Title: Blown to Bits: The Lonely Man of Rakata, the Malay Archipelago

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"Blown to Bits"

Chapter One.

The Play Commences.

Blown to bits; bits so inconceivably, so ineffably, so "microscopically" small that—but let us not anticipate.

About the darkest hour of a very dark night, in the year 1883, a large brig lay becalmed on the Indian Ocean, not far from that region of the Eastern world which is associated in some minds with spices, volcanoes, coffee, and piratical junks, namely, the Malay Archipelago.

Two men slowly paced the brig's quarterdeck for some time in silence, as if the elemental quietude which prevailed above and below had infected them. Both men were broad, and apparently strong. One of them was tall; the other short. More than this the feeble light of the binnacle-lamp failed to reveal.

"Father," said the tall man to the short one, "I do like to hear the gentle pattering of the reef-points on the sails; it is so suggestive of peace and rest. Doesn't it strike you so?"

"Can't say it does, lad," replied the short man, in a voice which, naturally mellow and hearty, had been rendered nautically harsh and gruff by years of persistent roaring in the teeth of wind and weather. "More suggestive to me of lost time and lee-way."

The son laughed lightly, a pleasant, kindly, soft laugh, in keeping with the scene and hour.

"Why, father," he resumed after a brief pause, "you are so sternly practical that you drive all the sentiment out of a fellow. I had almost risen to the regions of poetry just now, under the pleasant influences of nature."

"Glad I got hold of 'ee, lad, before you rose," growled the captain of the brig—for such the short man was. "When a young fellow like you gets up into the clouds o' poetry, he's like a man in a balloon—scarce knows how he got there; doesn't know very well how he's to get down, an' has no more idea where he's goin' to, or what he's drivin' at, than the man in the moon. Take my advice, lad, an' get out o' poetical regions as fast as ye can. It don't suit a young fellow who has got to do duty as first mate of his father's brig and push his way in the world as a seaman. When I sent you to school an' made you a far better scholar than myself, I had no notion they was goin' to teach you poetry."

The captain delivered the last word with an emphasis which was meant to convey the idea of profound but not ill-natured scorn.

"Why, father," returned the young man, in a tone which plainly told of a gleeful laugh within him, which was as yet restrained, "it was not school that put poetry into me—if indeed there be any in me at all."

"What was it, then?"

"It was mother," returned the youth, promptly, "and surely you don't object to poetry in *her*."

"Object!" cried the captain, as though speaking in the teeth of a Nor'wester. "Of course not. But then, Nigel, poetry in your mother *is* poetry, an' she can *do* it, lad—screeds of it—equal to anything that Dibdin, or, or,—that other fellow, you know, I forget his name—ever put pen to—why, your mother is herself a poem! neatly made up, rounded off at the corners, French-polished and all shipshape. Ha! you needn't go an' shelter yourself under *her* wings, wi' your inflated, up in the clouds, reef-point patterin', balloon-like nonsense."

“Well, well, father, don’t get so hot about it; I won’t offend again. Besides, I’m quite content to take a very low place so long as you give mother her right position. We won’t disagree about that, but I suspect that we differ considerably about the other matter you mentioned.”

“What other matter?” demanded the sire.

“My doing duty as first mate,” answered the son. “It must be quite evident to you by this time, I should think, that I am not cut out for a sailor. After all your trouble, and my own efforts during this long voyage round the Cape, I’m no better than an amateur. I told you that a youth taken fresh from college, without any previous experience of the sea except in boats, could not be licked into shape in so short a time. It is absurd to call me first mate of the *Sunshine*. That is in reality Mr Moor’s position—”

“No, it isn’t, Nigel, my son,” interrupted the captain, firmly. “Mr Moor is *second* mate. *I* say so, an’ if I, the skipper and owner o’ this brig, don’t know it, I’d like to know who does! Now, look here, lad. You’ve always had a bad habit of underratin’ yourself an’ contradictin’ your father. I’m an old salt, you know, an’ I tell ’ee that for the time you’ve bin at sea, an’ the opportunities you’ve had, you’re a sort o’ walkin’ miracle. You’re no more an ammytoor than I am, and another voyage or two will make you quite fit to work your way all over the ocean, an’ finally to take command o’ this here brig, an’ let your old father stay at home wi’—wi’—”

“With the Poetess,” suggested Nigel.

“Just so—wi’ the equal o’ Dibdin, not to mention the other fellow. Now it seems to me—. How’s ’er head?”

The captain suddenly changed the subject here.

Nigel, who chanced to be standing next the binnacle, stooped to examine the compass, and the flood of light from its lamp revealed a smooth but manly and handsome face which seemed quite to harmonise with the cheery voice that belonged to it.

“Nor’-east-and-by-east,” he said.

“Are ’ee sure, lad?”

“Your doubting me, father, does not correspond with your lately expressed opinion of my seamanship; does it?”

“Let me see,” returned the captain, taking no notice of the remark, and stooping to look at the compass with a critical eye.

The flood of light, in this case, revealed a visage in which good-nature had evidently struggled for years against the virulent opposition of wind and weather, and had come off victorious, though not without evidences of the conflict. At the same time it revealed features similar to those of the son, though somewhat rugged and red, besides being smothered in hair.

“Vulcan must be concoctin’ a new brew,” he muttered, as he gazed inquiringly over the bow, “or he’s stirring up an old one.”

“What d’you mean, father?”

“I mean that there’s somethin’ goin’ on there-away—in the neighbourhood o’ Sunda Straits,” answered the Captain, directing attention to that point of the compass towards which the ship’s head was turned. “Darkness like this don’t happen without a cause. I’ve had some experience o’ them seas before now, an’ depend upon it that Vulcan is stirring up some o’ the fires that are always blazin’ away, more or less, around the Straits Settlements.”

“By which you mean, I suppose, that one of the numerous volcanoes in the Malay Archipelago has become active,” said Nigel; “but are we not some five or six hundred miles to the sou’-west of Sunda? Surely the influence of volcanic action could scarcely reach so far.”

“So far!” repeated the captain, with a sort of humph which was meant to indicate mild contempt; “that shows how little you know, with all your book-learnin’, about volcanoes.”

“I don’t profess to know much, father,” retorted Nigel in a tone of cheery defiance.

“Why, boy,” continued the other, resuming his perambulation of the deck, “explosions have sometimes been heard for hundreds, ay *hundreds*, of miles. I thought I heard one just now, but no doubt the unusual darkness works up my imagination and makes me suspicious, for it’s wonderful what fools the imag—. Hallo! D’ee feel *that*?”

He went smartly towards the binnacle-light, as he spoke, and, holding an arm close to it, found that his sleeve was sprinkled with a thin coating of fine dust.

“Didn’t I say so?” he exclaimed in some excitement, as he ran to the cabin skylight and glanced earnestly at the barometer. That glance caused him to shout a sudden order to take in all sail. At the same moment a sigh of wind swept over the sleeping sea as if the storm-fiend were expressing regret at having been so promptly discovered and met.

Seamen are well used to sudden danger—especially in equatorial seas—and to prompt, unquestioning action. Not many minutes elapsed before the *Sunshine* was under the smallest amount of sail she could carry. Even before this had been well accomplished a stiff breeze was tearing up the surface of the sea into wild foam, which a furious gale soon raised into raging billows.

The storm came from the Sunda Straits about which the captain and his son had just been talking, and was so violent that they could do nothing but scud before it under almost bare poles. All that night it raged. Towards morning it increased to such a pitch that one of the backstays of the foremast gave way. The result was that the additional strain thus thrown on the other stays was too much for them. They also parted, and the foretop-mast, snapping short off with a report like a cannon-shot, went over the side, carrying the main-topgallant-mast and all its gear along with it.

Chapter Two.

The Haven in the Coral Ring.

It seemed as if the storm-fiend were satisfied with the mischief he had accomplished, for immediately after the disaster just described, the gale began to moderate, and when the sun rose it had been reduced to a stiff but steady breeze.

From the moment of the accident onward, the whole crew had been exerting themselves to the utmost with axe and knife to cut and clear away the wreck of the masts, and repair damages.

Not the least energetic among them was our amateur first mate, Nigel Roy. When all had been made comparatively snug, he went aft to where his father stood beside the steersman, with his legs nautically wide apart, his sou'-wester pulled well down over his frowning brows, and his hands in their native pockets.

"This is a bad ending to a prosperous voyage," said the youth, sadly; "but you don't seem to take it much to heart, father!"

"How much or little I take it to heart you know nothin' whatever about, my boy, seein' that I don't wear my heart on my coat-sleeve, nor yet on the point of my nose, for the inspection of all and sundry. Besides, you can't tell whether it's a bad or a good endin', for it has not ended yet one way or another. Moreover, what appears bad is often found to be good, an' what seems good is pretty often uncommon bad."

"You are a walking dictionary of truisms, father! I suppose you mean to take a philosophical view of the misfortune and make the best of it," said Nigel, with what we may style one of his twinkling smiles, for on nearly all occasions that young man's dark, brown eyes twinkled, in spite of him, as vigorously as any "little star" that was ever told in prose or song to do so—and much more expressively, too, because of the eyebrows of which little stars appear to be destitute.

"No, lad," retorted the captain; "I take a common-sense view—not a philosophical one; an' when you've bin as long at sea as I have, you'll call nothin' a misfortune until it's proved to be such. The only misfortune I have at present is a son who cannot see things in the same light as his father sees 'em."

"Well, then, according to your own principle that is the reverse of a misfortune, for if I saw everything in the same light that you do, you'd have no pleasure in talking to me, you'd have no occasion to reason me out of error, or convince me of truth. Take the subject of poetry, now—"

"Luff;" said Captain Roy, sternly, to the man at the wheel.

When the man at the wheel had gone through the nautical evolution involved in "luff," the captain turned to his son and said abruptly—"We'll run for the Cocos-Keelin' Islands, Nigel, an' refit."

"Are the Keeling Islands far off?"

"Lift up your head and look straight along the bridge of your nose, lad, and you'll see them. They're an interesting group, are the Keelin' Islands. Volcanic, they are, with a coral top-dressin', so to speak. Sit down here an' I'll tell 'ee about 'em."

Nigel shut up the telescope through which he had been examining the thin, blue line on the horizon that indicated the islands in question, and sat down on the cabin skylight beside his father.

"They've got a romantic history too, though a short one, an' are set like a gem on the bosom of the deep blue sea."

"Come, father, you're drifting out of your true course—that's poetical!"

"I know it, lad, but I'm only quotin' your mother. Well, you must know that the Keelin' Islands—we call them Keelin' for short—were uninhabited between fifty and sixty years ago, when a Scotsman named Ross, thinking them well situated as a port of call for the repair and provisioning of vessels on their way to Australia and China, set his heart on them and quietly took possession in the name of England. Then he went home to fetch his wife and family of six children, intendin' to settle on the islands for good. Returning in 1827 with the family and fourteen adventurers, twelve of whom were English, one a Portugee and one a Javanee, he found to his disgust that an Englishman named Hare had stepped in before him and taken possession. This Hare was a very bad fellow; a rich man who wanted to live like a Rajah, with lots o' native wives and retainers, an' be a sort of independent prince. Of course he was on bad terms at once with Ross, who, finding that things were going badly, felt that it would be unfair to hold his people to the agreement which was made when he thought the whole group was his own, so he offered to release them. They all, except two men and one woman, accepted the release and went off in a gun-boat that chanced to touch there at the time. For a good while Hare and his rival lived there—the one tryin' to get the Dutch, the other to induce the English Government to claim possession. Neither Dutch nor English would do so at first, but the English did it at long last—in 1878—and annexed the islands to the Government of Ceylon.

