

Sheba Blake Publishing

AN ANTARCTIC MYSTERY

Jules Verne



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An Antarctic Mystery

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About the Author

One

The Kerguelen Islands



No doubt the following narrative will be received: with entire incredulity, but I think it well that the public should be put in possession of the facts narrated in “An Antarctic Mystery.” The public is free to believe them or not, at its good pleasure.

No more appropriate scene for the wonderful and terrible adventures which I am about to relate could be imagined than the Desolation Islands, so called, in 1779, by Captain Cook. I lived there for several weeks, and I can affirm, on the evidence of my own eyes and my own experience, that the famous English explorer and navigator was happily inspired when he gave the islands that significant name.

Geographical nomenclature, however, insists on the name of Kerguelen, which is generally adopted for the group which lies in $49^{\circ} 45'$ south latitude, and $69^{\circ} 6'$ east longitude. This is just, because in 1772, Baron Kerguelen, a Frenchman, was the first to discover those islands in the southern part of the Indian Ocean. Indeed, the commander of the squadron on that voyage believed that he had found a new continent on the limit of the Antarctic seas, but in the course of a second expedition he recognized his

error. There was only an archipelago. I may be believed when I assert that Desolation Islands is the only suitable name for this group of three hundred isles or islets in the midst of the vast expanse of ocean, which is constantly disturbed by austral storms.

Nevertheless, the group is inhabited, and the number of Europeans and Americans who formed the nucleus of the Kerguelen population at the date of the 2nd of August, 1839, had been augmented for two months past by a unit in my person. Just then I was waiting for an opportunity of leaving the place, having completed the geological and mineralogical studies which had brought me to the group in general and to Christmas Harbour in particular.

Christmas Harbour belongs to the most important islet of the archipelago, one that is about half as large as Corsica. It is safe, and easy, and free of access. Your ship may ride securely at single anchor in its waters, while the bay remains free from ice.

The Kerguelens possess hundreds of other fjords. Their coasts are notched and ragged, especially in the parts between the north and the south-east, where little islets abound. The soil, of volcanic origin, is composed of quartz, mixed with a bluish stone. In summer it is covered with green mosses, grey lichens, various hardy plants, especially wild saxifrage. Only one edible plant grows there, a kind of cabbage, not found anywhere else, and very bitter of flavour. Great flocks of royal and other penguins people these islets, finding good lodging on their rocky and mossy surface. These stupid birds, in their yellow and white feathers, with their heads thrown back and their wings like the sleeves of a monastic habit, look, at a distance, like monks in single file walking in procession along the beach.

The islands afford refuge to numbers of sea-calves, seals, and sea-elephants. The taking of those amphibious animals either on land or from the

sea is profitable, and may lead to a trade which will bring a large number of vessels into these waters.

On the day already mentioned, I was accosted while strolling on the port by mine host of mine inn.

“Unless I am much mistaken, time is beginning to seem very long to you, Mr. Jeorling?”

The speaker was a big tall American who kept the only inn on the port.

“If you will not be offended, Mr. Atkins, I will acknowledge that I do find it long.”

“Of course I won’t be offended. Am I not as well used to answers of that kind as the rocks of the Cape to the rollers?”

“And you resist them equally well.”

“Of course. From the day of your arrival at Christmas Harbour, when you came to the Green Cormorant, I said to myself that in a fortnight, if not in a week, you would have enough of it, and would be sorry you had landed in the Kerguelens.”

“No, indeed, Mr. Atkins; I never regret anything I have done.”

“That’s a good habit, sir.”

“Besides, I have gained knowledge by observing curious things here. I have crossed the rolling plains, covered with hard stringy mosses, and I shall take away curious mineralogical and geological specimens with me. I have gone sealing, and taken sea-calves with your people. I have visited the rookeries where the penguin and the albatross live together in good fellowship, and that was well worth my while. You have given me now and again a dish of petrel, seasoned by your own hand, and very acceptable when one has a fine healthy appetite. I have found a friendly welcome at the Green Cormorant, and I am very much obliged to you. But, if I am right in my reckoning, it is two months

since the Chilian twomaster *PenÃ£s* set me down at Christmas Harbour in mid-winter.”

“And you want to get back to your own country, which is mine, Mr. Jeorling; to return to Connecticut, to Providence, our capital.”

“Doubtless, Mr. Atkins, for I have been a globe-trotter for close upon three years. One must come to a stop and take root at some time.”

