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THE MYSTERIOUS ISLAND by Jules Verne PART 1--DROPPED FROM THE CLOUDS Chapter 1 "Are we rising again?" "No. On the contrary." "Are we descending?" "Worse than t hat, cap tain! we are falling!" "For Heaven's sake heave out the ballast!" "There! the last sack is empty!" "Does the balloon rise?" "No!" "I hear a noise like the dashing of waves. The sea is below the car! It cannot be more than 500 feet from us!" "Overboard with every weight! ... everything!" Such were the loud and startling words which resounded through the air, above the vas t water y deser to fithe Pacific, about four o'clock in the evening of the 23rd of March, 1865. Few can possibly have forgotten the terrible storm from the northeast, in the middle of the equinox of that year. The tempest raged without intermission from the 18th to the 26th of March. Its ravages were terrible in America, Europe, and Asia, covering a distance of eighteen hundred miles, and extending ob liquely to the equator from the thirty-fifth north parallel to the fortieth south parallel. Towns were overthrown, forests uprooted, coasts devastated by the mountains of water which were precipit ated on the empty of the published accounts numbered by hundreds, whole districts leveled by waterspouts which destroyed everything they are a real foundation of parallel to the fortieth to the fortieth by this devastating tempest. It surpassed in disasters those which so frightfully rayaged the vanage and Guadalung entered to the fortieth of the foundation of the parallel.
em, vessels cast on the shore, which the published accounts numbered by hundreds, whole districts leveled by waterspouts which destroyed everything they passed ove r, seve r and thousand p eople crushed on land or drowned at sea; such were the traces of its fury, left by this devastating tempest. It surpassed in disasters those which so frightfully ravaged Ha vana a rol teas a rol thousand per one on the 25th of October, 1810, the other on the 26th of July, 1825. But while so many catastrophes were taking place on land and at sea, a drama not less exciting was being enacted in the a gitated air. In fact, a balloon, as a ball might be carried on the summit of a waterspout, had been taken into the circling movement of a column of air and had traversed space at the rate of ninet y miles an hour, turning round and round as if seized by some aerial maelstrom. Beneath the lower point of the balloon swung a car, containing five passengers, scarcely visible in the mid stof the thick vapor mingled with spray which hung over the surface of the ocean. Whence, it may be asked, had come that plaything of the tempest? From what part of the world did it rise? It surely could not have started during the storm. But the storm had raged five days already, and the first symptoms were manifested on the 18th. It cannot be doubted that the balloon came from a great distance, for it could not have traveled less than two thousand miles in twenty-four hours. At any rate the passengers, destitute of all marks for their guidance, could not have possessed them devining the route traversed since their departure. It was a remarkable fact that, although in the very midst of the furious tempest, they did not suffer from it. They were thrown about and dwhirled round and round without feeling the rotation in the slightest degree, or being sensible that they were removed from a horizontal position. Their eyes could not pie rece thrown about an density of the atmosphere that they could not be certain whether it was day or night. No reflection of I
, to a height of 4,500 feet. The voyagers, after having discovered that the sea extended beneath them, and thinking the dangers above less dreadful than those below, did not hesit ate to th ro w overboard even their most useful articles, while they endeavored to lose no more of that fluid, the life of their enterprise, which sustained them above the abyss. The night passed in the mid stoof a
, to a height of 4,500 feet. The voyagers, after having discovered that the sea extended beneath them, and thinking the dangers above less dreadful than those below, did not hesit ate to third or voyagers, while they endeavored to lose no more of that fluid, he life of their enterprise, which sustained them above the abyss. The night passed in the mid st of a larms which would have been death to less energetic souls. Again the day appeared and with it the tempest began to moderate. From the beginning of that day, the 24th of March, I is howed symptoms of abating. At dawn, some of the lighter clouds had risen into the more ofty regions of "he air. In a few hours the wind had changed from a hurricane to a fresh breeze, that is to say, the rate of the transit of the atmospheric layers was diminished by half. It was still what sallors call "close-reefed topsail breeze," but the commotion in the elements had none the less consider a bit diminished. To rowards eleven o'clock, the lower region of the air was sensibly clearer. The air close-reefed topsail breeze," but the commotion in the elements had none the less consider a bit did not seem to have gone farther to the west. It appeared to have exhausted itself. Could it have passed away in electric sizes, as is sometimes the case with regard to the typhoons of the I ndia not occar? But at the same time, it was also evident that the balloon was again slowly descending with a regular movemen. It an peare as if it were, little by little, collapsing, and that its case was I engthening and extending, passing from a spherical to an oval form. Towards middle, we have the saa at a leight of only 2,000 feet. It contain end 50,000 cub is feet of gas, and, thanks to its capacity, it could maintain itself a long time in the air, although it should be alloued to its contained to its case and to its case and the circles which middle the cords of the net, tried to secure more firmly the lower point of the balloon. I was have every limin, even to their ocket-knives, and one of them,