“Long before that date, however—before 1836—Hare left and went to Singapore, where he died, leaving Ross in possession—the ‘King of the Cocos Islands’ as he came to be called. In a few years—chiefly through the energy of Ross’s eldest son, to whom he soon gave up the management of affairs—the Group became a prosperous settlement. Its ships traded in cocoa-nuts, (the chief produce of the islands), throughout all the Straits Settlements, and boatbuildin’ became one of their most important industries. But there was one thing that prevented it from bein’ a very happy though prosperous place, an’ that was the coolies who had been hired in Java, for the only men that could be got there at first were criminals who had served their time in the chain-gangs of Batavia. As these men were fit for anything—from pitch-and-toss to murder—and soon outnumbered the colonists, the place was kept in constant alarm and watchfulness. For, as I dare say you know, the Malays are sometimes liable to have the spirit of *amok* on them, which leads them to care for and fear nothin’, and to go in for a fight-to-death, from which we get our sayin’—*run amuck*. An’ when a strong fellow is goin’ about loose in this state o’ mind, it’s about as bad as havin’ a tiger prowlin’ in one’s garden.

“Well, sometimes two or three o’ these coolies would mutiny and bide in the woods o’ one o’ the smaller uninhabited islands. An’ the colonists would have no rest till they hunted them down. So, to keep matters right, they had to be uncommon strict. It was made law that no one should spend the night on any but what was called the Home Island without permission. Every man was bound to report himself at the guard-house at a fixed hour; every fire to be out at sunset, and every boat was numbered and had to be in its place before that time. So they went on till the year 1862, when a disaster befell them that made a considerable change—at first for the worse, but for the better in the long-run. Provin’ the truth, my lad, of what I was—well, no—I was goin’ to draw a moral here, but I won’t!

“It was a cyclone that did the business. Cyclones have got a free-an’-easy way of makin’ a clean sweep of the work of years in a few hours. This cyclone completely wrecked the homes of the Keelin’ Islanders, and Ross—that’s the second Ross, the son of the first one—sent home for *his* son, who was then a student of engineering in Glasgow, to come out and help him to put things to rights. Ross the third obeyed the call, like a good son,—observe that, Nigel.”

“All right, father, fire away!”

“Like a good son,” repeated the captain, “an’ he turned out to be a first-rate man, which was lucky, for his poor father died soon after, leavin’ him to do the work alone. An’ well able was the young engineer to do it. He got rid o’ the chain-gang men altogether, and hired none but men o’ the best character in their place. He cleared off the forests and planted the ground with cocoa-nut palms. Got out steam mills, circular saws, lathes, etcetera, and established a system of general education with a younger brother as head-master—an’ tail-master too, for I believe there was only one. He also taught the men to work in brass, iron, and wood, and his wife—a Cocos girl that he married after comin’ out—taught all the women and girls to sew, cook, and manage the house. In short, everything went on in full swing of prosperity, till the year 1876, when the island-born inhabitants were about 500, as contented and happy as could be.

“In January of that year another cyclone paid them a visit. The barometer gave them warning, and, remembering the visit of fourteen years before, they made ready to receive the new visitor. All the boats were hauled up to places of safety, and every other preparation was made. Down it came, on the afternoon o’ the 28th—worse than they had expected. Many of the storehouses and mills had been lately renewed or built. They were all gutted and demolished. Everything movable was swept away like bits of paper. Lanes, hundreds of yards in length, were cleared among the palm-trees by the whirling wind, which seemed to perform a demon-dance of revelry among them. In some cases it snapped trees off close to the ground. In others it seemed to swoop down from above, lick up a patch of trees bodily and carry them clean away, leaving the surrounding trees untouched. Sometimes it would select a tree of thirty years growth, seize it, spin it round, and leave it a permanent spiral screw. I was in these regions about the time, and had the account from a native who had gone through it all and couldn’t speak of it except with glaring eyeballs and gasping breath.

“About midnight of the 28th the gale was at its worst. Darkness that could be felt between the flashes of lightning. Thunder that was nearly drowned by the roaring of the wind an’ the crashing of everything all round. To save their lives the people had to fling themselves into ditches and hollows of the ground. Mr Ross and some of his people were lying in the shelter of a wall near his house. There had been a schooner lying not far off. When Mr Ross raised his head cautiously above the wall to have a look to wind’ard he saw the schooner comin’ straight for him on the top of a big wave. ‘Hold on!’ he shouted, fell flat down, and laid hold o’ the nearest bush. Next moment the wave burst right over the wall, roared on up to the garden, 150 yards above high-water mark, and swept his house clean away! By good fortune the wall stood the shock, and the schooner stuck fast just before reachin’ it, but so near that the end of the jib-boom passed right over the place where the household lay holdin’ on for dear life and half drowned. It was a tremendous night,” concluded the captain, “an’ nearly everything on the islands was wrecked, but they’ve survived it, as you’ll see. Though it’s seven years since that cyclone swep’ over them, they’re all right and goin’ ahead again, full swing, as if nothin’ had happened.”

“And is Ross the Third still king?” asked Nigel with much interest.

“Ay—at least he was king a few years ago when I passed this way and had occasion to land to replace a tops’l yard that had been carried away.”

“Then you won’t arrive as a stranger?”

“I should think not,” returned the captain, getting up and gazing steadily at the *atoll* or group of islets enclosed within a coral ring which they were gradually approaching.

Night had descended, however, and the gale had decreased almost to a calm, ere they steered through the narrow channel—or what we may call a broken part of the ring—which led to the calm lagoon inside. Nigel Roy leaned over the bow, watching with profound attention the numerous phosphorescent fish and eel-like creatures which darted

hither and thither like streaks of silver from beneath their advancing keel. He had enough of the naturalist in him to arouse in his mind keen interest in the habits and action of the animal life around him, and these denizens of the coral-groves were as new to him as their appearance was unexpected.

“You’ll find ’em very kind and hospitable, lad,” said the captain to his son.

“What, the fish?”

“No, the inhabitants. Port—port—steady!”

“Steady it is!” responded the man at the wheel.

“Let go!” shouted the captain.

A heavy plunge, followed by the rattling of chains and swinging round of the brig, told that they had come to an anchor in the lagoon of the Cocos-Keeling Islands.

Chapter Three.

Interesting Particulars of Various Kinds.

By the first blush of dawn Nigel Roy hastened on deck, eager to see the place in regard to which his father’s narrative had awakened in him considerable interest.

It not only surpassed but differed from all his preconceived ideas. The brig floated on the bosom of a perfectly calm lake of several miles in width, the bottom of which, with its bright sand and brilliant coral-beds, could be distinctly seen through the pellucid water. This lake was encompassed by a reef of coral which swelled here and there into tree-clad islets, and against which the breakers of the Indian Ocean were dashed into snowy foam in their vain but ceaseless efforts to invade the calm serenity of the lagoon. Smaller islands, rich with vegetation, were scattered here and there within the charmed circle, through which several channels of various depths and sizes connected the lagoon with the ocean.

“We shall soon have the king himself off to welcome us,” said Captain Roy as he came on deck and gave a sailor-like glance all round the horizon and then up at the sky from the mere force of habit. “Visitors are not numerous here. A few scientific men have landed now and again; Darwin the great naturalist among others in 1836, and Forbes in 1878. No doubt they’ll be very glad to welcome Nigel Roy in this year of grace 1883.”

“But I’m not a naturalist, father, more’s the pity.”

“No matter, lad; you’re an ammytoor first mate, an’ pr’aps a poet may count for somethin’ here. They lead poetical lives and are fond o’ poetry.”

“Perhaps that accounts for the fondness you say they have for you, father.”

“Just so, lad. See!—there’s a boat puttin’ off already: the king, no doubt.”

He was right. Mr Ross, the appointed governor, and “King of the Cocos Islands,” was soon on deck, heartily shaking hands with and welcoming Captain Roy as an old friend. He carried him and his son off at once to breakfast in his island-home; introduced Nigel to his family, and then showed them round the settlement, assuring them at the same time that all its resources were at their disposal for the repair of the *Sunshine*.

“Thank ’ee kindly,” said the captain in reply, “but I’ll only ask for a stick to rig up a fore-topmast to carry us to Batavia, where we’ll give the old craft a regular overhaul—for it’s just possible she may have received some damage below the water-line, wi’ bumpin’ on the mast and yards.”

The house of the “King” was a commodious, comfortable building in the midst of a garden, in which there were roses in great profusion, as well as fruit-trees and flowering shrubs. Each Keeling family possessed a neat well-furnished plank cottage enclosed in a little garden, besides a boat-house at the water-edge on the inner or lagoon side of the reef, and numerous boats were lying about on the white sand. The islanders, being almost born sailors, were naturally very skilful in everything connected with the sea. There was about them a good deal of that kindly innocence which one somehow expects to find associated with a mild paternal government and a limited intercourse with the surrounding world, and Nigel was powerfully attracted by them from the first.

After an extensive ramble, during which Mr Ross plied the captain with eager questions as to the latest news from the busy centres of civilisation—especially with reference to new inventions connected with engineering—the island king left them to their own resources till dinner-time, saying that he had duties to attend to connected with the kingdom!

“Now, boy,” said the captain when their host had gone, “what’ll ’ee do? Take a boat and have a pull over the lagoon, or go with me to visit a family I’m particularly fond of, an’ who are uncommon fond of *me*!”

“Visit the family, of course,” said Nigel. “I can have a pull any day.”

“Come along then.”

He led the way to one of the neatest of the plank cottages, which stood on the highest ridge of the island, so that from the front windows it commanded a view of the great blue ocean with its breakers that fringed the reef as with a

ring of snow, while, on the opposite side, lay the peaceful waters and islets of the lagoon.

A shout of joyful surprise was uttered by several boys and girls at sight of the captain, for during his former visit he had won their hearts by telling them wild stories of the sea, one-half of each story being founded on fact and personal experience, the other half on a vivid imagination!

“We are rejoiced to see you,” said the mother of the juveniles, a stout woman of mixed nationality—that of Dutch apparently predominating. She spoke English, however, remarkably well, as did many of the Cocos people, though Malay is the language of most of them.

The boys and girls soon hauled the captain down on a seat and began to urge him to tell them stories, using a style of English that was by no means equal to that of the mother.

“Stop, stop, let me see sister Kathy first. I can’t begin without her. Where is she?”

“Somewhere, I s’pose,” said the eldest boy.

“No doubt of that. Go—fetch her,” returned the captain.

At that moment a back-door opened, and a girl of about seventeen years of age entered. She was pleasant-looking rather than pretty—tall, graceful, and with magnificent black eyes.

“Here she comes,” cried the captain, rising and kissing her. “Why, Kathy, how you’ve grown since I saw you last! Quite a woman, I declare!”

Kathy was not too much of a woman, however, to join her brothers and sisters in forcing the captain into a seat and demanding a story on the spot.

“Stop, stop!” cried the captain, grasping round their waists a small boy and girl who had already clambered on his knees. “Let me inquire about my old friends first—and let me introduce my son to you—you’ve taken no notice of *him* yet! That’s not hospitable.”

All eyes were turned at once on Nigel, some boldly, others with a shy inquiring look, as though to say, “Can *you* tell stories?”

“Come, now,” said Nigel, advancing, “Since you are all so fond of my father, I must shake hands with you all round.”

The hearty way in which this was done at once put the children at their ease. They admitted him, as it were, into their circle, and then turning again to the captain continued their clamour for a story.

“No, no—about old friends first. How—how’s old mother Morris?”

“Quite well,” they shouted. “Fatterer than ever,” added an urchin, who in England would have been styled cheeky.

“Yes,” lisped a very little girl; “one of ’e doors in ’e house too small for she.”

“Why, Gerchin, you’ve learned to speak English like the rest,” said the captain.

“Yes, father make every one learn.”

“Well, now,” continued the captain, “what about Black Sam?”

