

"There was nothing then at North Head but a few scattered farm houses, peopled by a hardy, honest class of settlers, who tilled and sowed in the midst of great sturdy forest of primeval pines, poplar, birch, beech, maple and ash. A few of these good people are still alive, hale and hearty.

"But all this vast stretch of noble wood, like many a generation of noble men and women, has long since gone under the woodman's axe and fierce forest fires, that in some places have devoured the very sod clean to the ledge.

"There was no fog alarm those days at North Head, no light at 'Swallow-Tail,' and many a poor mariner, struggling to grope his way along this untamed region of Fundy, went down and was never heard of. Those great Northern Head Cliffs were then mantled with wild sea fowl, as in the days when Champlain looked upon them. Great storms then raged and beat at the eternal face of these stupendous bluffs, as though to lay them in dust at their feet.

"One of the old residents of that day, still with us, is dear old 'Aunt Liza,' the community's fondly adopted mother. Many a time during that severe winter she would stop her work when an unusually heavy blast would strike the house, look anxiously from the nearest window, and sigh. Her motherly soul well knew what it meant on this wild New England coast those days. Many a shipwrecked famishing sailor has had reason to thank God for dear old 'Aunt Liza.' The light ever burns all night in her window facing the cove. The cup of warm tea, the bottle of fresh new milk, a pair of warm stockings, or the loan of a warm coat. 'Ah,' exclaimed one old tar to me one day, 'God bless the good old body! earth has few enough such Aunt Lizas.'

"The good old motherly soul, like the

rest of us, had her little superstitious fancies,—the action of the cattle, her own feelings, a bad dream. She was no fanatic or given to ghost yarns, but at times she would feel or see unusual things, like the raps our mothers have heard before the death of some near one; and who knows?

"This evening she seemed especially affected. She would come in from the barn, during that long bitter winter, and repeatedly speak of how strange the hens, or sheep, or cattle were acting. Many a time, when the snow was whirling drift on drift, house-high, and the fields, far as the eye could see, one unbroken sheet of blinding snow, she would turn from the window and, sighing, would say that she never felt so strange some way before. It would seem as if something dreadful was going to happen. 'God protect the poor souls that would be out such a night as this!' she would unceasingly sigh.

"It does seem as though this good old body keenly felt the imminent, awful danger of twenty-nine souls that very hour, the wildest of that wild winter, blindly beating about the old bay in a fierce northeaster. It was none other

about and hurls her hard down on these massive teeth, as it rushes on to the shore in demoniac laughter and revelry. She groans and parts, when a hundred others, like fiends of Asmodeus, rush into the open wounds and tear her limb from limb, viciously swashing booms, and men, and rigging up and down among the rocks in a pitiful tangled mass.

"'God pity the poor souls!' is Aunt Liza's cry next morning, as the school children are sent broadcast to spread the alarm.

"It was ten o'clock when she struck. Twelve long hours after strong, big-hearted men were hurrying, as best they could, through the deeply blocked roads to the awful scene.

"Some had cut down around the shore. The great surf was still making in, ponderous and somewhat tired like. It had stopped snowing, and there seemed a weight of sensible guilt about the elements after their, frightful night's revelry.

"The men, hurrying along the shore, soon began to come upon bits of wreckage, and the dead. One poor fellow, not a stitch on him, was lying over a spar, frozen stiff in death. Then another. Several more were still swashing in and out, with the big turf and wreckage, torn and cut, and dead. One or two, almost gone, hands and feet frozen, were tottering on a narrow bit of shore, just below here, close to this great cliff, while the angry cold sea was still dashing at them in thundering tones. The poor fellows were desperately fighting off death, and the gale was still strong

up against what would seem unmerciful odds, and today he stands a clear monument to pluck and perseverance and good judgment with more youth and go-ahead than some not half his age."

"What became of Dick?"
 "Dick got about again, and for some years after Jim was married, made his home with his old chum.

"But the roving spirit got hold of him again, and he bade good-bye to his old shipmate and was off.

"I did hear, not long since, that Dick had passed in his last check several years ago.

JACK CADE.



MR. JAMES LAWSON, SURVIVOR OF SHIPWRECK "LORD ASHBURTON."

than the Lord Ashburton and 'Jim and Dick.'

"They had made the outer gates of Fundy that morning, and she had now lain for hours, like some beaten out and exhausted thing, wallowing and slatting about in an equally exhausted atmosphere and sea. It was a dead calm, with a heaving long sea, and all fearfully ominous.