“Yes, and when one has taken root, one puts out branches.”

“Just so, Mr. Atkins. However, as I have no relations living, it is likely that I shall be the last of my line. I am not likely to take a fancy for marrying at forty.”

“Well, well, that is a matter of taste. Fifteen years ago I settled down comfortably at Christmas Harbour with my Betsy; she has presented me with ten children, who in their turn will present me with grandchildren.”

“You will not return to the old country?”

“What should I do there, Mr. Jeorling, and what could I ever have done there? There was nothing before me but poverty. Here, on the contrary, in these Islands of Desolation, where I have no reason to feel desolate, ease and competence have come to me and mine!”

[P. 5] “No doubt, and I congratulate you, Mr. Atkins, for you are a happy man. Nevertheless it is not impossible that the fancy may take you some day—”

Mr. Arkins answered by a vigorous and convincing shake of the head. It was very pleasant to hear this worthy American talk. He was completely acclimatized on his archipelago, and to the conditions of life there. He lived with his family as the penguins lived in their rookeries. His wife was a “valiant” woman of the Scriptural type, his sons were strong, hardy fellows, who did not know what sickness meant. His business was prosperous. The Green Cormorant had the custom of all the ships, whalers and others, that put in at Kerguelen. Atkins supplied them with everything they required, and no second

inn existed at Christmas Harbour. His sons were carpenters, sailmakers, and fishers, and they hunted the amphibians in all the creeks during the hot season. In short, this was a family of honest folk who fulfilled their destiny without much difficulty.

“Once more, Mr. Atkins, let me assure you,” I resumed, “I am delighted to have come to Kerguelen. I shall always remember the islands kindly. Nevertheless, I should not be sorry to find myself at sea again.”

“Come, Mr. Jeorling, you must have a little patience,” said the philosopher, “you must not forget that the fine days will soon be here. In five or six weeks —”

“Yes, and in the meantime, the hills and the plains, the rocks and the shores will be covered thick with snow, and the sun will not have strength to dispel the mists on the horizon.”

“Now, there you are again, Mr. Jeorling! Why, the wild grass is already peeping through the white sheet! Just look!”

“Yes, with a magnifying glass! Between ourselves, Atkins, could you venture to pretend that your bays are not still ice-locked in this month of August, which is the February of our northern hemisphere?”

“I acknowledge that, Mr. Jeorling. But again I say have patience! The winter has been mild this year. The ships will soon show up, in the east or in the west, for the fishing season is near.”

“May Heaven hear you, Atkins, and guide the *Halbrane* safely into port.”

“Captain Len Guy? Ah, he’s a good sailor, although he’s English—there are good people everywhere—and he takes in his supplies at the Green Cormorant.”

“You think the *Halbrane*—”

“Will be signalled before a week, Mr. Jeorling, or, if not, it will be because there is no longer a Captain Len Guy; and if there is no longer a Captain Len Guy, it is because the *Halbrane* has sunk in full sail between the Kerguelens and the Cape of Good Hope.”

Thereupon Mr. Atkins walked away, with a scornful gesture, indicating that such an eventuality was out of all probability.

My intention was to take my passage on board the *Halbrane* so soon as she should come to her moorings in Christmas Harbour. After a rest of six or seven days, she would set sail again for Tristan d’Acunha, where she was to discharge her cargo of tin and copper. I meant to stay in the island for a few weeks of the fine season, and from thence set out for Connecticut. Nevertheless, I did not fail to take into due account the share that belongs to chance in human affairs, for it is wise, as Edgar Poe has said, always “to reckon with the unforeseen, the unexpected, the inconceivable, which have a very large share (in those affairs), and chance ought always to be a matter of strict calculation.”

Each day I walked about the port and its neighbourhood. The sun was growing strong. The rocks were emerging by degrees from their winter clothing of snow; moss of a wine-like colour was springing up on the basalt cliffs, strips of seaweed fifty yards long were floating on the sea, and on the plain the lyella, which is of Andean origin, was pushing up its little points, and the only leguminous plant of the region, that gigantic cabbage already mentioned, valuable for its anti-scorbutic properties, was making its appearance.

I had not come across a single land mammal—sea mammals swarm in these waters—not even of the batrachian or reptilian kinds. A few insects only—butterflies or others—and even these did not fly, for before they could use

their wings, the atmospheric currents carried the tiny bodies away to the surface of the rolling waves.

“And the *Halbrane*” I used to say to Atkins each morning.