“Gone to Batavia,” chorused the children.

“And—and—what’s-’is-name?—the man wi’ the nose—”

A burst of laughter and, “We’s *all* got noses here!” was the reply.

“Yes, but you know who I mean—the short man wi’ the—”

“Oh! with the turned *up* nose. *I* know,” cried the cheeky boy; “you means Johnson? He hoed away nobody know whar’.”

“And little Kelly Drew, what of her?”

A sudden silence fell on the group, and solemn eyes were turned on sister Kathy, who was evidently expected to answer.

“Not dead?” said the captain earnestly.

“No, but very *very* ill,” replied the girl.

“Dear Kelly have never git over the loss of her brother, who—.”

At this point they were interrupted by another group of the captain’s little admirers, who, having heard of his arrival, ran forward to give him a noisy welcome. Before stories could be commenced, however, the visitors were summoned to Mr Ross’s house to dinner, and then the captain had got into such an eager talk with the king that evening was upon them before they knew where they were, as Nigel expressed it, and the stories had to be postponed until the following day.

Of course beds were offered, and accepted by Captain Roy and Nigel. Just before retiring to them, father and son went out to have a stroll on the margin of the lagoon.

“Ain’t it a nice place, Nigel?” asked the former, whose kindly spirit had been stirred up to quite a jovial pitch by the gushing welcome he had received alike from old and young.

“It’s charming, father. Quite different from what you had led me to expect.”

“My boy,” returned the captain, with that solemn deliberation which he was wont to assume when about to deliver a palpable truism. “W’en you’ve come to live as long as me you’ll find that everything turns out different from what people have bin led to expect. Leastways that’s *my* experience.”

“Well, in the meantime, till I have come to your time of life, I’ll take your word for that, and I do hope you intend to stay a long time here.”

“No, my son, I don’t. Why do ye ask?”

“Because I like the place and the people so much that I would like to study it and them, and to sketch the scenery.”

“Business before pleasure, my lad,” said the captain with a grave shake of the head. “You know we’ve bin blown out of our course, and have no business here at all. I’ll only wait till the carpenter completes his repairs, and then be off for Batavia. Duty first; everything else afterwards.”

“But you being owner as well as commander, there is no one to insist on duty being done,” objected Nigel.

“Pardon me,” returned the captain, “there is a certain owner named Captain David Roy, a very stern disciplinarian, who insists on the commander o’ this here brig performin’ his duty to the letter. You may depend upon it that if a man ain’t true to himself he’s not likely to be true to any one else. But it’s likely that we may be here for a couple of days, so I release *you* from duty that you may make the most o’ your time and enjoy yourself. By the way, it will save you wastin’ time if you ask that little girl, Kathy Holbein, to show you the best places to sketch, for she’s a born genius with her pencil and brush.”

“No, thank you, father,” returned Nigel. “I want no little girl to bother me while I’m sketching—even though she be a born genius—for I think I possess genius enough myself to select the best points for sketching, and to get along fairly well without help. At least I’ll try what I can do.”

“Please yourself, lad. Nevertheless, I think you wouldn’t find poor Kathy a bother; she’s too modest for that—moreover, she could manage a boat and pull a good oar when I was here last, and no doubt she has improved since.”

“Nevertheless, I’d rather be alone,” persisted Nigel. “But why do you call her *poor* Kathy? She seems to be quite as strong and as jolly as the rest of her brothers and sisters.”

“Ah, poor thing, these are not her brothers and sisters,” returned the captain in a gentler tone. “Kathy is only an adopted child, and an orphan. Her name, Kathleen, is not a Dutch one. She came to these islands in a somewhat curious way. Sit down here and I’ll tell ’ee the little I know about her.”

Father and son sat down on a mass of coral rock that had been washed up on the beach during some heavy gale, and for a few minutes gazed in silence on the beautiful lagoon, in which not only the islets, but the brilliant moon and even the starry hosts were mirrored faithfully.

“About thirteen years ago,” said the captain, “two pirate junks in the Sunda Straits attacked a British barque, and, after a fight, captured her. Some o’ the crew were killed in action, some were taken on board the junks to be held to ransom, I s’pose, and some, jumping into the sea to escape if possible by swimming, were probably drowned, for they were a considerable distance from land. It was one o’ these fellows, however, who took to the water that managed to land on the Java shore, more dead than alive. He gave information about the affair, and was the cause of a gun-boat, that was in these waters at the time, bein’ sent off in chase o’ the pirate junks.

“This man who swam ashore was a Lascar. He said that the chief o’ the pirates, who seemed to own both junks, was a big ferocious Malay with only one eye—he might have added with no heart at all, if what he said o’ the scoundrel was true, for he behaved with horrible cruelty to the crew o’ the barque. After takin’ all he wanted out of his prize he scuttled her, and then divided the people that were saved alive between the two junks. There were several passengers in the vessel; among them a young man—a widower—with a little daughter, four year old or so. He was bound for Calcutta. Being a very powerful man he fought like a lion to beat the pirates off, but he was surrounded and at last knocked down by a blow from behind. Then his arms were made fast and he was sent wi’ the rest into the biggest junk.

“This poor fellow recovered his senses about the time the pirates were dividin’ the prisoners among them. He seemed dazed at first, so said the Lascar, but as he must have bin in a considerable funk himself I suspect his observations couldn’t have bin very correct. Anyhow, he said he was sittin’ near the side o’ the junk beside this poor man, whose name he never knew, but who seemed to be an Englishman from his language, when a wild scream was heard in the other junk. It was the little girl who had caught sight of her father and began to understand that she was going to be separated from him. At the sound o’ her voice he started up, and, looking round like a wild bull, caught sight o’ the little one on the deck o’ the other junk, just as they were hoistin’ sail to take advantage of a breeze that had sprung up.

“Whether it was that they had bound the man with a piece o’ bad rope, or that the strength o’ Samson had been given to him, the Lascar could not tell, but he saw the Englishman snap the rope as if it had bin a bit o’ pack-thread,

and jump overboard. He swam for the junk where his little girl was. If he had possessed the strength of a dozen Samsons it would have availed him nothin', for the big sail had caught the breeze and got way on her. At the same time the other junk lay over to the same breeze and the two separated. At first the one-eyed pirate jumped up with an oath and fired a pistol shot at the Englishman, but missed him. Then he seemed to change his mind and shouted in bad English, with a diabolical laugh—'Swim away; swim hard, p'raps you kitch 'im up!' Of course the two junks were soon out of sight o' the poor swimmer—and that was the end of *him*, for, of course, he must have been drowned."

"But what of the poor little girl?" asked Nigel, whose feelings were easily touched by the sorrows of children, and who began to have a suspicion of what was coming.

"I'm just comin' to that. Well, the gun-boat that went to look for the pirates sighted one o' the junks out in the Indian Ocean after a long search and captured her, but not a single one o' the barque's crew was to be found in her, and it was supposed they had been all murdered and thrown overboard wi' shots tied to their feet to sink them. Enough o' the cargo o' the British barque was found, however, to convict her, and on a more careful search bein' made, the little girl was discovered, hid away in the hold. Bein' only about four year old, the poor little thing was too frightened to understand the questions put to her. All she could say was that she wanted 'to go to father,' and that her name was Kathy, probably short for Kathleen, but she could not tell."

"Then that is the girl who is now here?" exclaimed Nigel.

"The same, lad. The gun-boat ran in here, like as we did, to have some slight repairs done, and Kathy was landed. She seemed to take at once to motherly Mrs Holbein, who offered to adopt her, and as the captain of the gun-boat had no more notion than the man-in-the-moon who the child belonged to, or what to do with her, he gladly handed her over, so here she has been livin' ever since. Of coarse attempts have been made to discover her friends, but without success, and now all hope has been given up. The poor girl herself never speaks on the subject, but old Holbein and his wife tell me she is sure that Kathy has never forgotten her father. It may be so; anyhow, she has forgotten his name—if she ever knew it."

Next day Nigel made no objections to being guided to the most picturesque spots among the coral isles by the interesting orphan girl. If she had been older he might even have fallen in love with her, an event which would have necessitated an awkward modification of the ground-work of our tale. As it was, he pitied the poor child sincerely, and not only—recognising her genius—asked her advice a good deal on the subject of art, but—recognising also her extreme youth and ignorance—volunteered a good deal of advice in exchange, quite in a paternal way!

Chapter Four.

Nigel Undergoes some quite New and Interesting Experiences.

The arrangements made on the following day turned out to be quite in accordance with the wishes and tastes of the various parties concerned.

The ship's carpenter having been duly set to work on the repairs, and being inspected in that serious piece of prosaic business by the second mate, our captain was set free to charm the very souls of the juveniles by wandering for miles along the coral strand inventing, narrating, exaggerating to his heart's content. Pausing now and then to ask questions irrelevant to the story in hand, like a wily actor, for the purpose of intensifying the desire for more, he would mount a block of coral, and thence, sometimes as from a throne, or platform, or pulpit, impress some profound piece of wisdom, or some thrilling point, or some exceedingly obvious moral on his followers open-mouthed and open-eyed.

These were by no means idlers, steeped in the too common business of having nothing to do. No, they had regularly sought and obtained a holiday from work or school; for all the activities of social and civilised life were going on full swing—fuller, indeed, than the average swing—in that remote, scarcely known, and beautiful little gem of the Indian Ocean.

Meanwhile Nigel and Kathy, with sketch-books under their arms, went down to where the clear waters of the lagoon rippled on the white sand, and, launching a cockleshell of a boat, rowed out toward the islets.

"Now, Kathy, you must let me pull," said Nigel, pushing out the sculls, "for although the captain tells me you are very good at rowing, it would never do for a man, you know, to sit lazily down and let himself be rowed by a girl."

"Very well," said Kathy, with a quiet and most contented smile, for she had not yet reached the self-conscious age—at least, as ages go in the Cocos-Keeling Islands! Besides, Kathy was gifted with that charming disposition which never *objects* to anything—anything, of course, that does not involve principle!

But it was soon found that, as the cockleshell had no rudder, and the intricacies they had to wind among were numerous, frequent directions and corrections were called for from the girl.

"D'you know," said Nigel at last, "as I don't know where you want me to go to, it may be as well, after all, that you should row!"

"Very well," said Kathy, with another of her innocent smiles. "I thinked it will be better so at first."

Nigel could not help laughing at the way she said this as he handed her the sculls.

She soon proved herself to be a splendid boat-woman, and although her delicate and shapely arms were as mere

pipe-stems to the great brawny limbs of her companion, yet she had a deft, mysterious way of handling the sculls that sent the cockleshell faster over the lagoon than before.

“Now, we go ashore here,” said Kathy, turning the boat,—with a prompt backwater of the left scull, and a vigorous pull of the right one,—into a little cove just big enough to hold it.

The keel went with such a plump on the sand, that Nigel, who sat on a forward thwart with his back landward, reversed the natural order of things by putting his back on the bottom of the boat and his heels in the air.

To this day it is an unsettled question whether this was done on purpose by Kathy. Certain it is that *she* did not tumble, but burst into a hearty fit of laughter, while her large lustrous eyes half shut themselves up and twinkled.

“Why, you don’t even apologise, you dreadful creature!” exclaimed Nigel, joining in the laugh, as he picked himself up.

“Why should I ’pologise?” asked the girl, in the somewhat broken English acquired from her adopted family. “Why you not look out?”

“Right, Kathy, right; I’ll keep a sharp lookout next time. Meanwhile I will return good for evil by offering my hand to help you a—hallo!”

While he spoke the girl had sprung past him like a grasshopper, and alighted on the sand like a butterfly.