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ge rs had ho isted themse
lves into the net, and clung to the meshes, gazing at the abyss. The delicate sensibility of balloons is well known. It is sufficient to throw out the I ightest article to pro duce al position. The apparatus in the air is like a balance of mathematical precision. It can be thus easily understood that when it is lightened of any considerable we ight i ts s and sudden. So it happened on this occasion. But after being suspended for an instant aloft, the balloon began to redescend, the gas escaping by the rent which it we had done all that men could do. No human efforts could save them now. They must trust to the mercy of Him who rules the elements. At four o'clock the ballo on we
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en had defined in that their could be No human enous could save them how. They had that the first of the help to the selection was help the net. Too had seen some en immediately a loud voice shouted,-- "Land! land!" The balloon, which the wind still drove towards the southwest, had since daybreak gone a consider able d is ta hundreds of miles, and a tolerably high land had, in fact, appeared in that direction. But this land was still thirty miles off. It would not take less than an hour to ge ce of falling to leeward. An hour! Might not the balloon before that be emptied of all the fluid it yet retained? Such was the terrible question! The voy agers c ou ld d
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ce of falling to leeward. An hour! Might not the balloon before that be emptied of all the fluid it yet retained? Such was the terrible question! The voy agers c ou Id dey must reach at any cost. They were ignorant of what it was, whether an island or a continent, for they did not know to what part of the worl d the hurric ane h ad d and, whether inhabited or desolate, whether hospitable or not. It was evident that the balloon could no longer support itself! Several times already had the crests tom of the net, making it still heavier, and the balloon only half rose, like a bird with a wounded wing. Half an hour later the land was not more than a mile off, bung in great folds, had gas in its upper part alone. The voyagers, clinging to the net, were still too heavy for it, and soon, half plunged into the sea, they were beate bulged out again, and the wind, taking it, drove it along like a vessel. Might it not possibly thus reach the land? But, when only two f athoms off, terrible cries re he balloon, which had appeared as if it would never again rise, suddenly made an unexpected bound, after having been struck by a tremendous sea. As if it had ts weight, it mounted to a height of 1,500 feet, and here it met a current of wind, which instead of taking it directly to the coast, carried it in an early parallel ached obliquely, and finally fell on a sandy beach, out of the reach of the waves. The voyagers, aiding each other, managed to disengage themselves from the heir weight, was taken by the wind, and like a wounded bird which revives for an instant, disappeared into space. But the car had contained five passenge on the shore. The missing person had evidently been swept off by the sea, which had just struck the net, and it was owing to this circ umst ance that the soon after reached the land. Scarcely had the four castaways set foot on firm ground, than they all, thinking of the absent one, simul traneous by exclass us save him!! Chapter 2 Those whom the hurricane had just thrown on this coast were neither aeronaut
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           imed, "Perhaps he will try to swim to land! Let
us save him! let us save him!" Chapter 2 Those whom the hurricane had just thrown on this coast were neither aeronauts by profession nor amat eu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          rs. They were prisoners of war whose boldnes
s had induced them to escape in this extraordinary manner. A hundred times they had almost perished! A hundred times had they almost f all en fr an. But Heaven had reserved them for a strange destiny, and after having, on the 20th of March, escaped from Richmond, besieg ed by the troops seven thousand miles from the capital of Virginia, which was the principal stronghold of the South, during the terrible War of Secession. Their circumstances which led to the escape of the prisoners were as follows: That same year, in the month of February, 1865, in one of the coups de
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          om t heir forn b alloon into the depths of the oce
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         s of Genera I Ulysses G rant, they found themselve
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         a er ial voyage had la sted five days. The curious
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        main by which General Grant attempted, though