“The *Halbrane*, Mr. Jeorling,” he would reply with complacent assurance, “will surely come into port to-day, or, if not to-day, to-morrow.”

In my rambles on the shore, I frequently routed a crowd of amphibians, sending them plunging into the newly released waters. The penguins, heavy and impassive creatures, did not disappear at my approach; they took no notice; but the black petrels, the puffins, black and white, the grebes and others, spread their wings at sight of me.

One day I witnessed the departure of an albatross, saluted by the very best croaks of the penguins, no doubt as a friend whom they were to see no more. Those powerful birds can fly for two hundred leagues without resting for a moment, and with such rapidity that they sweep through vast spaces in a few hours. The departing albatross sat motionless upon a high rock, at the end of the bay of Christmas Harbour, looking at the waves as they dashed violently against the beach.

Suddenly, the bird rose with a great sweep into the air, its claws folded beneath it, its head stretched out like the prow of a ship, uttering its shrill cry: a few moments later it was reduced to a black speck in the vast height and disappeared behind the misty curtain of the south.

Two

The Schooner Halbrane



The *Halbrane* was a schooner of three hundred tons, and a fast sailer. On board there was a captain, a mate, or lieutenant, a boatswain, a cook, and eight sailors; in all twelve men, a sufficient number to work the ship. Solidly built, copper-bottomed, very manageable, well suited for navigation between the fortieth and sixtieth parallels of south latitude, the *Halbrane* was a credit to the ship-yards of Birkenhead.

All this I learned from Atkins, who adorned his narrative with praise and admiration of its theme. Captain Len Guy, of Liverpool, was three-fifths owner of the vessel, which he had commanded for nearly six years. He traded in the southern seas of Africa and America, going from one group of islands to another and from continent to continent. His ship's company was but a dozen men, it is true, but she was used for the purposes of trade only; he would have required a more numerous crew, and all the implements, for taking seals and other amphibia. The *Halbrane* was not defenceless, however; on the contrary, she was heavily armed, and this was well, for those southern seas were not too safe; they were frequented at that period by pirates, and on approaching the

isles the *Halbrane* was put into a condition to resist attack. Besides, the men always slept with one eye open.

One morning—it was the 27th of August—I was roused out of my bed by the rough voice of the innkeeper and the tremendous thumps he gave my door. “Mr. Jeorling, are you awake?”

“Of course I am, Atkins. How should I be otherwise, with all that noise going on? What’s up?”

“A ship six miles out in the offing, to the nor’east, steering for Christmas!”

“Will it be the *Halbrane*?”

“We shall know that in a short time, Mr. Jeorling. At any rate it is the first boat of the year, and we must give it a welcome.”

I dressed hurriedly and joined Atkins on the quay, where I found him in the midst of a group engaged in eager discussion. Atkins was indisputably the most considerable and considered man in the archipelago—consequently he secured the best listeners. The matter in dispute was whether the schooner in sight was or was not the *Halbrane*. The majority maintained that she was not, but Atkins was positive she was, although on this occasion he had only two backers.

The dispute was carried on with warmth, the host of the Green Cormorant defending his view, and the dissentients maintaining that the fast-approaching schooner was either English or American, until she was near enough to hoist her flag and the Union Jack went fluttering up into the sky. Shortly after the *Halbrane* lay at anchor in the middle of Christmas Harbour.

The captain of the *Habrane*, who received the demonstrative greeting of Atkins very coolly, it seemed to me, was about forty-five, red-faced, and solidly built, like his schooner; his head was large, his hair was already turning grey, his black eyes shone like coals of fire under his thick eyebrows, and his strong

white teeth were set like rocks in his powerful jaws; his chin was lengthened by a coarse red beard, and his arms and legs were strong and firm. Such was Captain Len Guy, and he impressed me with the notion that he was rather impassive than hard, a shut-up sort of person, whose secrets it would not be easy to get at. I was told the very same day that my impression was correct, by a person who was better informed than Atkins, although the latter pretended to great intimacy with the captain. The truth was that nobody had penetrated that reserved nature.