A few minutes later and this little jesting fit had vanished, and they were both engaged with pencil and book, eagerly—for both were enthusiastic—sketching one of the most enchanting scenes that can well be imagined. We will not attempt the impossible. Description could not convey it. We can only refer the reader’s imagination to the one old, hackneyed but expressive, word—fairyland!

One peculiarly interesting point in the scene was, that on the opposite side of the lagoon the captain could be seen holding forth to his juvenile audience.

When a pretty long time had elapsed in absolute silence, each sketcher being totally oblivious of the other, Nigel looked up with a long sigh, and said:—

“Well, you *have* chosen a most exquisite scene for me. The more I work at it, the more I find to admire. May I look now at what you have done?”

“Oh yes, but I have done not much. I am slow,” said the girl, as Nigel rose and looked over her shoulder.

“Why!—what—how beautiful!—but—but—what do you mean?” exclaimed the youth.

“I don’t understand you,” said the girl, looking up in surprise.

“Why, Kathy, I had supposed you were drawing that magnificent landscape all this time, and—and you’ve only been drawing a group of shells. Splendidly done, I admit, but why—”

He stopped at that moment, for her eyes suddenly filled with tears.

“Forgive me, dear child,” said Nigel, hurriedly “I did not intend to hurt your feelings. I was only surprised at your preference.”

“You have not hurt me,” returned Kathy in a low voice, as she resumed her work, “but what you say calls back to me—my father was very fond of shells.”

She stopped, and Nigel, blaming himself for having inadvertently touched some tender chord, hastened, somewhat clumsily, to change the subject.

“You draw landscape also, I doubt not?”

“Oh yes—plenty. If you come home to me to-night, I will show you some.”

“I shall be only too happy,” returned the youth, sitting down again to his sketch, “and perhaps I may be able to give you a hint or two—especially in reference to perspective—for I’ve had regular training, you know, Kathy, and I dare say you have not had that here.”

“Not what you will think much, perhaps, yet I have study a little in school, and *very* much from Nature.”

“Well, you have been under the best of masters,” returned Nigel, “if you have studied much from Nature. And who has been your other teacher?”

“A brother of Mr Ross. I think he must understand very much. He was an engineer, and has explained to me the rules of perspective, and many other things which were at first very hard to understand. But I do see them now.”

“Perhaps then, Kathleen,” said Nigel, in that drawling, absent tone in which artists are apt to indulge when busy at work—“perhaps you may be already too far advanced to require instruction from me.”

“Perhaps—but I think no, for you seems to understand a great deal. But why you call me Kathleen just now?”

“Because I suppose that is your real name—Kathy being the short for it. Is it not so?”

“Well, p’raps it is. I have hear mother Holbein say so once. I like Kathleen best.”

“Then, may I call you Kathleen?”

“If you like.”

At this point both artists had become so engrossed in their occupation that they ceased to converse, and for a considerable time profound silence reigned—at least on their part, though not as regarded others, for every now and then the faint sound of laughter came floating over the tranquil lagoon from that part of the coral strand where Captain Roy was still tickling the fancies and expanding the imaginations and harrowing or soothing the feelings of the Cocos-Keeling juveniles.

Inferior animal life was also in ceaseless activity around the sketchers, filling the air with those indescribably quiet noises which are so suggestive of that general happiness which was originally in terrestrial paradise and is ultimately to be the lot of redeemed creation.

Snipe and curlews were wading with jaunty step and absorbed inquiring gaze in the shallow pools. Hermit-crabs of several species and sizes were scuttling about searching for convenient shells in which to deposit their naturally homeless and tender tails. Overhead there was a sort of sea-rookery, the trees being tenanted by numerous gannets, frigate birds, and terns—the first gazing with a stupid yet angry air; the last—one beautiful little snow-white species in particular—hovering only a few feet above the sketchers’ heads, while their large black eyes scanned the drawings with the owlish look of wisdom peculiar to connoisseurs. Noddies also were there, and, on the ground, lizards and spiders and innumerable ants engaged in all the varied activities connected with their several domestic arrangements.

Altogether it was a scene of bright peaceful felicity, which seemed to permeate Nigel’s frame right inward to the spinal marrow, and would have kept him entranced there at his work for several hours longer if the cravings of a healthy appetite had not warned him to desist.

“Now, Kathleen,” he said, rising and stretching himself as one is apt to do after sitting long in a constrained position, “it seems to me about time to—by the way, we’ve forgotten to bring something to eat!”

His expression as he said this made his companion look up and laugh.

“Plenty cocoa-nuts,” she said, pointing with her pencil to the overarching trees.

“True, but I doubt my ability to climb these long straight stems; besides, I have got only a small clasp-knife, which would be but a poor weapon with which to attack the thick outer husk of the nuts.”

“But I have got a few without the husks in the boat,” said the girl, rising and running to the place where the cockleshell had been left.

She returned immediately with several nuts divested of their thick outer covering, and in the condition with which we are familiar in England. Some of them were already broken, so that they had nothing to do but sit down to lunch.

“Here is one,” said Kathy, handing a nut to Nigel, “that has got no meat yet in it—only milk. Bore a hole in it and drink, but see you bore in the right hole.”

“The right hole?” echoed the youth, “are some of them wrong ones?”

“Oh yes, only one of the three will do. One of our crawbs knows that and has claws that can bore through the husk and shell. We calls him coconut crawb.”

“Indeed! That is strange; I never heard before of a crab that fed on cocoa-nuts.”

“This one do. He is very big, and also climbs trees. It goes about most at night. Perhaps you see one before you go away.”

The crab to which Kathy referred is indeed a somewhat eccentric crustacean, besides being unusually large. It makes deep tunnels in the ground larger than rabbit burrows, which it lines with cocoa-nut fibre. One of its claws is developed into an organ of extraordinary power with which it can break a cocoa-nut shell, and even, it is said, a man’s limb! It never takes all the husk off a cocoa-nut—that would be an unnecessary trouble—but only enough off the end where the three eyelets are, to enable it to get at the inside. Having pierced the proper eye with one of its legs it rotates the nut round it until the hole is large enough to admit the point of its great claw, with which it continues the work. This remarkable creature also climbs the palm-trees, but not to gather nuts; that is certain, for its habits have been closely watched and it has been ascertained that it feeds only on fallen nuts. Possibly it climbs for exercise, or to obtain a more extended view of its charming habitat, or simply “for fun.” Why not?

All this and a great deal more was told to Nigel by Kathleen, who was a bit of a naturalist in her tendencies—as they sat there under the graceful fronds of the palm-trees admiring the exquisite view, eating and drinking cocoa-nuts.

“I suppose you have plenty of other kinds of food besides this?” said Nigel.

“Oh yes, plenty. Most of the fish in our lagoon be good for eating, and so also the crawbs, and we have turtle too.”

“Indeed! How do you catch the turtle? Another nut, please.—Thank you.”

“The way we gets turtle is by the men diving for them and catching them in the water. We has pigs too—plenty, and

the wild birds are some very nice."

(See note.)

When the artists had finished they proceeded to the shore, and to their surprise and amusement found the cockleshell in possession of a piratical urchin of about four years of age in a charmingly light state of clothing. He was well-known to Kathleen, and it turned out that, having seen the cockle start at too great a distance to be hailed, and having set his heart on joining in the excursion, he had watched their movements, observed their landing on the islet—which was not far from the main circlet of land—and, running round till he came opposite to it, swam off and got into the boat. Being somewhat tired he had lain down to rest and fallen sound asleep.

On the way home this urchin's sole delight was to lean over the bow and watch the fish and coral-groves over which they skimmed. In this he was imitated by Nigel who, ungallantly permitting his companion to row, also leaned over the side and gazed down into the clear crystal depths with unwearying delight.

For the wonderful colours displayed in those depths must be seen to be believed. Not only is the eye pleased with the ever-varying formations of the coral bowers, but almost dazzled with the glittering fish—blue, emerald, green, scarlet, orange, banded, spotted, and striped—that dart hither and thither among the rich-toned sea-weed and the variegated anemones which spread their tentacles upwards as if inviting the gazer to come down. Among these, crabs could be seen crawling with undecided motion, as if unable to make up their minds, while in out of the way crevices clams of a gigantic size were gaping in deadly quietude ready to close with a snap on any unfortunate creature that should give them the slightest touch.

Nigel was sharply awakened from his dream by a sudden splash. Looking up he observed that the small boy was gone. With a bound he stood erect, one foot on the gunwale and hands clasped ready to dive, when a glance revealed the fact that Kathy was smiling broadly!

"Don't jump!" she said. "He is only after a fish."

Even while she spoke Nigel saw the brown little fellow shooting about like a galvanised tadpole, with a small harpoon in his hand.

Next moment he appeared on the surface shouting and spluttering, with a splendid fish on the end of his harpoon! Both were hauled into the boat, and very soon after they drew near to land.

In the shallow water Nigel observed some remarkable creatures which resembled hedgehogs, having jaws armed with formidable teeth to enable them to feed, Kathy said, on coral insects. File-fishes also drew his attention particularly. These were magnificently striped and coloured, and apparently very fearless.

"What convenient tails they have to lay hold of," remarked our hero, as they slowly glided past one; "I believe I could catch it with my hand!"

Stooping swiftly as he spoke, he dipped his arm into the water, and actually did grasp the fish by its tail, but dropped it again instantly—to the shrieking delight of the urchin and Kathy,—for the tail was armed with a series of sharp spines which ran into his hand like lancets.

This was an appropriate conclusion to a day that would have been otherwise too enjoyable. Poor Nigel's felicity was further diluted when he met his father.

"We'll have to sleep aboard to-night," said the captain, "for there's a fair breeze outside which seems likely to hold, and the mast has been temporarily rigged up, so we'll have to up anchor, and away by break of day to-morrow."

Nigel's heart sank.

"To-morrow! father?"

"Ay, to-morrow. Business first, pleasure afterwards."

"Well, I suppose you are right, but it seems almost a shame to leave such a heaven upon earth as this in such a hurry. Besides, is it not unkind to such hospitable people to bolt off after you've got all that you want out of them?"

"Can't help that, lad—

> "Dooty first, an' fun to follow,
> That's what beats creation hollow."

"Come father, don't say that you quote *that* from mother!"

"No more I do, my boy. It's my own—homemade. I put it together last night when I couldn't sleep for your snorin'."

"Don't tell fibs, father. You know I never snore. But—really—are we to start at daylight?"

"We are, if the wind holds. But you may stay as late as you choose on shore to-night."

Nigel availed himself of the opportunity to see as much of the place and people as was possible in the limited time. Next morning the good though damaged brig was running in the direction of Sunda Straits before a stiff and steady breeze.

Note 1. We recommend those who desire more curious information on the fauna and flora of the Keeling Islands to apply to Henry O. Forbes most interesting book, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago*, published by Sampson Low.

Chapter Five.

Captain Roy surprises and gratifies his Son, who surprises a Negro, and suddenly forms an Astonishing Resolve.

Arrived in Batavia—the low-lying seaport and capital of the Dutch island of Java—Captain Roy had his brig examined, and found that the damage she had sustained was so serious that several months would probably elapse before she would be again ready for sea.

"Now, Nigel, my lad," said the old gentleman, on the morning after the examination had been made, "come down below with me; I want to have a confabulation with 'ee."

"Why, father," said the youth, when seated at the small cabin table opposite his rugged parent, "you seem to be in an unusually solemn frame of mind this morning. Has anything happened?"

"Nothin', boy—nothin'. Leastwise nothin' in particular. You know all about the brig, an' what a deal o' repair she's got to undergo?"

"Of course I do. You know I was present when you talked the matter over with that fellow—what's-'is-name—that gave you his report."

"Just so. Well now, Nigel, you don't suppose, do you, that I'm goin' to keep you here for some months knockin' about with nothin' to do—eatin' your grub in idleness?"