circumstances which led to the escape of the prisoners were as follows: That same year, in the month of February, 1865, in one of the coup's de n vain, to possess himself of Richmond, several of his officers fell into the power of the enemy and were detained in the town. One of the most native of Massachusetts, a first-class engineer, to whom the gover nment had confided, during the war, the direction of the railways, which we now, lean, about forty-five years of age; his close-cut hair and his beard, of which he only kept a thick mustache, were a lread y getting gray ear made to be struck on a medal, piercing eyes, a serious mouth, the ph ysiognomy of a clever man of the mil itary school. He was one of t xe, like generals who first act as common soldiers. Besides mental power, he also possessed great manual dexterity. His muscles exhibited man of thought, all he did was without effort to one of his vigorous and sang uine temperament. Learned, clear-headed, and practical, he dought to insure human success--a ctivity of mind and body, impetuous wishes, and powerful will. He might have take n for his motton of persevere even without hope of success." Cy rus Harding was courage personified. He had been in all the battles of that we grant, he fought at Paducah, Be Imont, Pittsburg Landing, at the siege of Corinth, Port Gibson, Black River, Chattanooga, tier worthy of the general who said, "I ne ver count my dead!" And hundreds of times Captain Harding had almost been a mong mbats where he never spared himself, fortune fa vor ed him till the moment when he was wounded and taken prisoner on the count my dead!" And hundreds of times Captain Harding had almost been a mong mbats where he never spared himself, fortune fa vor ed him till the moment when he was wounded and taken prisoner on the count my dead!" And hundreds of times Captain Harding had almost been a mong
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   dis tingui shed was Captain Cyrus Harding. He was a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              re s o i mportan t at that tim e. A true Northerner, thin, bo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          He ha done-of those finely -developed heads which app
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     hose engineers who beg an by h andling the hammer and picka
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   rema rkable pro ofs of tenacity . A man of action as well as a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 e ful filled in all emerg encies those three conditions which unite
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 t hat of William of Orange in the 17th century: "I can undertake a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                ar . After having begun as a volunteer at Illinois, under Ulysses
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              he Wilderness, on the Pot omac, everywhere and valiantly, a sold
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              th ose who were not coun ted by the terrible Grant; but in these co
mbats where he never spared himself, fortune fa vor ed him till the moment when he was wounded and taken prisoner on t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        he f ield o f battle near Ri chmond. At the same time and on the same
day another important per sonage fell into the hands of the Southerners. This was no other than cideon Spilett, a repo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    rter for the New York Herald, who had been ordered to follow the chan
geś of the war in the midst of the Northern armie s. Gid eo n Spilett was one of that race of indomita ble English or A
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  me rican c hron iclers, like Stanley and others, who stop at nothing to obtain
n exact information, and transmit it to their journal in the shor test possible time. The newspapers of the Union
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                such as the New York Hera Id, are genuine powers, and their reporters are
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       getic, prompt and ready for anything, full of ideas, having traveled over the whan ger, when in pursu it of information, for himself first, and then for his journal
men to be reckoned wit h. Gide on S pile tt ranke d a
                                                                                       mo ng the fi rst of those re porters: a man of great merit, en er
                                                                                     nci I, resolute in action, ca ring neither for trouble, fatigue, no r d
ole world, soldier and a rtist, e nthu sia sti c in cou
a perfect treasury of knowledge on a ll sor ts o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       e imposs ible . He was one of those intrepid observers who write under fire, "reportin
revolver in one h and, note-book in the other; grape-shot never made his pencil tremble. H
                                                                                   f curi ous subjects, of the unpublished, of the unknown, and of the
g" among bullets, and to whom every danger
                                                                                   is welcome. He also ha d been in all the battle s, in the firs t r ank
e did not fatigue the wires with inces sant t ele
                                                                                     grams, like those who speak w hen they have nothing to say
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    b ut each of his notes, short, decisive, and clear, threw light on some important point. Besid
                                                                                               ho, a fter the aff air of the Black River, determined a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  t any cost to keep his place at the wicket of the telegraph office, and after having announced t
es, he was not wa nting in hum or. I t w as he w
o his journal the result of the battle, tel egraph
                                                                                                 ed for two hours the first c hapters of the Bible. I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  t cost the New York Hera ld two th ousand dollars, but the New York Herald published the firs
                                                                                                   w as ra the r more than forty years of age.