I may as well say at once that the person to whom I have alluded was the boatswain of the *Halbrane*, a man named Hurliguerly, who came from the Isle of Wight. This person was about forty-four, short, stout, strong, and bow-legged; his arms stuck out from his body, his head was set like a ball on a bull neck, his chest was broad enough to hold two pairs of lungs (and he seemed to want a double supply, for he was always puffing, blowing, and talking), he had droll roguish eyes, with a network of wrinkles under them. A noteworthy detail was an ear-ring, one only, which hung from the lobe of his left ear. What a contrast to the captain of the schooner, and how did two such dissimilar beings contrive to get on together? They had contrived it, somehow, for they had been at sea in each other's company for fifteen years, first in the brig *Power*, which had been replaced by the schooner *Halbrane*, six years before the beginning of this story.

Atkins had told Hurliguerly on his arrival that I would take passage on the *Halbrane*, if Captain Len Guy consented to my doing so, and the boatswain presented himself on the following morning without any notice or introduction. He already knew my name, and he accosted me as follows:

“Mr. Jeorling, I salute you.”

“I salute you in my turn, my friend. What do you want?”

"To offer you my services."

"On what account?"

"On account of your intention to embark on the *Halbrane*."

"Who are you?"

"I am Hurliguerly, the boatswain of the *Halbrane*, and besides, I am the faithful companion of Captain Len Guy, who will listen to me willingly, although he has the reputation of not listening to anybody."

"Well, my friend, let us talk, if you are not required on board just now."

"I have two hours before me, Mr. Jeorling. Besides, there's very little to be done to-day. If you are free, as I am—"

He waved his hand towards the port.

"Cannot we talk very well here?" I observed.

"Talk, Mr. Jeorling, talk standing up, and our throats dry, when it is so easy to sit down in a corner of the Green Cormorant in front of two glasses of whisky."

"I don't drink."

"Well, then, I'll drink for both of us. Oh! don't imagine you are dealing with a sot! No! never more than is good for me, but always as much!"

I followed the man to the tavern, and while Atkins was busy on the deck of the ship, discussing the prices of his purchases and sales, we took our places in the eating room of his inn. And first I said to Hurliguerly: "It was on Atkins that I reckoned to introduce me to Captain Len Guy, for he knows him very intimately, if I am not mistaken."

"Pooh! Atkins is a good sort, and the captain has an esteem for him. But he can't do what I can. Let me act for you, Mr. Jeorling."

"Is it so difficult a matter to arrange, boatswain, and is there not a cabin on board the *Halbrane*? The smallest would do for me, and I will pay—"

“All right, Mr. Jeorling! There is a cabin, which has never been used, and since you don’t mind putting your hand in your pocket if required—however—between ourselves—it will take somebody sharper than you think, and who isn’t good old Atkins, to induce Captain Len Guy to take a passenger. Yes, indeed, it will take all the smartness of the good fellow who now drinks to your health, regretting that you don’t return the compliment!”

What a wink it was that accompanied this sentiment! And then the man took a short black pipe out of the pocket of his jacket, and smoked like a steamer in full blast.

“Mr. Hurliguery?” said I.

“Mr. Jeorling.”

“Why does your captain object to taking me on his ship?”

“Because he does not intend to take anybody on board his ship. He never has taken a passenger.”

“But, for what reason, I ask you.”

“Oh! because he wants to go where he likes, to turn about if he pleases and go the other way without accounting for his motives to anybody. He never leaves these southern seas, Mr. Jeorling; we have been going these many years between Australia on the east and America on the west; from Hobart Town to the Kerguelens, to Tristan d’Acunha, to the Falklands, only taking time anywhere to sell our cargo, and sometimes dipping down into the Antarctic Sea. Under these circumstances, you understand, a passenger might be troublesome, and besides, who would care to embark on the *Halbrane*? she does not like to flout the breezes, and goes wherever the wind drives her.”

“The *Halbrane* positively leaves the Kerguelens in four days?”

“Certainly.”

“And this time she will sail westward for Tristan d’Acunha?”

“Probably.”

“Well, then, that probability will be enough for me, and since you offer me your services, get Captain Len Guy to accept me as a passenger.”

“It’s as good as done.”

“All right, Hurliguerly, and you shall have no reason to repent of it.”

“Eh! Mr. Jeorling,” replied this singular mariner, shaking his head as though he had just come out of the sea, “I have never repented of anything, and I know well that I shall not repent of doing you a service. Now, if you will allow me, I shall take leave of you, without waiting for Arkins to return, and get on board.”

With this, Hurliguerly swallowed his last glass of whisky at a gulp—I thought the glass would have gone down with the liquor—bestowed a patronizing smile on me, and departed.

An hour later, I met the innkeeper on the port, and told him what had occurred.

