

Chapter 1

Captain Jim Dower and the Icebergs

“Me son, I’ll take her over now. You go below for some rest.”

“Aye, skipper. But watch out for those icebergs!”

In springtime, icebergs and great pans of ice gathered along the northern and eastern shores of Newfoundland and moved southward into the shipping lanes.

Captain Jim Dower peered into the haze of the moonlit night, his quick eye taking in the compass reading and the set of the sails. A stiff breeze filled the great sheets of canvas as his freight vessel swished through the dark waters.

Captain Dower was a man among hardy men. His crew had confidence in him. He knew all the rocks, reefs, coves, and bays along the coast of Newfoundland. He hardly needed to look at the charts as he sailed around Pouch Cove into Conception Bay to dock at Bay Roberts, and then out around Grate’s Cove into Trinity Bay to stop at Heart’s Content and Heart’s Delight, and then out again around the town of Bonavista, crossing Bonavista Bay to dock at Newtown. Then, north and west into the open Atlantic, giving Joe Batt’s Arm and Fogo lots of room as he headed across Notre Dame Bay to Springdale, then out around Cape St. John, across White Bay to the port at Englee. A striking figure he was at the wheel, his teeth clenched on his old pipe - his constant companion.

He mused, “If all goes well, we should be in Catalina by noon tomorrow. And if there isn’t too much ice along the north shore, we should make home in five days. It’ll be great to get home; the twins are growing fast.”

He tried to think about all the things his wife, the spiritual leader in the home, had told him about the new church she had joined. She was a Methodist when he married her - he a Roman Catholic.

What his wife said made sense, but it was so different from anything he had heard before.

“It’s strange how this Keslake happened to come to our home,” the captain pondered. “Never will forget his embarrassment when his ship sailed off without him, leaving him high and dry and with only his Bible and the clothes on his back.”

As he was told later, Pastor C. H. Keslake had set out to share the gospel in the northern peninsula of Newfoundland. The vessel on which he was traveling anchored off shore at Englee, where the Dowers lived. After giving the pastor permission to go ashore, the captain warned, "We'll be here about four hours, and when you hear the whistle blow, come aboard or you will be left."

When ashore the pastor went straight to the nearest house, which happened to be the Dower home. Since such visitors were not uncommon in Englee, Mrs. Dower invited him in. As soon as he was settled in a kitchen chair, he asked Mrs. Dower, "Are you a Christian?"

Startled by his bluntness, she quickly replied, "Oh, yes, I am."

"Well," he said, "I am sure that you love the Lord very much."

She replied, "I do indeed, and I enjoy studying the Bible."

Then the pastor asked, "Do you understand the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation? Do you know, for instance, about the beast, his mark, the fall of Babylon, and many of the other subjects presented in the great prophecies of Revelation?"

Mrs. Dower paused, "Well, to be truthful, I know very little about those prophecies, and I often wonder what God is trying to tell us in those books."

"Well," offered the pastor, "I would like to explain some of those prophecies to you."

Caught up with his enthusiasm, she agreed to a Bible study right then - a series of Bible studies that lasted long after the ship's whistle had blown. Much to the consternation of the visiting pastor, the ship had left with all his clothes and books and would not return for thirty days.

But taking advantage of his strange fortune, the pastor continued studies with Mrs. Dower and visited other homes in the community. At the end of those four weeks, Mrs. Dower had decided to become a Seventh-day Adventist. Her first Sabbath was the day she gave birth to twins, Roland and Gertrude.

Suddenly Captain Dower awoke from his reveries as he faced a dense fogbank. The ship plunged into the deep haze obscuring the moon and making the sails barely visible. Grasping the wheel with tense hands, he knew not whether to turn right or left. At any moment the vessel could crash into an iceberg. He could feel their presence ground him. Realizing his need for deliverance, he dropped to his knees and prayed, promising the Lord that if He would bring his ship and his crew through the fog safely, he would serve him faithfully the

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rest of his life. Minutes later the fog lifted, and he sailed out into a beautiful moonlit night. As the captain looked back through the lifting fog, he could see the wake of the vessel. Shaken at what he saw, he leaned on the wheel for support. He saw how he had avoided one iceberg after another. God had guided him through the ice mountains safely.

That night he hurled his pipe and can of tobacco into the sea and determined to be a dedicated, earnest Seventh-day Adventist. Christ, the Pilot, had found another man to witness for Him in places where last-day truth had not yet reached.