med to take in at a glance all t he details
t intelligence. Gi deon S pilet t was ta II. He
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  Light whiskers borderin g on red surrounded his face. His eye was steady, lively, rapid in its c
hanges. It was the eye of a man ac cu sto
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  of a scen e. Well buil t, he was inured to all climates, like a bar of steel hardened in cold wate
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       He rald, which he enriched by his letters and drawings, for he was as skilful in the use of the penc
descript ion and sketch of the bat tle. The last words in his note-book were these: "A Southern riflem
r. For ten years Gideon Spi let t had b
                                                                                                     een the reporter of the New York
il as of the pen. When he was c ap ture
                                                                                                    d, he was in the act of making a
an has just taken aim a t me , b ut- -"
                                                                                                   he Southerner notwithstandin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 g mil sse d Gi deon Spil ett, who, wi th his usual fortune, came out of this affair without a scratch. Cyrus
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         y reputation, had both been carried to Richmond. The engineer's wounds rapidly healed, and it was during his The two men then learned to appreciate each other. Soon their common aim had but one object, that of escapin
Harding and Gi deon Spilet t, who did
                                                                                                 n ot know each ot her except b
convalescence that he ma de ac quai
                                                                                              nt an ce with the reporter.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      the Federals The two Americans had from the first determined to seize every chance; but although they were a
g. rejoining Grant's army, and fight inc
                                                                                               tog et her in the ran ks
                                                                                                     Richmond was so
llowed to wand er at liberty in the town
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                strictly gua rded, t hat esca pe appear ed impossible. In the meanwhile Captain Harding was rejoined by a servant wh
o was devoted to him in life and in de
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          his intrepid fellow was a Negro born on the engineer's estate, of a slave father and mother, but to whom Cyrus, who wa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          t, had long since given his freedom . The once slave, though free, would not leave his master. He would have died for
s an Abolitionist from conviction and h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         gor ous, active, c lever, intelligent, gentle, and calm, sometimes naive, always merry, obliging, and honest. His name was N to the famili ar ab breviati on of Neb. W hen Neb heard that his master had been made prisoner, he left Massachusetts without h
him. He was a m an of a bou t th irt y, vi
ebuchadnezzar, but he only an swer ed
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    mo nd, and by dint of strat agem and sh rewdness, after having risked his life twenty times over, managed to penetrate into the beside
esitating an instant, arrived b efo re Ri ch
ged town. The pleasure of Harding on se
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                eing hi s servant, an d the joy of Neb at finding his master, can scarcely be described. But though Neb had been able to make his way
nto Richmond, it was quite anot her thing to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         get out ag air, for the N orther in prisoners were very strictly watched. Some extraordinary opportunity was needed to make the attempt with
any chance of succ ess, an d this op por tu nit
                                                                                                                                                                                                     ontrolly did not present itself, but was very difficule t to find. Meanwhile Grant continued his energetic operations. The victory of Petersburg had been ver
y dearly bought. His forces, unite d to those o
                                                                                                                                                                                                 f B utler, had as yet been unsu coessful b efore Richmond, and nothing gave the prisoners any hope of a speedy deliverance. The reporter, to whom his tedio
us captivity did not of fer a single incident worthy
                                                                                                                                                                                             of no te, could stand it no I onger. Hi is usually active mind was occupied with one sole thought-how he might get out of Richmond at any cost. Several time
s had he even made the attem pt, but was stopped by so
                                                                                                                                                                           me insurmount able obstacle. However, the si ege continued; and if the prisoners we're anxious to escape and join Grant's army, certain of the besieged were no less anxi