“Ah! that Hurliguerly!” said he, “always the old story. If you were to believe him, Captain Len Guy wouldn’t blow his nose without consulting him. He’s a queer fellow, Mr. Jeorling, not bad, not stupid, but a great hand at getting hold of dollars or guineas! If you fall into his hands, mind your purse, button up your pocket, and don’t let yourself be done.”

“Thanks for your advice, Atkins. Tell me, you have been talking with Captain Len Guy; have you spoken about me?”

“Not yet, Mr. Jeorling. There’s plenty of time. The *Halbrane* has only just arrived, and—”

“Yes, yes, I know. But you understand that I want to be certain as soon as possible.”

“There’s nothing to fear. The matter will be all right. Besides, you would not be at a loss in any case. When the fishing season comes, there will be more ships in Christmas Harbour than there are houses around the Green Cormorant. Rely on me. I undertake your getting a passage.”

Now, these were fair words, but, just as in the case of Hurliguerly, there was nothing in them. So, notwithstanding the fine promises of the two, I resolved to address myself personally to Len Guy, hard to get at though he might be, so soon as I should meet him alone.

The next day, in the afternoon, I saw him on the quay, and approached him. It was plain that he would have preferred to avoid me. It was impossible that Captain Len Guy, who knew every dweller in the place, should not have known that I was a stranger, even supposing that neither of my would-be patrons had mentioned me to him.

His attitude could only signify one of two things—either my proposal had been communicated to him, and he did not intend to accede to it; or neither Hurliguerly nor Arkins had spoken to him since the previous day. In the latter case, if he held aloof from me, it was because of his morose nature; it was because he did not choose to enter into conversation with a stranger.

At the moment when I was about to accost him, the *Halbrane’s* lieutenant rejoined his captain, and the latter availed himself of the opportunity to avoid me. He made a sign to the officer to follow him, and the two walked away at a rapid pace.

“This is serious,” said I to myself. “It looks as though I shall find it difficult to gain my point. But, after all it only means delay. To-morrow morning I will go on board the *Halbrane*. Whether he likes it or whether he doesn’t, this Len Guy will have to hear what I’ve got to say, and to give me an answer, yes or no!”

Besides, the captain of the *Halbrane* might come at dinner-time to the Green Cormorant, where the ship's people usually took their meals when ashore. So I waited, and did not go to dinner until late. I was disappointed, however, for neither the captain nor anyone belonging to the ship patronized the Green Cormorant that day. I had to dine alone, exactly as I had been doing every day for two months.

After dinner, about half-past seven, when it was dark, I went out to walk on the port, keeping on the side of the houses. The quay was quite deserted; not a man of the *Halbrane* crew was ashore. The ship's boats were alongside, rocking gently on the rising tide. I remained there until nine, walking up and down the edge in full view of the *Halbrane*. Gradually the mass of the ship became indistinct, there was no movement and no light. I returned to the inn, where I found Atkins smoking his pipe near the door.

"Atkins," said I, "it seems that Captain Len Guy does not care to come to your inn very often?"

"He sometimes comes on Sunday, and this is Saturday, Mr. Jeorling."

"You have not spoken to him?"

"Yes, I have."

Atkins was visibly embarrassed.

"You have informed him that a person of your acquaintance wished to take passage on the *Halbrane*?"

"Yes."

"What was his answer?"

"Not what either you or I would have wished, Mr. Jeorling."

"He refuses?"

"Well, yes, I suppose it was refusing; what he said was: 'My ship is not intended to carry passengers. I never have taken any, and I never intend to do

so.”

Three

Captain Len Guy



I slept ill. Again and again I “dreamed that I was dreaming.” Now—this is an observation made by Edgar Poe—when one suspects that one is dreaming, the waking comes almost instantly. I woke then, and every time in a very bad humour with Captain Len Guy. The idea of leaving the Kerguelens on the *Halbrane* had full possession of me, and I grew more and more angry with her disobliging captain. In fact, I passed the night in a fever of indignation, and only recovered my temper with daylight. Nevertheless I was determined to have an explanation with Captain Len Guy about his detestable conduct. Perhaps I should fail to get anything out of that human hedgehog, but at least I should have given him a piece of my mind.

I went out at eight o'clock in the morning. The weather was abominable. Rain, mixed with snow, a storm coming over the mountains at the back of the bay from the west, clouds scurrying down from the lower zones, an avalanche of wind and water. It was not likely that Captain Len Guy had come ashore merely to enjoy such a wetting and blowing.