"Certainly not," said the youth, regarding the stern countenance of his parent with an amused look. "I have no intention of acting such an ignoble part, and I'm surprised at you askin' the question, for you know I am not lazy—at least not more so than average active men—and there must be plenty of work for me to do in looking after the cargo, superintending repairs, taking care of the ship and men. I wonder at you, father. You must either have had a shock of dotage, or fallen into a poetical vein. What is a first mate fit for if—"

"Nigel," said Captain Roy, interrupting, "I'm the owner an' commander of the *Sunshine*, besides bein' the paternal parent of an impertinent son, and I claim to have the right to do as I please—therefore, hold your tongue and listen to me."

"All right, father," replied the young man, with a benignant grin; "proceed, but don't be hard upon me; spare my feelings."

"Well now, this is how the land lies," said the old seaman, resting his elbows on the table and clasping his hands before him. "As Mr Moor and I, with the stooard and men, are quite sufficient to manage the affairs o' the brig, and as we shall certainly be here for a considerable time to come, I've made up my mind to give you a holiday. You're young, you see, an' foolish, and your mind needs improvin'. In short, you want a good deal o' the poetry knocked out o' you, for it's not like your mother's poetry by any means, so you needn't flatter yourself—not built on the same lines by a long way. Well—where was I?"

"Only got the length of the holiday yet, father."

"Only, indeed. You ungrateful dog! It's a considerable length to get, that, isn't it? Well, I also intend to give you some money, to enable you to move about in this curious archipelago—not much, but enough to keep you from starvation if used with economy, so I recommend you to go into the town, make general inquiries about everything and everywhere, an' settle in your mind what you'll do, for I give you a rovin' commission an' don't want to be bothered with you for some time to come."

"Are you in earnest, father?" asked Nigel, who had become more interested while the captain unfolded his plan.

"Never more in earnest in my life—except, p'raps, when I inquired over twenty years ago whether you was a boy or a girl."

"Well, now, that *is* good of you, father. Of course I need not say that I am charmed at the prospect you open up to me. And—and when may I start?"

"At once. Up anchor and away to-night if you choose."

"But—where?"

"Anywhere—everywhere, Java, Sumatra, Borneo—all Malaysia before you where to choose. Now be off, and think over it, for I've got too much to do to waste time on you at present," said the captain, rising, "and, stay—Nigel."

"Well?" said the youth, looking back as he was about to leave the cabin.

"Whatever you do, don't grow poetical about it. You know it is said somewhere, that mischief is found for idle hands to do."

“All right, father. I’ll keep clear of poetry—leave all that sort o’ nonsense to *you*. I’ll—

> “I’ll flee Temptation’s siren voice,
> *Throw* poesy to the *crows*
> And let my soul’s ethereal fire
> Gush out in sober prose.”

It need scarcely be said that our hero was not slow to take advantage of the opportunity thus thrown in his way. He went off immediately through the town, armed with the introduction of his father’s well-known name, and made inquiries of all sorts of people as to the nature, the conditions, the facilities, and the prospects of travel in the Malay Archipelago. In this quest he found himself sorely perplexed for the very good reason that “all sorts” of people, having all sorts of ideas and tastes, gave amazingly conflicting accounts of the region and its attractions.

Wearied at last with his researches, he sauntered towards afternoon in the direction of the port, and began in a listless sort of way to watch the movements of a man who was busily engaged with a boat, as if he were making preparations to put to sea.

Now, whatever philosophers may say to the contrary, we hold strongly to the opinion that likings and dislikings among men and women and children are the result of some profound occult cause which has nothing whatever to do with experience. No doubt experience may afterwards come in to modify or intensify the feelings, but it is not the originating cause. If you say it is, how are we to account for love at first sight? Beauty has nothing necessarily to do with it, for men fall in love at first sight with what the world calls plain women—happily! Character is not the cause, for love assails the human breast, oft-times, before the loved object has uttered a word, or perpetrated a smile, or even fulminated a glance to indicate character. So, in like manner, affection may arise between man and man.

It was so on this occasion with Nigel Roy. As he stood abstractedly gazing at the boatman he fell in love with him—at least he took a powerful fancy to him, and this was all the more surprising that the man was a negro,—a woolly-headed, flat-nosed, thick-lipped nigger!

We would not for a moment have it supposed that it is unnatural to love such a man. Quite the reverse. But when such a man is a perfect stranger, has never uttered a word in one’s presence, or vouchsafed so much as a glance, and is gravely, stolidly engaged in the unsavoury work of greasing some of the tackling of a boat, it does seem unaccountable that he should be unwittingly capable of stirring up in another man’s bosom feelings of ardent goodwill, to put it mildly.

After watching him for some time, Nigel, under an almost involuntary impulse, shouted “Hullo!”

“Hullo!” replied the negro, looking up with a somewhat stern frown and a pout of his thick lips, as much as to say —“Who are *you*?”

Nigel smiled, and made that suggestive motion with his forefinger which signifies “Come here.”

The frown fled and the pout became a smile as the negro approached, wiping his hands on a piece of cotton-waste.

“What you want wi’ *me*, sar?” he asked.

“Well, upon my word,” said Nigel, somewhat perplexed, “I can’t very well say. I suppose something must have been in my mind, but—anyhow, I felt a desire to have a talk with you; that is, if you can spare the time.”

The first part of this reply induced a slight recurrence of the frown and pout, but at its conclusion the black brow cleared and the mouth expanded to such a gum-and-teeth-exposing extent that Nigel fairly burst into a laugh.

“You’s bery good, sar,” said the man, “an’ I’s hab much pleasure to make your acquaintance.—Der an’t no grease on ’em now.”

The last remark had reference to the enormous black paw which he held out.

Nigel at once grasped it and shook it heartily.

“I’s bery fond ob a talk, sar,” continued the negro, “so as you wants one, heabe ahead.”

Thus encouraged, our hero began by remarking that he seemed to be preparing for a trip.

“Dat’s zackly what I’s a-doin’, sar.”

“A long one?”

“Well, dat depends on what you call short. Goin’ to Sunda Straits, which p’raps you know, sar, is nigh a hundred miles fro’ here.”

“And what may you be going to do there?” asked Nigel.

“Goin’ home to Krakatoa.”

“Why, I thought that was an uninhabited island. I passed close to it on my way here, and saw no sign of inhabitants.”

“Dat’s cause I was absint fro’ home. An’ massa he keeps indoors a good deal.”

“And pray who is massa?” asked Nigel.

“Sar,” said the negro, drawing up his square sturdy frame with a look of dignity; “fair-play is eberyt’ing wid me. You’ve ax me a heap o’ questions. Now’s my turn. Whar you comes fro’?”

“From England,” replied Nigel.

“An’ whar you go to?”

“Well, you’ve posed me now, for I really don’t know where I’m going to. In fact that is the very thing I have been trying to find out all day, so if you’ll help me I’ll be much obliged.”

Here Nigel explained his position and difficulties, and it was quite obvious, judging from the glittering eyes and mobile mouth, that he poured his tale into peculiarly sympathetic ears. When he had finished, the negro stood for a considerable time gazing in meditative silence at the sky.

“Yes,” he said at last, as if communing with himself, “I t’ink—I ain’t quite sure, but I t’ink—I may ventur’.”

“Whatever it is you are thinking about,” remarked Nigel, “you may venture to say anything you like to *me*.”

The negro, who, although comparatively short of stature, was Herculean in build, looked at the youth with an amused expression.

“You’re bery good, sar, but dat’s not what I’s t’inkin’ ob. I’s t’inkin’ whedder I dar’ ventur’ to introdoce you to my massa. He’s not fond o’ company, an’ it might make ’im angry, but he came by a heaby loss lately an’ p’raps he may cond’send to receibe you. Anyhow you’d be quite safe, for he’s sure to be civil to any friend ob mine.”

“Is he then so fierce?” asked Nigel, becoming interested as well as amused.

“Fierce! no, he’s gentle as a lamb, but he’s awrful when he’s roused—tigers, crokindiles, ’noceroses is nuffin’ to him!”

“Indeed! what’s his name, and what does he do? how does he live?”

The negro shook his head. “Da’s more’n I dar tell till I ax his leave, sar. I kin only say de peepil around calls ’im the hermit ob Rakata, ’cause he libs by his-self (wid me, ob course, but *I* counts for nuffin’), close under de ole volcano ob Krakatoa. Dey tink—some ob de foolish peepil—dat he hab sold his-self to de dibil, but I knows better. He’s a good man, and you’d hab great fun if you stop wid him. Now, what I’s a-gwine to advise you is, come wid me an’ see de hermit. If he lets you stop, good. If not, I fetch you ober to de main land—whar you please—an’ you kin come back here or go whar you choose. Its wort’ your while to take your chance, anyhow.”

The negro said this with such an earnest look that Nigel made up his mind on the spot to accept this curious invitation.

“I’ll go!” he exclaimed with sudden energy. “When do you start?”

“To-morrer at daybreak, sar.”

“Well, I shall have to talk it over first with my father, but I’m sure he won’t object, so you may look out for me here at daybreak. Shall I have to fetch any provisions with me for the voyage?”

“No, nuffin’. Boat’s crammed wi’ grub. But you’d better bring a gun o’ some sort an’ a ’volver, an’ a big knife, an’ a mortal big appetite, for a man’s no good widout dat.”

“I always carry that about with me,” said the youth, “whatever else I may leave behind; and I’ll see to the other things.—By the way, what’s your name?”

“Moses.”

“Is that all?”

“Isn’t dat enuff?” returned the negro with a look of dignity.

“Quite; but I have the advantage of you there, Moses, for I have two names—Nigel Roy.”

“Well, I don’t see much use ob two, but which does you like to be called by—Nadgel or Roy?”

“Whichever you please, Moses; I’ll answer to either. So now, good-bye for the present, and look out for me to-morrow at daylight.”

“Good-bye, Massa Nadgel, till to-morrer.”

The negro waved his hand and, sauntering slowly back to his boat, remarked in an undertone, “I lub dat young feller!” Saying which, he resumed his greasing operations.

Of course Captain Roy made no objection to his son’s proposal, though he freely gave his opinion that it was a wild-goose chase.

“However, lad, please yourself and you’ll please me,” he added; “and now, be particular to bear in mind that you’ve got to write to me every time you get within hail of a post-office or a passing ship or steamer that may chance to be comin’ this way, and in each letter be sure to tell me where you’re goin’ to next, so as I may send a letter there to you in case I want you to return sudden or otherwise. We mustn’t lose touch, you see. You needn’t write long

screeds. I only want to know your whereabouts from time to time. For the rest—you can spin it out in yarns when you come back."

Chapter Six.

The Hermit of Rakata Introduced.

Nothing worthy of particular note occurred during the boat-voyage along the northern shore of Java to Sunda Straits. A fair, steady breeze wafted them westward, and, on the morning of the third day, they came in sight of the comparatively small uninhabited island of Krakatoa.

The boat in which they voyaged, although a little one, had a small portion of the bow decked over, so that our hero and his sable friend could find shelter from the night air when disposed to sleep, and from the fierce rays of the sun at noon.

By the advice of his father, Nigel had changed his sailor costume for the "shore-goin' toggery" in which he had landed on the Keeling Islands, as being more suitable to his new character as a traveller, namely, a white cloth cap with a peak in front and a curtain behind to protect his neck, a light-grey tunic belted at the waist, and a pair of strong canvas trousers. He had also purchased an old-fashioned double-barrelled fowling-piece, muzzle-loading and with percussion locks.

