

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Hall
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Willis
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whittman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse
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A Dream of the North Sea

James Runciman

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A DREAM OF THE NORTH SEA

BY

JAMES RUNCIMAN



"He slid desperately over and made his clutch"

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DEDICATION

To the Queen.

MADAM,

This book is dedicated to Your Majesty with the respectful admiration of one who is proud to have been associated with an effort to make the world more hopeful and beautiful for men who not long ago knew little hope and felt no beauty.

In the wild weather, when the struggle for life never slackens from hour to hour on the trawling grounds, the great work of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, like some mighty Pharos, sheds light on the troubled darkness, and brave men, in hundreds, are thankful for its wise care and steady helpfulness.

Perhaps, of all the tribe of writers, I know most minutely the scope and significance of that Mission—"as well for the body as the soul"—of which Your Majesty is the Patron; and it is my earnest conviction that no event in your brilliant and beneficent reign could well be appraised at a higher value than the despatch of Hospital Cruisers to the smackmen, which your gracious and practical sympathy has done so much to bring about.

Permit me to subscribe myself,
MADAM,
Your Majesty's most humble,
obedient Servant,

JAMES RUNCIMAN.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES,
May 1, 1889.

PREFACE.

One of the greatest of English classics—great by reason of his creative power, simplicity, and pathos—has built the superstructure of his famous allegory upon the slender foundations of a dream. But just as the immortal work of John Bunyan had a very real support in truths and influences of the highest power and the deepest meaning, so the pages which record Mr. Runciman's "Dream of the North Sea," have an actual, a realistic, and a tragic import in the daily toil, sufferings, and hardships of the Deep Sea Trawlers. Moreover, the blessed work of healing the bodies, cheering the minds, and enlightening the souls of these storm-beaten labourers is not altogether a dream, for the extended operations which are now undertaken by the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen furnish material for one of the brightest and most interesting records of present-day beneficence. But so much remains to be done, so great are the trials and the sorrows that still brood on the lone North Sea, that Mr. Runciman's dream in vivid story and deft literary art, goes forth with a strong appeal to every thoughtful reader. The greatness of the work yet to be undertaken may to some extent be conceived from the marvellous results which have already been accomplished. I have elsewhere said that to this issue many persons have contributed, from the Queen on the throne down to the humble and pious smacksmen in the North Sea, but that, so far as human skill and genius can achieve a conspicuous success in any human and benevolent enterprise, it has fallen to the lot of the Founder of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen to accomplish such a success. No one can now write or think or "dream" of the trawlers on the German Ocean, without referring, and referring again, to Mr. E.J. Mather, either *in propria persona*, or—as the author of "Waverley" might have said—in the guise of some *Eidolon* suited to a Vision of the North Sea. This leads me to explain that though it had been originally announced that the introductory notice to this book would be from the pen of Mr. Mather, that gentleman, in view of the apparent references to himself throughout the tale, shrank from the task, with the result that the honour and the privilege have fallen upon me. I close by expressing a hope that Mr. Runciman's dream of the future may,

when it reaches its accomplishment, add fresh lustre to a work which was begun by Mr. Mather in courage and in hope, and by him carried to a unique success.

ALEXANDER GORDON.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE DREAMER.

So many of my dreams have come true, that I sometimes incline to believe that dreams are in reality the only truths. I fancy this dream, at any rate, will be fulfilled.

A hard gale rushed over a torn sea, and the drift was swept so that the moon was obscured with every fresh gust. High overhead a clear, steely sky was flecked here and there with fleecy white, and, ever and again, the moon slipped her mantle of cloud from her rounded shoulder, and looked around her with large, calm glances. But there was an evil-looking sky away to the eastward, and the black wreaths 'of cloud crept steadily upward, obscuring little by little the fair, glittering sky. The swift waves gathered volume, and soon their hollows were like great Panpipes through which the gale blew with many doleful sounds. Everything to be seen on sea or sky promised a wild night, and the powerful schooner yacht which was charging along over the running seas was already reefed down closely. Light bursts of spray came aboard aft like flying whiplashes, and the man at the wheel stolidly shook his head as the jets cut him. Right forward a slight sea sometimes came over with a crash, but the vessel was in no trouble, and she looked as if she could hold her own in a much worse breeze. I believe that only poets and landsmen are fond of bad weather; and the steersman occasionally threw a demure, quizzical glance at a young girl who was hanging on by one hand to the companion hatch. The wind had heightened her colour, and the chance gleams of the moon showed the girl's face as a flash of warm brightness in the chill dreariness of the night. It was a strange place and strange weather for a young lady to be out in, for the autumn was far advanced, and the deadly gales might be expected at any time; but this young person was in no way discomposed. There was something almost weird in the sight of that glowing young face, placid amid the fitful drifts; the screaming gusts caught at tiny stray curls of her dark hair; the ves-