No one on the quay; of course not. As for my getting on board the *Halbrane*, that could not be done without hailing one of her boats, and the

boatswain would not venture to send it for me.

“Besides,” I reflected, “on his quarter-deck the captain is at home, and neutral ground is better for what I want to say to him, if he persists in his unjustifiable refusal. I will watch him this time, and if his boat touches the quay, he shall not succeed in avoiding me.”

I returned to the Green Cormorant, and took up my post behind the window panes, which were dimmed by the hissing rain. There I waited, nervous, impatient, and in a state of growing irritation. Two hours wore away thus. Then, with the instability of the winds in the Kerguelens, the weather became calm before I did. I opened my window, and at the same moment a sailor stepped into one of the boats of the *Halbrane* and laid hold of a pair of oars, while a second man seated himself in the back, but without taking the tiller ropes. The boat touched the landing, place and Captain Len Guy stepped on shore.

In a few seconds I was out of the inn, and confronted him.

“Sir,” said I in a cold hard tone.

Captain Len Guy looked at me steadily, and I was struck by the sadness of his eyes, which were as black as ink. Then in a very low voice he asked:

“You are a stranger?”

“A stranger at the Kerguelens? Yes.”

“Of English nationality?”

“No. American.”

He saluted me, and I returned the curt gesture.

“Sir,” I resumed, “I believe Mr. Atkins of the Green Cormorant has spoken to you respecting a proposal of mine. That proposal, it seems to me, deserved a favourable reception on the part of a—”

“The proposal to take passage on my ship?” interposed Captain Len Guy.

“Precisely.”

“I regret, sir, I regret that I could not agree to your request.”

“Will you tell me why?”

“Because I am not in the habit of taking passengers. That is the first reason.”

“And the second, captain?”

“Because the route of the *Halbrane* is never settled beforehand. She starts for one port and goes to another, just as I find it to my advantage. You must know that I am not in the service of a shipowner. My share in the schooner is considerable, and I have no one but myself to consult in respect to her.”

“Then it entirely depends on you to give me a passage?”

“That is so, but I can only answer you by a refusal—to my extreme regret.”

“Perhaps you will change your mind, captain, when you know that I care very little what the destination of your schooner may be. It is not unreasonable to suppose that she will go somewhere—”

“Somewhere indeed.” I fancied that Captain Len Guy threw a long look towards the southern horizon.

“To go here or to go there is almost a matter of indifference to me. What I desired above all was to get away from Kerguelen at the first opportunity that should offer.”

Captain Len Guy made me no answer; he remained in silent thought, but did not endeavour to slip away from me.

“You are doing me the honour to listen to me?” I asked him sharply.

“Yes, sir.”

“I will then add that, if I am not mistaken, and if the route of your ship has not been altered, it was your intention to leave Christmas Harbour for Tristan d’Acunha.”

“Perhaps for Tristan d’Acunha, perhaps for the Cape, perhaps for the Falklands, perhaps for elsewhere.”

“Well, then, Captain Guy, it is precisely elsewhere that I want to go,” I replied ironically, and trying hard to control my irritation.

Then a singular change took place in the demeanour of Captain Len Guy. His voice became more sharp and harsh. In very plain words he made me understand that it was quite useless to insist, that Our interview had already lasted too long, that time pressed, and he had business at the port; in short that we had said all that we could have to say to each other.

I had put out my arm to detain him—to seize him would be a more correct term—and the conversation, ill begun, seemed likely to end still more ill, when this odd person turned towards me and said in a milder tone,—

“Pray understand, sir, that I am very sorry to be unable to do what you ask, and to appear disobliging to an American. But I could not act otherwise. In the course of the voyage of the *Halbrane* some unforeseen incident might occur to make the presence of a passenger inconvenient—even one so accommodating as yourself. Thus I might expose myself to the risk of being unable to profit by the chances which I seek.”

“I have told you, captain, and I repeat it, that although my intention is to return to America and to Connecticut, I don’t care whether I get there in three months or in six, or by what route; it’s all the same to me, and even were your schooner to take me to the Antarctic seas—”

“The Antarctic seas!” exclaimed Captain Len Guy with a question in his tone. And his look searched my thoughts with the keenness of a dagger.

“Why do you speak of the Antarctic seas?” he asked, taking my hand.

“Well, just as I might have spoken of the ‘Hyperborean seas’ from whence an Irish poet has made Sebastian Cabot address some lovely verses to his