                                                                                                                                                          than Forster, a determined S outherner. The truth was, that if the pris oners of the Secessionists could not leave the town, neither could the Secessionists themselves while the North
ous to join the Southern forces. Amo ng them was one Jona
                                                                                                                                                    en unable to communicate with Ge neral Lee, and he very much wished to make known to him the situation of the town, so as to hasten the march of the army to their relief. Thus Jonath
ern army invested it. The Governo r of R ichmond for a long time had be
n Forster accordingly conc eived the idea of rising in a ball oon, so as to pass over the besieging li nes, and in that way reach the attempt. A balloon was manufactured and placed at the disposal of Forster, who was to be accomp
anied by five other persons. They were furnished with arms in case they might have to defend themselves when they alighted, and provisions in the event of their aerial voyage being prolonged. The departure of the balloon was fixed for the 18th of March. It should be effected to
uring the night, with a northwe st wind of moderate force , and the aerona uts c alc u lated that they would reach General Lee's camp in a few hours. But this northwest wind was not a simple breeze. From the 18th it was evident that it was changing to a hurricane. The tea
mpest soon became such that Fo rster's depar ture was d eferred, for it was impossible to risk the balloon, inflated on the great square of Richmond, was ready to depart on the first abatement of the wind
and, as may be supposed, the impa tience among the besieged to see the storm moderate was even great. There was even great difficulty in keeping the balloon fastened to the ground, as the squalls dashed
t furiously about. The night of the 19th passed, but the next morning the storm blew with redoubled force. The departure of the ballo on was impossible. On that day the engineer, Cyrus Harding, was accosted in one of the streets of Richmond by a person whom he did not in the le
ast know. This was a sailor named Pencroft , a man of about thirty-five or forty years of age, strongly built, very sunburnt, and po ssessed of a pair of bright sparkling eyes and a remarkably good physiognomy. Pencroft was an American from the North, who had sailed all the ocean
over, and who had gone through every possible and almost impossible and almost impossible adventure that a being with two feet and no wings would encounter. It is needless to say that he was a bold, dashing fellow, ready to dare anything and was astonished at nothing. Pencroft at the beginning of
he year had gone to Richmond on business, with a young boy of fifteen from New Jersey, son of a former c aptain, an orphan, whom he loved as if he had been his own child. Not having been able to leave the fown before the first operations of the siege, he found himself shut
up, to his great disgust; but, not accustomed to succum b to difficulties, he resolved to escape by some means or other. He knew with what impatience that determined man chafed under his restraint. On this day he did not, therefore, hes
itate to accost him, saying, without circumlocution, "Have you h ad enough of Richmond, capta in?" The engineer looked fixedly at the man who spoke, and who added, in a low voice,-- "Captain Harding, will you try to escape?" "When?" asked the engineer quickly, and it was
evident that this question was uttered without consideration, for he had not yet examined the stranger who addressed him. But after having with a penetrating eye observed the open face of the sailor, he was convinced that he had before him an honest man. "Who are you?" he ask ed briefly. Pencroft made himself known. "Well," replied Harding, "and in what way do you propose to escape?" "By that lazy balloon which is left there doing nothing, and which looks to me as if it was waiting on purpose for us--" There was no necessity for the sailor to finish his sentence. The engineer understood him at once. He seized Pencroft by the arm, and dragged him to his house. There the sailor developed his project, which was indeed extremely simple. They risked nothing but their lives in its execution. The hurricane was in all its violence, it is true
e, but so clever and daring an engineer as Cyrus Harding knew perfectly well how to manage a balloon. Had he himself been as well acquainted with the art of sailing in the air as he was with the navigation of a ship, Pencroft would not have hesitated to set out, of course taking his
young friend Herbert with him; for, accustomed to brave the fiercest tempests of the ocean, he was not to be hindered on account of the hurricane. Captain Harding had listened to the sailor without saying a word, but his eyes shone with satisfaction. Here was the long-sought-for o
pportunity--he was not a man to let it pass. The plan was feasible, though, it must be confessed, dangerous in the extreme. In the night, in spite of their guards, they might approach the balloon, slip into the car, and then cut the cords which held it. There was no doubt that they might