"For you see, Nigel," the captain had said, "it's all very well to use breech-loaders when you've got towns and railways and suchlike to supply you wi' cartridges, but when you've got to cruise in out-o'-the-way waters, there's nothin' like the old style. It's not difficult to carry a few thousand percussion-caps an' a bullet-mould about wi' you wherever you go. As to powder, why, you'll come across that 'most everywhere, an' lead too; and, for the matter o' that, if your life depended on it you could shove a handful of gravel or a pen-knife or tooth-pick into your gun an' blaze away, but with a breech-loader, if you run out o' cartridges, where are you?"

So, as Nigel could not say where he was, the percussion-gun had been purchased.

The peak of Rakata—the highest in the island—a little over 2600 feet, came in sight first; gradually the rest of the island rose out of the horizon, and ere long the rich tropical verdure became distinguishable.

Krakatoa—destined so soon to play a thrilling part in the world's history; to change the aspect of the heavens everywhere; to attract the wondering gaze of nearly all nations, and to devastate its immediate neighbourhood—is of volcanic origin, and, at the time we write of (1883) was beginning to awaken from a long, deep slumber of two hundred years. Its last explosion occurred in the year 1680. Since that date it had remained quiet. But now the tremendous subterranean forces which had originally called it into being were beginning to reassert their existence and their power. Vulcan was rousing himself again and beginning once more to blow his bellows. So said some of the sailors who were constantly going close past the island and through Sunda Straits, which may be styled the narrows of the world's highway to the China seas.

Subterranean forces, however, are so constantly at work more or less violently in those regions that people took little notice of these indications in the comparatively small island of Krakatoa, which was between five and six miles long by four broad.

As we have said, it was uninhabited, and lying as it does between Sumatra and Java, about sixteen miles from the former and over twenty miles from the latter, it was occasionally visited by fishermen. The hermit whom Nigel was about to visit might, in some sort, be counted an inhabitant, for he had dwelt there many years, but he lived in a cave which was difficult of access, and held communication with no one. How he spent his time was a mystery, for although his negro servant went to the neighbouring town of Anjer in Java for supplies, and sometimes to Batavia, as we have seen, no piece of inanimate ebony from the forest could have been less communicative than he. Indeed, our hero was the first to unlock the door of his lips, with that key of mysterious sympathy to which reference has already been made. Some of the bolder of the young fishermen of the neighbouring coasts had several times made futile efforts to find out where and how the hermit lived, but the few who got a glimpse of him at a distance brought back such a report that a kind of superstitious fear of him was generated which kept them at a respectful distance.

He was ten feet high, some romancers said, with shoulders four feet broad, a chest like a sugar-hogs-head, and a countenance resembling a compound of orang-utan and tiger.

Of course our hero knew nothing of these rumours, and as Moses declined to give any information regarding his master beyond that already given, he was left to the full play of his imagination.

Moses was quite candid about it. He made no pretence to shroud things in mystery.

"You mus' know, Massa Nadgel," he said, as they slowly drew near to the island, "I's 'fraid ob 'im dough I lub 'im."

"But why do you love him, Moses?"

"'Cause he sabe my life an' set me free."

"Indeed? well, that is good reason. And why do you fear him?"

"Da's what I don' know, massa," replied the negro with a puzzled look.

"Is he harsh, then?"

“No.”

“Passionate?”

“No. Gentle as a lamb.”

“Strong?”

“Yes—oh! mighty strong an’ big.”

“Surely you’re not afraid of his giving you a licking, Moses?”

“Oh no,” returned the negro, with a smile of expansive benignity; “I’s not ’fraid ob dat. I’s bin a slabe once, got used to lickin’s. Don’t care nuffin’ at all for a lickin’!”

“Then it must be that you’re afraid of hurting his feelings, Moses, for I know of no other kind of fear.”

“Pr’aps da’s it!” said the negro with a bright look, “now I wouldn’t wonder if you’s right, Massa Nadgel. It neber come into my head in dat light before. I used to be t’ink, t’inkin’ ob nights—when I’s tired ob countin’ my fingers an’ toes. But I couldn’t make nuffin’ ob it. *Now* I knows! It’s ’fraid I am ob hurtin’ his feelin’s.”

In the excess of his satisfaction at the solution of this long-standing puzzle, Moses threw back his head, shut his eyes, opened his enormous mouth and chuckled.

By the time he had reversed this process they were sufficiently near to Krakatoa to distinguish all its features clearly, and the negro began to point out to Nigel its various localities. There were three prominent peaks on it, he said, named respectively, Perboewatan, about 400 feet high, at the northern end of the island; Danan, near the centre, 1500 feet; and Rakata, at the southern end, over 2600 feet. It was high up on the sides of the last cone that the residence of the hermit was situated.

“And you won’t tell me your master’s name?” said Nigel.

Moses shook his woolly head. “No, sar, no. I’s ’fraid ob him—he! he! I ’fraid ob hurtin’ his feelin’s!”

“Well, never mind; I’ll find it out from himself soon. By the way, what were you telling me about explosions yesterday when that little white gull came to admire your pretty face, and took off our attention?”

“Well, I dun know. Not got much to tell, only dar’s bin rumblin’ an’ grumblin’s an’ heavin’s lately in de mountains as didn’t use to be, an’ cracks like somet’in’ bustin’ down b’low, an’ massa he shook ’is head two or t’ree times an’ look solemn. He don’t often do dat—shook ’is head, I mean—for he mostly always looks solemn.”

A few minutes later the boat, running through a narrow opening among the rocks into a small circular harbour not more than fifty yards in diameter, rested its keel gently on a little bed of pure yellow sand. The shore there was so densely covered with bushes that the harbour might easily have been passed without being observed.

Jumping ashore, Moses made the painter fast to a tree.

“What a quiet, cosy place!” said Nigel, as he sprung on the beach and looked admiringly round.

“Yes, an’ not easy to find if you don’t knows ’im. We will leabe de boat here,—no danger ob bein’ tooked away—an’ den go up to de cave.”

“Is it far?” asked Nigel.

“A good bit—near de top ob de mountain,” answered the negro, who looked at his companion somewhat uneasily.

“Why, what’s the matter, Moses?”

“Nuffin’—oh! nuffin’—but—but when massa axes you who you is, an’ what you bin up to, an’ whar you’re a-gwine to, an’ what wages you want, jist you answer ’im in a sorter permiscuous way, an’ don’t be too partikler.”

“Wages! man, what d’ye mean?”

“Well, you’ll ’scuse me, sar,” returned the negro with an air of profound humility, “but my massa lost a old sarvint—a nigger like myself—only last munt’, an’ he wants to go on one ob his usual expeditions jus’ now, so he sends me to Batavia to git anoder man—‘a good one, you know,’ says massa,—an’ as you, sar, was good ’nuff to ax me what you should do, an’ you looked a pritty smart man, I—”

“You scoundrel!” cried Nigel, interrupting him, “do you really mean to tell me that you’ve brought me here as a hired servant?”

“Well, not zackly,” returned Moses, with solemn simplicity, “you needn’t ax no wages unless you like.”

“But what if I don’t want to take service?” demanded our hero, with a savage frown.

“You kin go home agin,” answered Moses, humbly.

Nigel could contain himself no longer. As he observed the man’s deprecatory air, and thought of his own position, he burst into a fit of hearty laughter, whereupon the negro recovered himself and smiled the smile of the guiltless.

“Come,” said Nigel at last. “Lead on, you rascal! When I see your master I shall know what to say.”

“All right, Massa Nadgel, but mind what you say, else I won’t answer for de consikences. Foller me an’ look arter your feet, for de road is roughish.”

The negro’s last remark was unquestionably true, for the road—if a mere footpath merits the name—was rugged in the extreme—here winding round the base of steep cliffs, there traversing portions of luxuriant forest, elsewhere skirting the margin of the sea.

Moses walked at such a pace that Nigel, young and active though he was, found it no easy matter to keep up with him. Pride, however, forbade him to show the slightest sign of difficulty, and made him even converse now and then in tones of simulated placidity. At last the path turned abruptly towards the face of a precipice and seemed to terminate in a small shallow cave. Any one following the path out of mere curiosity would have naturally imagined that the cave was the termination of it; and a very poor termination too, seeing that it was a rather uninteresting cave, the whole of the interior of which could be seen at a single glance from its mouth.

But this cave served in reality as a blind. Climbing by one or two projecting points, the negro, closely followed by Nigel, reached a narrow ledge and walked along it a short distance. On coming to the end of the ledge he jumped down into a mass of undergrowth, where the track again became visible—winding among great masses of weatherworn lava. Here the ascent became very steep, and Moses put on what sporting men call a spurt, which took him far ahead of Nigel, despite the best efforts of the latter to keep up. Still our hero scorned to run or call out to his guide to wait, and thereby admit himself beaten. He pushed steadily on, and managed to keep the active Moses in view.

Presently the negro stepped upon a platform of rock high up on the cliffs, where his form could be distinctly seen against the bright sky. There Nigel observed that he was joined by a man whose tall commanding figure seemed in such a position to be of gigantic proportions.

The two stood engaged in earnest conversation while watching Nigel. The latter immediately slackened his pace, in order at once to recover breath and approach with a leisurely aspect.

“The wild man of the island, I suppose,” he thought as he drew near; but on coming still nearer he saw that he must be mistaken, for the stranger who advanced to meet him with gracious ease and self-possession was obviously a gentleman, and dressed, not unlike himself, in a sort of mixed travelling and shooting costume.

“I must apologise, Mr Roy, for the presumption of my man, in bringing you here under something like false pretences,” said the stranger, holding out his hand, which Nigel shook heartily. “Moses, I find, has failed to execute my commission, and has partially deceived you; but as you are now here, the least I can do is to bid you welcome, and offer you the hospitality of my roof.”

There was something so courteous and kindly in the tone and manner of the stranger, and something so winning in his soft gentle tones, which contrasted strangely with his grand towering figure and massive bearded countenance, that Nigel felt drawn to him instantly. Indeed there was a peculiar and mysterious something about him which quite fascinated our hero as he looked up at him, for, bordering on six feet though Nigel was, the stranger stood several inches above him.

“You are very kind,” said the visitor, “and I don’t think that Moses can fairly be charged with deceiving me, although he has been somewhat unwise in his way of going about this business, for I had told him I wanted to see something of these regions, and perhaps it may be to my advantage to travel in your service—that is, if I can be of any use to you; but the time at my disposal may be too limited.”

“How much time have you to spare?” asked the stranger.

“Well, say perhaps three months.”

“That will do,” returned his questioner, looking thoughtfully at the ground. “We will talk of this hereafter.”

“But—excuse me,” said Nigel, “your man spoke of you as a hermit—a sort of—of—forgive me—a wild-man-of-the-island, if I may—”

“No, I didn’t, Massa Nadgel,” said the negro, the edge of whose flat contradiction was taken off by the extreme humility of his look.

“Well,” returned Nigel, with a laugh; “you at least gave me to understand that other people said something of that sort.”

“Da’s right, Massa Nadgel—kite right. You’re k’rect *now*.”

“People have indeed got some strange ideas about me, I believe,” interposed the hermit, with a grave almost sad expression and tone. “But come, let me introduce you to my hermitage and you shall judge for yourself.”

So saying, this singular being turned and led the way further up the rugged side of the peak of Rakata.

After about five minutes’ walk in silence, the trio reached a spot where there was a clear view over the tree-tops, revealing the blue waters of the strait, with the Java shores and mountains in the distance.

Behind them there yawned, dark and mysterious, a mighty cavern, so black and high that it might well suggest a portal leading to the regions below, where Vulcan is supposed to stir those tremendous fires which have moulded

much of the configuration of the world, and which are ever seething—an awful Inferno—under the thin crust of the globe on which we stand.

Curiously-formed and large-leaved trees of the tropics, with their pendent parasites, as well as rank grasses, sprouting from below and hanging from above, partially concealed this cavern from Nigel when he first turned towards it, but a few steps further on he could see it in all its rugged grandeur.