"But on the morning of the 19th the old frenzy seized her again, the gale slipped back once more into the old quarter, northeast, fresh as a young lion, and it began to snow on the word.

"They were light. All night they had been at the pumps. The captain and our two heroes began to see the worst, and they were anxious enough to make in before it shut down again thick into a driving gale. They had no faith in the old sieve.

"Jim and Dick, long ere this, realized the danger, and few words were spoken.

"Everything was set and close hauled, and the old thing, like an old man of eighty trying to run, was beginning to tot in in a limping way.

"Twice they sighted Partridge Island, fair in the mouth of St. John harbor, but were driven back clear to Grand Manan by the incoming gale and blinding storm.

"There was no concealing the fact, every man Jack of them now knew they were in for it. It had shut down dark and thick beyond vision.

"All day they had been at it, wet, hungry and cold, and they could now hear again, alarmingly close to, the huge wild surf thundering in mad crashing shouts, as if it knew, and were revelling in devilish glee.

"Time and again they would head her up, but she was light and would slide off. Again would they come about, like an uncanny phantom in the thickening gale. The blackness of night had settled in with the storm, and the old bay seemed mad in riot.

"It was plain every man aboard was looking to himself now. God or chance was all that was left. The captain's face was set like steel. Jim and Dick stood forward the main rigging and had silently shaken hands, and bade one another good-bye, but the crazed gale tore their words into threads.

"Straight ahead she was driving, hard and fast in its jaws, like some poor old thing the riotous storm had caught and the ten thousand wind and storm demons were dragging in fiendish glee, on to the grinning sharp tusk-rocks that lay crouching at the base of these great cliffs.

"'Good-bye!' came the frightful shouting farewell of the captain, through the frenzied gale, as 'crunch!' she strikes with a sickening hurl. She careens with a splintering, cracking groan, when everything goes by the board, masts, yards, blocks, running gear and all, in a crashing snarl. Another huge sea lifts her bodily, with a devilish inhumana

enough to hurl the rescuers about, as if it would not be interfered with.

"They see marks up over the cliffs! But they laugh at the thought, as you, that any human being could climb up there. Never in their remembrance had it been done. It made one dizzy even to look at the eagle and wild sea gull soaring at such a height. They could scarcely see the top—but, heavens in mercy! there is a poor fellow, like a speck, near to the top!

"But the others have reached the bank, by the main road, ere this. They stuck winding, stumbling tracks, and followed them up, when suddenly they came across one poor soul, who has just thrown himself down, giving it up, to sleep and die, face and feet frozen. It's Dick.

"Another party has found another, all crouched under some alders—to die.

"Others have been following another staggering trail, for a mile, in through woods, across a clearing, snow arm-pit deep, and it leads them to an old lonely barn. The tracks lead in, but the door is bolted. They halloo to let them in, that they are friends. But the poor fellow, not knowing where he is, almost crazed from his frightful exposure, hands and feet frozen, refuses.

"They break the door in. It's Jim, and the good soul is terribly frozen, all but gone. Three of them have climbed up over this cliff, helped by the gale and the desperation of death. At a great risk the men got the fourth up."

"Death, rather its fear, makes gods of us sometimes. The living were at once gotten into the village, the good people taken in two here, and two there, eight in all. 'Aunt Liza' know no sleep night or day nursing those fortunate enough to get under her immediate care. But the tender, exhaustless hospitality of the people of the Island will ever stand memorial to Grand Manan. Twenty-one perished—nineteen drowned and two frozen. That pile of stone there and those painted circles on the bank, mark the spot."

"Did they get them all?"
 "Yes, the captain was taken home and buried. But twenty of them lie in one plot in the beautiful little cemetery on the 'Hill' at North Head.

"Jim and Dick, poor fellows, were terribly frozen, and went to the hospital, where they suffered for eight long years. Jim lost one leg to the knee and part of one foot. But he was mighty good stuff. He no sooner got out than he took up his residence on this beautiful 'Gem of Fundy,' went into the boot and shoe business, married an estimable lady, and soon won a place of honor and influence among the island's best people. Here he tenderly watches over the sacred last resting place of his messmates. He is now a man three score and ten, has been back to his beloved Denmark several times, lost his first wife, and married the second time. He has made heroic success in life, fighting his way