ht be killed, but on the other hand they might succeed, and without this storm!--Without this storm the balloon would have started already and the looked-for opportunity would not have then presented itself. "I am not alone!" said Harding at last. "How many people do you wish to be ring with you?" asked the sailor. "Two; my friend Spilett, and my servant Neb." "That will be three," replied Pencroft; "and with Herbert and me five. But the balloon will hold six--" "That will be enough, we will go," answered Harding in a firm voice. This "we" included Spilett, for the reporter, as his friend well knew, was not a man to draw back, and when the project was communicated to him he approved of it unreservedly. What astonished him was, that so simple an idea had not occurred to him before. As to Neb, he followed his master wherever his master wi she to go. "This evening, then," said Pencroft, "we will all meet out there." "This evening, at ten o'clock," replied Captain Harding; "and Heaven grant that the storm does not abate before our departure." Pencroft took leave of the two friends, and returned to his lodging, where you not have the sailor's plan, and it was not without the storm the triple of the result of the provided the result of the provided to the engage of the ball of the provided the result of the provided to the engage of the ball of the provided the result of the provid
ements! No! the storm did not abate, and neither Jonathan Forster nor his companions dreamed of confronting it was that the balloon, held to the ground and dashed about by the wind, would be to
n into shreds. For several hours he roamed round the nearly-deserted square, surveying the apparatus. Pencroft did the same on his side, his hands in his pockets, yawning now and then like a man who did not know how to kill the time, but really dreading, like his friend, either the
escape or destruction of the balloon. Evening arrived. The night was dark in the extreme. Thick mists passed like clouds close to the ground. Rain fell mingled with snow, it was very cold. A mist hung over Richmond. It seemed as if the violent storm had produced a truce between
he besiegers and the besieged, and that the cannon were silenced by the louder detonations of the storm. The streets of the town were deserted. It had not even appeared necessary in that horrible weather to place a guard in the square, in the midst of which plunged the balloon. E
erything favored the departure of the prisoners, but what might possibly be the termination of the furious elements?-- "Dirty weather!" exclaimed Pencroft, fixing his hat firmly on his head with a blow of his fist; "but pshaw, we
e shall succeed all the same!" At half-past nine, Harding and his companions glided from different directions into the square, which the gas-lamps, extinguished by the wind, had left in total obscurity. Even the enormous balloon, a most beaten to the ground, could not be seen. Inde
pendently of the sacks of ballast, to which the cords of the net were fastened, the car was held by a strong cable passed through a ring in the pavement. The five prisoners met by the car. They had not been perceived, and such was the darkness that they could not even see each of
her. Without speaking a word, Harding, Spilett, Neb, and Herbert took their places in the car, while Pencroft by the engineer's order detached successively the bags of ballast. It was the work of a few minutes only, and the sailor rejoined his companions. The balloon was then only h
eld by the cable, and the engineer had nothing to do but to give the word. At that moment a dog sprang with a bound into the car. It was Top, a favorite of the engineer. The faithful creature, having broken his chain, had followed his master. He, however, fearing that its additional wei
ght might impede their ascent, wished to send away the animal. "One more will make but little difference, poor beast!" exclaimed Pencroft, heaving out two bags of sand, and as he spoke letting go the cable; the balloon ascending in an oblique direction, disappeared, after having d
ashed the car against two chimneys, which it threw down as it swept by them. Then, indeed, the engineer could not dream of descending, and when day broke, even a glimpse of the earth below was interc
epted by fog. Five days had passed when a partial clearing allowed them to see the wide extending ocean beneath their feet, now lashed into the maddest fury by the gale. Our readers will recollect what befell these five daring individuals who set out on their hazardous expedition in
the balloon on the 20th of March. Five days afterwards four of them were thrown on a desert coast, seven thousand miles from their country! But one of their number was missing, the man who was to be their guide, their leading spirit, the engineer, Captain Harding! The instant the
y had recovered their feet, they all hurried to the beach in the hopes of rendering him assistance. Chapter 3 The engineer, the meshes of the net having given way, had been carried off by a wave. His dog also had disappeared. The faithful animal had voluntarily leaped out to help hi
s master. "Forward," cried the reporter; and all four, Spilett, Herbert, Pencroft, and Neb, forgetting their fatigue, began their search. Poor Neb shed bitter tears, giving way to despair at the thought of having lost the only being he loved on earth. Only two minutes had passed from the time when Cyrus Harding disappeared to the moment when his companions set foot on the ground. They had hopes therefore of arriving in time to save him. "Let us look for him!" cried Neb. "Yes, Neb," replied Gideon Spilett, "and we will find him too!" "Living, I trust!" "Still living!" "Can he swim?" asked Pencroft. "Yes," replied Neb, "and besides, Top is there." The sailor, observing the heavy surf on the shore, and nearly half a mile from the place where the castaway
s had landed. The nearest point of the beach he could reach was thus fully that distance off. It was then nearly six o'clock. A thick fog made the night very dark. The castaways proceeded toward the north of the land on which chance had thrown them, an unknown region, the geogli
aphical situation of which they could not even guess. They were walking upon a sandy soil, mingled with stones, which appeared destitute of any sort of vegetation. The ground, very unequal and rough, was in some places perfectly riddled with holes, making walking extremely pai