sel advanced with short plunges, and the flashing broad stream went past with that eerie moan which always makes me think of dire things. The girl looked quietly forward, and it seemed as if her spirit was unmoved by the tumult. She looked almost stern, for her broad brows were a little bent, but her mouth was firm and kindly, and her very impassivity gave sign of even temper. I do not like the miniature style of portrait-painting, so I shall not catalogue the features of this girl in the orthodox fashion. She would have drawn your eye in any crowd, for she had that look of slight abstraction which always marks those who are used at intervals to forget material things; and the composed mouth and rather square chin hinted at a certain capacity for practical affairs. The storm stirred her blood, and she murmured at last, "Terrors take hold on him as waters; a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and as a storm hurleth him out of his place."

I would have ventured to tell you a good deal about that young lady's character, had I never heard her speak another word. The association, the choice of words, the sombre music of the old English—all were enough to show the bent of her mind.

At last she turned, and said, "When do you think we shall sight them?"

The man at the wheel shouted, "Somewheres towards midnight, Miss. We're a-goin' through it middling smart, and we can always draw on them."

Then the girl went below into the warm glow of the saloon. A sweet-faced lady smiled softly, and said, "Is it poetry to-night, or a new scheme for regenerating everything?" The tone was caressing and half-admiring, and the younger lady's still smile in reply was like a revelation; it showed that she accepted banter, but was too serious to return it. Marion Dearsley and her aunt, Mrs. Walton, understood each other: the matron pretended to laugh at her niece's gravity, but the genuine relation between the pair was that of profound mutual confidence and fondness.

The soft gleam of the lamps showed a very pleasant group in the roomy, comfortable saloon. A stout, black-bearded man lounged carelessly on a sofa, supporting himself with one huge hand as the

vessel kicked awkwardly. He looked as if he had been born with a smile, and every line of his great face was disposed so as to express vast contentment and good-humour. You could not call him finely bred, but when he observed, in terrific bass tones, "Hah! Miss Dearsley, you have gazed on the what's-his-name; you love the storm; you find it fahscinating—oh! fahscinating; ah! fahscinating! I like an ignoble cabin and a pipe, but the what's-his-name is fahscinating—ah! fahscinating." His infectious good-humour was better than any graces. Then his pride in his phrases was very fine to behold, and he regarded his repetition of his sonorous adjective as quite an original thing in the way of pure rhetoric. Tom Lennard was by inheritance a merchant, by choice a philanthropist; he was naturally religious, but he could not help regarding his philanthropic work as a great frolic, and he often scandalized reformers of a more serious disposition. The excellent Joseph Naylor, who was never seen to smile, and who was popularly supposed to sleep in his black frock-coat and high stock, once met Tom on a platform. When Tom was introduced to the prim, beneficent Joseph his enthusiasm overcame him; he brought his colossal paw down on Mr. Naylor's shoulder so that the poor man showed signs of shutting up like a concertina inside the frock-coat; he squeezed Joseph's hand so fervently that the poor victim looked like a dentist's patient, and Thomas roared like an amiable Bull of Bashan, "Bah! Aw'm glad to see this day, sir. To think we should meet at last! Ah! fahscinating!—oh! fahscinating."

Mr. Naylor bore the shock like a true philosopher, but at home that evening he mildly observed, "My dear, our new ally, Mr. Lennard, is most friendly, most cordial, quite impressively cordial; but do you know I should not like to sign a cheque just now. His cordiality has had distinct effect on my joints, and I wish really that his left hand were lighter. Social intercourse can only be carried on with difficulty when you feel as if a large sack had fallen on you from the third floor of a warehouse."

The good Joseph always drew back with a timid air of maidenly modesty when Tom approached him, and I quite sympathize with this bashfulness. It has never been my fortune to exchange courtesies with a large and healthy polar bear, so I cannot describe the

operation, but I should imagine that Tom's salute would aid one's imagination.

This delightful rough diamond called on Miss Dearsley to choose the lee side, and then he addressed himself to a superb young fellow who was leaning against the wainscot, and easily following the pitching of the ship. "Look here, Ferrier, you can't find one bigot in this ship's company, but we've all had a lot of experience, and we find that religion's your only blasting-powder to break up the ugly old rocks that we used to steer among. We find that we must have a clear passage; we fix our charge. Whoof! there you are; good sailing-room; bee-yootiful — oh! fahscinating."