“My home,” said the hermit, with a very slight smile and the air of a prince, as he turned towards his visitor and waved his hand towards it.

“A magnificent entrance at all events,” said Nigel, returning the smile with something of dubiety, for he was not quite sure that his host was in earnest.

“Follow me,” said the hermit, leading the way down a narrow well-worn path which seemed to lose itself in profound darkness. After being a few minutes within the cavern, however, Nigel’s eyes became accustomed to the dim light, and he perceived that the roof rapidly lowered, while its walls narrowed until they reached a spot which was not much wider than an ordinary corridor. Here, however, it was so dark that it was barely possible to see a small door in the right-hand wall before which they halted. Lifting a latch the hermit threw the door wide open, and a glare of dazzling light almost blinded the visitor.

Passing through the entrance, Nigel followed his guide, and the negro let the heavy door shut behind him with a clang that was depressingly suggestive of a prison.

“Again I bid you welcome to my home,” said the hermit, turning round and extending his hand, which Nigel mechanically took and pressed, but without very well knowing what he did, for he was almost dumfounded by what he saw, and for some minutes gazed in silence around him.

And, truly, there was ground for surprise. The visitor found himself in a small but immensely high and brilliantly lighted cavern or natural chamber, the walls of which were adorned with drawings of scenery and trees and specimens of plants, while on various shelves stood innumerable stuffed birds, and shells, and other specimens of natural history.

A table and two chairs stood at one end of the cave, and, strangest of all, a small but well-filled book-case ornamented the other end.

“Arabian Nights!” thought Nigel. “I *must* be dreaming.”

His wandering eyes travelled slowly round the cavern until they rested at last on the door by which they had entered, beside which stood the negro with a broad grin on his sable visage.

Chapter Seven.

Wonders of the Hermit’s Cave and Island.

The thing that perhaps surprised Nigel most in this strange cavern was the blaze of light with which it was filled, for it came down direct through a funnel-shaped hole in the high roof and bore a marvellous resemblance to natural sunshine. He was well aware that unless the sun were shining absolutely in the zenith, the laws of light forbade the entrance of a *direct* ray into such a place, yet there were the positive rays, although the sun was not yet high in the heavens, blinding him while he looked at them, and casting the shadows of himself and his new friends on the floor.

There was the faintest semblance of a smile on the hermit’s face as he quietly observed his visitor, and waited till he should recover self-possession. As for Moses—words are wanting to describe the fields of teeth and gum which he displayed, but no sound was suffered to escape his magnificent lips, which closed like the slide of a dark lantern when the temptation to give way to feeling became too strong.

“My cave interests you,” said the hermit at last.

“It amazes me,” returned our hero, recovering himself and looking earnestly at his host, “for you seem not only to have all the necessaries of life around you in your strange abode, but many of the luxuries; among them the cheering presence of sunshine—though how you manage to get it is beyond my powers of conception.”

“It is simple enough, as you shall see,” returned the hermit. “You have heard of the saying, no doubt, that ‘all things are possible to well-directed labour?’”

“Yes, and that ‘nothing can be achieved without labour.’”

“Well, I have proved that to some extent,” continued the hermit. “You see, by the various and miscellaneous implements on my shelves, that I am given to dabbling a little in science, and thus have made my lonely home as pleasant as such a home can be—but let us not talk of these matters just now. You must be hungry. Have you had breakfast?”

“No, we have not—unless, at least, you count a sea biscuit dipped in salt water a breakfast. After all, that may well be the case, for hermits are noted for the frugality of their fare.”

“I am not a genuine hermit,” remarked his host gravely. “Men do indeed call me the Hermit of Rakata, because I dwell alone here under the shadow of this particular cone of Krakatoa, but I do not ape the austere life of the

conventional hermit, as you see, either in my domestic arrangements or food. Come, your breakfast is ready. From my outlook I saw your boat approaching some hours ago, and knew that it was mine, so I made ready for your arrival, though I did not guess that Moses was bringing me a guest instead of a servant!"

So saying, he led the way through a short natural passage to an inner cave, the entrance to which, like the outer one, was boarded. On opening a small door, Nigel was again greeted as before with brilliant rays of sunshine, and, in addition, with a gush of odours that were exceedingly grateful to a hungry man. A low "Ho! ho!" behind him told that his black companion was equally gratified.

The inner cave or mess-room, as the host styled it, combined dining-room and kitchen, for while in one corner stood a deal table with plates, cups, etcetera, but no tablecloth, in another stood a small stove, heated by an oil-lamp, from which issued puffing and sputtering sounds, and the savoury odours above referred to.

Nigel now perceived that although his strange host necessarily spoke a good deal while welcoming him and offering him the hospitalities of his abode, he was by no means communicative. On the contrary, it was evident that he was naturally reserved and reticent, and that although polite and gentle in the extreme, there was a quiet grave dignity about him which discouraged familiarity. It must not be supposed, however, that he was in any degree morosely silent. He was simply quiet and undemonstrative, said little except when asked questions, and spoke, alike to Nigel and Moses, in the soft, low, kindly tones with which one might address very young people.

Going to the stove he took a coffee-pot therefrom and set it on the table. At the same time, Moses, without requiring to be told, opened the oven and brought forth fried fish, meat of some kind, and cakes of he knew not what, but cared little, for their excellence was unquestionable.

During the meal that followed, Nigel ventured as far as politeness permitted—indeed a little further, if truth must be told—to inquire into the circumstances and motives of his entertainer in taking up his abode in such a strange place, but he soon found that his eccentric friend was not one who could be "pumped." Without a touch of rudeness, and in the sweetest of voices, he simply assumed an absent manner and changed the subject of discourse, when he did not choose to reply, by drawing attention to some irrelevant matter, or by putting a counter question which led away from the subject. Nigel also found that his host never laughed and rarely smiled, though, when he did so, the smile was so slight as merely to indicate a general feeling of urbanity and goodwill, and it was followed instantly by a look of gravity, if not sadness. Altogether the guest was much perplexed about the host at first, and somewhat constrained in consequence, but gradually he began to feel at ease. Another discovery that he soon made was, that the hermit treated Moses not as a servant, but as if he were in all respects an equal and a comrade.

After eating for some time in silence, and having tried to draw out his host without success, Nigel changed his tactics and said—

"You were so kind as to speak of me as your guest, Mr—Mr—I beg pardon, may I—"

"My name is Van der Kemp," said the hermit quietly.

"Well, Mr Van der Kemp, I must tell you that I am quite willing to accept the position for which Moses hired me—"

"No, I didn't," contradicted the negro, flatly yet very gently, both in tone and manner, for long residence with the hermit had apparently imbued him with something of his spirit.

"Well, then," said Nigel, "the position for which Moses *should have* hired some one else." ("K'rect *now*," whispered Moses.) "Of course I do not intend to ask for or accept wages, and also, of course, I accept the position on the understanding that you think me fit for the service. May I ask what that service is to be, and where you think of going to?"

"The service," returned the hermit slowly and with his eyes fixed on the floor as if pondering his reply, "is to accompany me as my attendant and companion, to take notes as occasion may serve, and to paddle a canoe."

At this reply our hero almost laughed, but was prevented from doing so by his host asking abruptly if he understood canoeing.

"Well, yes. At least I can manage what in England is known as the Rob Roy canoe, having possessed one in my boyhood."

"That will do," returned the hermit gravely. "Can you write shorthand?"

"I can. A friend of mine, a reporter on one of the London dailies, once gave me a few lessons, and, becoming fond of the subject, I followed it up."

"That is well; you did well. It is of immense advantage to a man, whatever his position in life, that he should be able to write shorthand with facility. Especially useful is it in commerce. I know that, having had some experience of commercial life."

At this point in the conversation Nigel was startled by what was to him an absolutely new sensation, namely a shaking or trembling of the whole cavern, accompanied by faint rumbling sounds as if in deeper caverns below him.

He glanced quickly at his host and at the negro, but to his surprise these remarkable men seemed not to be aware of the shaking, although it was severe enough to cause some of the furniture to rattle. Observing his look of surprise, Moses remarked, with a benignant though capacious smile, "Mountain's got de mulligrumps pritty bad jist now."

"We are pretty well accustomed to that," said the host, observing that Nigel turned to him for an explanation. "No

doubt you are aware that this region is celebrated for earthquakes and volcanoes, so much so that the inhabitants pay little attention to them unless they become unusually violent. This island of Krakatoa is itself the fragment of an extinct volcano; but the term ‘extinct’ is scarcely applicable to volcanoes, for it is well-known that many which were for centuries supposed to be extinct have awakened to sudden and violent activity—‘quiescent’ might be a more appropriate term.”

“Yes,” said Moses, ceasing to masticate for purposes of speech; “dem ’stinkt volcanoes hab got an okard habit ob unstinkin’ dereselves hereabouts when you don’ ’spect it of ’em. Go on, massa. I ax yer pard’n for ’truptin’.”

The hermit’s peculiar good-natured little smile played for a moment on his massive features, and then faded away as he continued—

“Perhaps you may have heard that this is the very heart of the district that has long been recognised as the greatest focus of volcanic activity on the globe?”

“I have heard something of the sort,” answered Nigel, “but I confess that my knowledge is limited and my mind hazy on the subject.”

“I doubt it not,” returned his friend, “for geographical and scientific training in primary schools anywhere is not what it might be. The island of Java, with an area about equal to that of England, contains no fewer than forty-nine great volcanic mountains, some of which rise to 12,000 feet above the sea-level. Many of these mountains are at the present time active.” (“Yes, much *too* active,” muttered the negro), “and more than half of them have been seen in eruption since Java was occupied by Europeans. Hot springs, mud-volcanoes, and vapour-vents abound all over the island, whilst earthquakes are by no means uncommon. There is a distinct line in the chain of these mountains which seems to point to a great fissure in the earth’s crust, caused by the subterranean fires. This tremendous crack or fissure crosses the Straits of Sunda, and in consequence we find a number of these vents—as volcanic mountains may be styled—in the Island of Sumatra, which you saw to the nor’ard as you came along. But there is supposed to be another great crack in the earth’s crust—indicated by several volcanic mountains—which crosses the other fissure almost at right angles, and at the exact point where these two lines intersect *stands this island of Krakatoa*.

“I emphasise the fact,” continued the hermit after a pause, “first, because, although this has been a quiescent volcano since the year 1680, and people have come to regard it as extinct, there are indications now which lead me to believe that its energy is reviving; and, second, because this focus where fissures cross each other—this Krakatoa Island—is in reality part of the crater of an older and much larger volcanic mountain, which must have been literally blown away in prehistoric times, and of which Krakatoa and the neighbouring islets of Varlaten, Polish Hat, Lang Island, and the rest, are but the remnants of the great crater ring. If these rumblings and minor earthquakes, which I have noticed of late—and the latest of which you have just experienced—are the precursors of another explosion, my home here may be rendered untenable.”

“Hi!” exclaimed Moses, who had been listening with open mouth and eyes to this discourse, which was obviously news to him, “I hope, massa, he ain’t a-gwine to ’splode to-day—anyhow, not till arter breakfast!”

“You must have studied the subject of volcanoes a good deal, I suppose, from what you say,” observed Nigel.

“Naturally, living as I do almost on the top of one. My library, which I will show you presently, contains many interesting works on the subject. But come, if you have finished we will ascend the Peak of Rakata and I will introduce you to my sunshine.”

He rose and led his guest back to the outer cavern, leaving Moses still busy with knife and fork, apparently meditating on the pleasure of breakfasting with the prospect of a possible and immediate explosion.

In passing through the first chamber, Nigel observed, in a natural recess, the library just referred to. He also noted that, besides stuffed birds and other specimens and sea-shells, there were chisels, saws, hammers, and other tools, besides something like a forge and carpenter’s bench in a side-chamber opening out of the large one, which he had not at first seen—from all which he concluded that the hermit was imbued with mechanical as well as scientific and literary tastes.