nful. From these holes escaped every minute great birds of clumsy flight, which flew in all directions. Others, more active, rose in flocks and passed in clouds over their heads. The sailor thought he recognized gulls and cormorants, whose shrill cries rose above the roaring of the s
ea. From time to time the castaways stopped and shouted, then listened for some response from the ocean, for they had been near to the place, they would have heard the barking of the dog Top, even should Harding himself have be
en unable to give any sign of existence. They stopped to listen, but no sound arose above the roaring of the waves and the dashing of the waves and the dashing of the waves and the dashing for twenty minutes, the four ca
staways were suddenly brought to a standstill by the sight of foaming billows close to their feet. The solid ground ended here. They found themselves at the extremity of a sharp point on which the sea broke furiously. "It is a promontory," said the sailor; "we must retrace our steps, holding towards the right, and we shall thus gain the mainland." "But if he is there," said Neb, pointing to the ocean, whose waves shone of a snowy white in the darkness. "Well, let us call again," and all uniting their voices, they gave a vigorous shout, but there came no reply. They
waited for a lull, then began again; still no reply. The castaways accordingly returned, following the opposite side of the promontory, over a soil equally sandy and rugged. However, Pencroft observed that the shore was more equal, that the ground rose, and he declared that it was joined by a long slope to a hill, whose massive front he thought that he could see looming indistinctly through the sea was also less tumultuous, and they observed that the agitation of the waves was diminished. The
noise of the surf was scarcely heard. This side of the promontory evidently formed a semicircular bay, which the sharp point sheltered from the breakers of the open sea. But to follow this direction was to go south, exactly opposite to that part of the coast where Harding might have
landed. After a walk of a mile and a half, the shore presented no curve which would permit them to return to the mainland. The castaways, although their strength was nearly exhausted, still marche d courageously forward, hoping every moment to meet with a sudden angle which would set them in the first direction. What was their disappointment, when, after trudging nearly two miles, having reached an elevated point composed of slippery rocks, they found themselves again
stopped by the sea. "We are on an islet," said Pencroft, "and we have surveyed it from one extremity to the other." The sailor was right; they had been thrown, not on a continent, not even on an islet which was not more than two miles in length, with even a less br
eadth. Was this barren spot the desolate refuge of sea-birds, strewn with stones and destitute of vegetation, attached to a more important archipelago? It was impossible to say. When the voyagers from their car saw the land through the mist, they had not been able to reconnoiter i
sufficiently. However, Pencroft, accustomed with his sailor eyes to piece through the gloom, was almost certain that he could clearly distinguish in the west confused masses which indicated an elevated coast. But they could not in the dark determine whether it was a single island
or connected with others. They could not leave it either, as the sea surrounded them; they must therefore put off till the next day their search for the engineer, from whom, alas! not a single cry had reached them to show that he was still in existence. "The silence of our friend prove
s nothing," said the reporter. "Perhaps he has fainted or is wounded, and unable to reply directly, so we will not despair." The reporter then proposed to light a fire on a point of the islet, which would serve as a signal to the engineer. But they searched in vain for wood or dry bramb
es; nothing but sand and stones were to be found. The grief of Neb and his companions, who were all strongly attached to the intrepid Harding, can be better pictured than described. It was too evident that they were powerless to help him. They must wait with what patience they co
uld for daylight. Either the engineer had been able to save himself, and had already found a refuge on some point of the coast, or he was lost for ever! The long and painful hours passed by. The cold was intense. The castaways suffered cruelly, but they scarcely perceived it. They d
id not even think of taking a minute's rest. Forgetting everything but their chief, hoping or wishing to hope on, they continued to walk up and down on this sterile spot, always returning to its northern point, where they could approach nearest to the scene of the catastrophe. They lis
tened, they called, and then uniting their voices, they endeavored to raise even a louder shout than before, which would be transmitted to a great distance. The wind had now fallen almost to a calm, and the noise of the sea began also to subside. One of Neb's shouts even appeared
to produce an echo. Herbert directed Pencroft's attention to it, adding, "That proves that there is a coast to the west, at no great distance." The sailor nodded; besides, his eyes could not deceive him. If he had discovered land, however indistinct it might appear, land was sure to be
there. But that distant echo was the only response produced by Neb's shouts, while a heavy gloom hung over all the part east of the island. Meanwhile, the sky was clearing little by little. Towards midnight the stars shone out, and if the engineer had been there with his companions
he would have remarked that these star's did not belong to the Northern Hemisphere. The Polar Star was not visible, the constellations were not those which they had been accustomed to see in the United States; the Southern Cross glittered brightly in the sky. The night passed aw
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