"I quite follow you, and I sympathize with you so far as I am concerned personally; but when Fullerton persuaded me to come out I only thought of the physical condition of your people, and that is why I asked for Mr. Blair's yacht so that I might have a genuine, fair show. You see, I fear I am wanting in imagination, and the sight of physical pain touches me so directly, that I never can spare a very great deal of sympathy for that obscure sort of pain that I cannot see; I'm hand and glove with you, of course, and I shall go through with the affair to the finish; but you must doctor the souls, and let me attend to the bodies for the present."

The speaker was a powerful, broad fellow, with a kind of military carriage; his tall forehead was crossed by soft lines of tranquil thought, and he had the unmistakable look of the true student. Lewis Ferrier came south to Cambridge after he had done well at Edinburgh. He might have been Senior Wrangler had he chosen, but he read everything that he should not have read, and he was beaten slightly by a typical examinee of the orthodox school. Still, every one knew that Ferrier was the finest mathematician of his year, and there was much muttering and whispering in academic corners when he decided at last to go in for medicine. He said, "I want something practical," and that was all the explanation he ever gave to account for his queer change. He took a brilliant medical degree, and he decided to accept a professorship of Biology before attempting to practise. His reasons for being out on the North Sea in an autumn gale will come out by degrees.

A gentle-looking man stepped up to Ferrier and laid a white hand on his arm. "We shall never interfere with you in the least degree, my dear Ferrier. We'll take such help as you can give. We need all we can get. When you are fairly in the thick of our work you will perhaps understand that we have vital need of religion to keep us up at all. You can't tell what an appalling piece of work there is before us; but I give you my word that if religion were not a vital part of my being, if I did not believe that God is watching every action and leading us in our blind struggles, I should faint at my task; I should long for extinction, though only cowards seek it of their own accord."

A quiet, short man broke in here. He had sat smiling softly as the talk went on. His face was gently humorous, and all the signs of a placid and pure life were there. This smiling philosopher said, "That's right, Fullerton. Ferrier's like my old mare used to be in the days when she was a little peacocky and fiery—she always wanted to rush her journeys. She steps soberly now. We'll teach him something before we've done with him. You know, my dear boy, you must understand that the greater number of these men are, well—uncultivated, do you understand. They're not so squalid, perhaps, as Lapps or Esquimaux, but they're mostly as dense. We've fought hard for a long time, and we're making some headway; but we can do little, and if we could not get at our men by religion we couldn't manage at all. I've brought you into a queer country, and you must be prepared for a pretty set of surprises. My sister and my niece have been out before, and I persuaded Mrs. Walton and Miss Dearsley to take a turn. As soon as my people have got over their troubles we'll all make a dead set at you, you audacious young materialist that you are." Then John Blair smiled gently once more, and there was a certain pride visible as his sad eyes twinkled on his young favourite.

This company of kind folks were all of the sort called evangelical, and they were bound on a strange errand, the like of which had brought one of the men out to sea many times before. The yacht was now chasing one of the great North Sea trawling fleets, and Fullerton's idea was to let the gallant young doctor see something of the wild work that goes on among the fishing-boats when the weather is ugly.

The dark, solemn young lady sat very still while the men talked, and her face had that air of intense attention which is so impressive when it is not simulated. I think she was a spiritual relative of Joan of Arc and Madame Roland. It seems dreadful to say so, but I am not sure that she would not have played Charlotte Corday's part had occasion arisen. In low, full tones she asked, "Did no one ever work among the fishers before Mr. Fullerton found them out?" "No one, except the fellows who sold vile spirits, my dear," said Blair.

"Not a single surgeon?"

"Not one. That's why we decided to kidnap Ferrier. We want to give him a proper school of surgery to practise in—genuine raw material, and plenty of it, and you must help us to keep him in order. Fancy his trying to convert us; he'll try to convert you next, if you don't mind!"

The girl paid no heed to the banter. She went on as if in a reverie.

"It is enough to bring a judgment on a nation, all the idle women and idle men. Mamma told me that a brewer's wife paid two thousand pounds for flowers in one month. Why cannot you speak to women?"

"We mustn't blame the poor ladies," said Fullerton: "how could they know? Plenty of people told them about Timbuctoo, and Jerusalem, and Madagascar, and North and South America, but this region's just a trifle out of the way. A lady may easily sign a cheque or pack a missionary's medicine-chest, but she could not come out here among dangers and filth and discomfort, and the men ashore are not much pluckier. No; in my experience of English people I've always found them lavish with their help, only you must let them know what to help. There's the point."

"And you've begun, dear Mr. Fullerton, have you not?"

"Yes; but the end is far off. We were so late—so late in beginning, and I must pass away, and my place will know me no more; and many and many another will pass away. Oh, yes! we shall travel from gulf to gulf; but I think, sometimes, that my soul will be here on the wild nights. I must be near my men—my poor men!—and I'll meet them when their voyage is over."