

They were benumbed with cold, and would surely have frozen to death, but for our timely rescue.

Mr. Larkin grasped one of the lads. He cut off his shoes and tore off his jacket. Then, loosening his own garments to the skin, he placed the chilled child in contact with his own warm body, carefully wrapping over him his great-coat.

I did the same with the other child, and we then returned to the boat. The men, having partly recovered, pulled slowly back.

We later learned that the children were playing on the ice, and had ventured on the cake.

A movement of the tide set the ice in motion, and the little fellows were borne away on that cold night. They would certainly have perished, had not Mr. Larkin seen them as the ice was sweeping out to sea.

“How do you feel?” I said to the mate, the next morning after this adventure.

“A little stiff in the arms, captain,” the noble fellow replied. Big tears of grateful happiness gushed from his eyes. “A little stiff in the arms, captain, but very easy here,” and he laid his hand on his manly heart.

A TIMELY RESCUE



An Old Seaman's Tale



A LearningIsland.org
15 - Minute Book

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We kept time with each other by our long, deep breathing. Such a pull! At every stroke the boat shot ahead like an arrow. Thus we worked at the oars for fifteen minutes—it seemed to me as many hours.

“Have we almost come to it, Mr. Larkin?” I asked.

“Almost, captain,—don't give up: for the love of our dear little ones at home, don't give up,” replied Larkin.

The oars flashed as the blades turned up to the moonlight. The men who plied them were fathers, and had fathers' hearts. The strength which nerved them at that moment was more than human.

Suddenly Mr. Larkin stopped pulling, and my heart for a moment almost ceased its beating. The terrible thought that he had given out crossed my mind. But I was quickly reassured by his saying—

“Gently, captain, gently—a stroke or two more—there, that will do.” The next moment the boat's side came in contact with something.

Larkin sprung from the boat upon the ice. I followed, calling upon the men to make fast the boat to the ice.

We ran to the dark spot in the center of the mass, and found two little boys. The head of the smaller was nestling in the bosom of the larger. Both were fast asleep!

tiller, and the mate sat beside me.

“Do you see that cake of ice with something black upon it, lads?” I cried. “Put me alongside of that, and I will give you a month's extra wages when you are paid off.”

The men were worn out by the hard duty of the preceding nights. Though they did their best, the boat made little headway against the tide.

Mr. Larkin was suffering as he saw how little we gained. He cried out, “Pull, lads. I'll double the captain's prize. Pull, lads, for the sake of mercy, pull!”

A convulsive effort at the oars told how willing the men were to obey, but their strength was gone. One of the poor fellows splashed us twice with his oar, and then gave out. The other was nearly as far gone. Mr. Larkin sprung forward and seized the deserted oar.

“Lie down in the bottom of the boat,” said he to the man. “Captain, take the other oar. We must row for ourselves.” I took the second man's place.

Larkin had stripped to his Guernsey shirt. As he pulled the bow, I waited the signal stroke. It came gently, but firmly. The next moment we were pulling a long, steady stroke, gradually increasing in rapidity until the wood seemed to smoke in the oar-locks.

A TIMELY RESCUE

It was in the month of February, 1831, on a bright moonlit night, and extremely cold. The little brig I commanded lay quietly at her anchors inside the bay.

We had had a hard time of it. We were beaten about for eleven days, with cutting north-easters blowing. Snow and sleet had been falling for the greater part of the time.



When at length we made the port, all hands were almost exhausted. We could not have held out two days longer without relief.

“A bitter cold night, Mr. Larkin,” I said to my mate. I paused for a moment on deck to finish my pipe. “The tide is running out swift and strong. It will be well to keep a sharp look-out for this floating ice, Mr. Larkin.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered the mate, and I went below.

Two hours afterwards, I was aroused from a sound sleep by an officer. “Excuse me for disturbing you, captain,” said he, as I glared at him. “I wish you would turn out, and come on deck as soon as possible.”

“Why—what's the matter, Mr. Larkin?”

“Why, sir, I have been watching a cake of ice that swept by at a little distance a moment ago. I saw something black upon it—something that I thought moved.”

We were on deck before either spoke another word. The mate pointed out, with no little difficulty, the cake of ice floating off to leeward. A black spot broke its white, glittering surface.

“Get me a spy-glass, Mr. Larkin. The moon will be out of that cloud in a moment, and then we can see clearly.”

I kept my eye on the receding mass of ice, while the moon was slowly working its way through a heavy bank of clouds.

The mate stood by with a spy-glass. When the full light fell at last upon the water, I put the glass to my eye. One glance was enough.

“Forward, there!” I shouted at the top of my voice. With, one bound I readied the main hatch, and began to clear away the ship's rowboat. Mr. Larkin had received the glass from my hand to take a look for himself.

“O, pitiful sight!” he said in a whisper, as he set to work to aid me in getting out the boat. “There are two children on that cake of ice!”

In a very short space of time, we launched the rowboat. Mr. Larkin and myself jumped in, followed by two men, who took the oars. I held the