At the further and darker end of the outer cave there was a staircase, partly natural, and partly improved by art, which led upward into profound darkness.

“Let me take your hand here,” said the hermit, looking down upon his guest with his slight but winning smile; “it is a rough and dark staircase. You will be apt to stumble.”

Nigel placed his hand in that of his host with perfect confidence, and with a curious feeling—aroused, probably, by the action—of having returned to the days of childhood.

The stair was indeed rugged as well as winding, and so pitchy dark that the youth could not have advanced at all without stumbling, unless his host had held him all the way. At last a glimmer of light was seen in the distance. It seemed to increase suddenly, and in a few moments the two emerged from total darkness into dazzling sunshine.

When Nigel looked round him he saw that they had gained a plateau, high up on the very summit of the mountain, which appeared to be absolutely inaccessible by any means save that by which they had reached it.

“This is what I call my observatory,” said the hermit, turning to his guest. “We have passed right through the peak of Rakata, and reached its northern side, which commands, as you see, a view of all the northern part of the island. I come here often in the night to study the face of the heavens, the moon, and stars, and meditate on their mysterious Maker, whose ways are indeed wonderful and past finding out; but all which must, in the nature of things, be *right*.”

As this was the first mention that the hermit had made of the Creator, and the reference was one requiring more thought than Nigel had yet bestowed on it, he made no rejoinder.

“Have you studied astronomy, Mr Roy?”

“No—at least not more of it than was needful for navigation. But pray, sir, do not call me Mr Roy,” said the youth, with a somewhat embarrassed air. “If I am to be your assistant and familiar companion for two or three months, I hope that you will agree to call me Nigel. Your man has done so already without asking leave!”

“I will, on one condition.”

“And that is?”

“That you also dispense with the ‘Mr’ and ‘sir,’ and call me Van der Kemp.”

“Agreed,” said Nigel, “though it does not seem so appropriate in me as in you, considering the difference of our years.”

“Look here,” said the hermit, turning abruptly to a small wooden shed which had hitherto escaped the youth’s observation, so covered was it with overhanging boughs and tropical creeping plants, “these are my astronomical instruments.”

He pointed to a table in the hut on which stood several telescopes—and microscopes as well—one of the former being a large instrument, certainly not less than six feet long, with a diameter of apparently six or eight inches.

“Here, you see, I have the means of investigating the wonders of Nature in her grandest as well as her minutest scales. And there,” he added, pointing to a couple of large reflecting mirrors in strong wooden frames, erected on joints in such a way that they could be turned in any direction,—“there you have the secret of my sunshine. One of these mirrors catches the sunshine direct and reflects it on the other, which, as you see, is so arranged that it transmits the rays down the natural funnel or chimney into the cave. By means of chains connected with the mechanism, and extending below, I can change the direction of the mirrors as the sun changes its place in the sky, without requiring to come up here.”

“Very ingenious!” said Nigel; “but how do you manage when the mountain comes between you and the sun, as I see it cannot fail to do during some part of the day?”

“Simply enough,” returned the hermit, pointing to a distant projecting cliff or peak. “On yon summit I have fixed four mirrors similar to these. When the sun can no longer be reflected from this pair, the first of the distant mirrors takes it up and shoots a beam of light over here. When the sun passes from that, the second mirror is arranged to catch and transmit it, and so on to the fourth. After that I bid good-bye to the sun, and light my lamp!”

Nigel felt an almost irresistible tendency to smile at this, but the grave simplicity of the man forbade such familiarity.

“Look yonder,” continued the hermit, sweeping one of his long arms towards Sumatra, “in that direction runs the line of volcanic disturbance—the fissure of which I have already spoken. Focus this telescope to suit your sight. Now, do you see the little island away there to the nor’-west?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that is *Varlaten*. I mentioned it when at breakfast. Sweep your glass round to the nor’ard, the little island there is *Polish Hat*, and you see *Lang Island* in the nor’-east. These, with Krakatoa, are merely the higher parts still remaining above water of the ring or lip of the ancient crater. This will give you some idea what an enormous mountain the original of this old volcano must have been. This island-mountain is estimated to have been twenty-five miles in circumference, and 10,000 to 12,000 feet high. It was blown into the air in 1680, and this island, with the few islets I have pointed out, is all that remains of it. Now, cast your eye down the centre of the island on which we stand; you see several cones of various sizes. These are ancient vents, supposed to be extinct—”

“But one of them, the one furthest away,” interrupted Nigel, steadying his telescope on the branch of a tree, “seems to be anything but extinct, for I see a thin column of white smoke or steam rising from it.”

“That is just what I was going to point out. They call that Perboewatan. It is the lowest peak on the island, about 400 feet high, and stands, I should say, in the very centre of the ancient crater, where are the two fissures I have mentioned. For two hundred years Perboewatan has not smoked like that, and, slight though it is at present, I cannot help thinking that it indicates an impending eruption, especially when I consider that earthquakes have become more numerous of late years, and there was one in 1880 which was so violent as to damage seriously the lighthouse on Java’s First Point.”

“Then you have resided here for some time?” said Nigel.

“Yes, for many years,” replied the hermit, in a low, sad tone.

“But is it wise in you to stay if you think an explosion so likely? Don’t you needlessly run considerable risk?”

“I do not fear to die.”

Nigel looked at his new friend in surprise, but there was not a shadow of boastfulness or affectation either in his look or tone.

“Besides,” he continued, “the explosion may be but slight, and Perboewatan is, as you see, about four miles off. People in the neighbourhood of the straits and passing ships are so accustomed to volcanic explosions on a more or less grand scale that they will never notice this little cloud hanging over Krakatoa. Those who, like myself, know the ancient history of the island, regard it in a more serious light, but we may be wrong. Come, now, we will descend again and have a ramble over part of the island. It will interest you. Not many men have penetrated its luxuriant forests or know their secrets. I have wandered through them in all directions, and can guide you. Indeed, Moses could do that as well as I, for he has lived with me many years. Come.”

Returning to the cavern they found that the active negro had not only finished his breakfast, but had washed the dishes and cleared up the kitchen, so that he was quite ready to shoulder a wallet and a gun when his master bade him prepare for a day in the forest.

It is not, however, our intention to follow the trio thither. Matters of greater interest, if not importance, claim our attention at present. Let it suffice to say, therefore, that after a most delightful day, spent in wandering amongst the luxuriant tropical vegetation with which the island was densely covered, visiting one of the extinct craters, bathing in one of the numerous hot springs, and collecting many objects of interest to the hermit, in the shape of botanical and geological specimens, they returned in the evening to their cavern-house not only ready but eager for sustenance and repose.

Chapter Eight.

Perboewatan becomes moderately Violent.

The cave was enshrouded in almost total darkness when they entered it, but this was quickly dispelled, to Nigel’s no little surprise, by the rays of a magnificent oil-lamp, which Moses lighted and placed on the table in the larger cave. A smaller one of the same kind already illuminated the kitchen.

Not much conversation was indulged in during the progress of the supper that was soon spread upon the rude table. The three men, being uncommonly hungry and powerfully robust, found in food a sufficient occupation for their mouths for some time.

After supper they became a little, but not much, more sociable, for, although Nigel’s active mind would gladly have found vent in conversation, he experienced some difficulty in making headway against the discouragement of Van der Kemp’s very quiet disposition, and the cavernous yawns with which Moses displayed at once his desire for slumber and his magnificent dental arrangements.

“We always retire early to rest after a day of this sort,” said the hermit at last, turning to his guest. “Do you feel disposed for bed?”

“Indeed I do,” said Nigel, with a half-suppressed yawn, that was irresistibly dragged out of him by the sight of another earthquake on the negro’s face.

“Come, then, I will show you your berth; we have no bedrooms here,” said the hermit, with a sort of deprecatory smile, as he led the way to the darker end of the cavern, where he pointed to a little recess in which there was a pile of something that smelt fresh and looked like heather, spread on which there was a single blanket.

“Sailors are said to be indifferent to sheets. You won’t miss them, I daresay?”

“Not in the least,” returned Nigel, with a laugh. “Good-night,” he added, shaking hands with his host and suppressing another yawn, for Moses’ face, even in the extreme distance, was irresistibly infectious!

Our hero was indifferent not only to sheets, but also, in certain circumstances, to the usual habiliments of night. Indeed, while travelling in out-of-the-way regions he held it to be a duty to undress but partially before turning in, so that he might be ready for emergencies.

On lying down he found his mattress, whatever it was, to be a springy, luxurious bed, and was about to resign himself to slumber when he observed that, from the position in which he lay, he could see the cavern in all its extent. Opening his half-closed eyes, therefore, he watched the proceedings of his host, and in doing so, as well as in speculating on his strange character and surroundings, he became somewhat wakeful.

He saw that Van der Kemp, returning to the other end of the cave, sat down beside the lamp, the blaze of which fell full on his fine calm countenance. A motion of his head brought Moses to him, who sat down beside him and entered into earnest conversation, to judge from his gestures, for nothing could be heard where Nigel lay save the monotonous murmur of their voices. The hermit did not move. Except for an occasional inclination of the head he appeared to be a grand classic statue, but it was otherwise with the negro. His position in front of the lamp caused him to look if possible even blacker than ever, and the blackness was so uniform that his entire profile became strongly pronounced, thus rendering every motion distinct, and the varied pouting of his huge lips remarkably obvious. The extended left hand, too, with the frequent thrusting of the index finger of the other into the palm, was suggestive of argument, and of much reasoning effort—if not power.

After about half-an-hour of conversation, Moses arose, shook his master by the hand, appeared to say “Good-night” very obviously, yawned, and retired to the kitchen, whence, in five minutes or so, there issued sounds which betokened felicitous repose.

Meanwhile his master sat motionless for some time, gazing at the floor as if in meditation. Then he rose, went to his

book-case and took down a large thick volume, which he proceeded to read.

Nigel had by that time dropped into a drowsy condition, yet his interest in the doings of his strange entertainer was so great that he struggled hard to keep awake, and partially succeeded.

“I wonder,” he muttered, in sleepy tones, “if that’s a f–fam–’ly Bible he’s reading—or—or—a vol’m o’ the En–Encyclopida Brit—”

He dropped off at this point, but, feeling that he had given way to some sort of weakness, he struggled back again in to wakefulness, and saw that the hermit was bending over the large book with his massive brow resting on the palms of both hands, and his fingers thrust into his iron-grey hair. It was evident, however, that he was not reading the book at that moment, for on its pages was lying what seemed to be a miniature or photograph case, at which he gazed intently. Nigel roused himself to consider this, and in doing so again dropped off—not yet soundly, however, for curiosity induced one more violent struggle, and he became aware of the fact that the hermit was on his knees with his face buried in his hands.

The youth’s thoughts must have become inextricably confused at this point, yet their general drift was indicated by the muttered words:

“I—I’m glad o’ that—a good sign—an’—an’ it’s *not* th’ Encyclop.” Here Morpheus finally conquered, and he sank into dreamless repose.

How long this condition lasted he could not tell, but he was awakened violently by sensations and feelings of dread, which were entirely new to him. The bed on which he rested seemed to heave under him, and his ears were filled by sharp rattling sounds, something like—yet very different from—the continuous roll of musketry.

Starting up, he sprang into the large cavern where he found Van der Kemp quietly tightening his belt and Moses hastily pulling on his boots.

“Sometin’s bu’sted an’ no mistake!” exclaimed the latter.

“An eruption from one of the cones,” said the hermit. “I have been for a long time expecting it. Come with us.”

He went swiftly up the staircase and passages which led to the observatory as he spoke.

The scene that met their eyes on reaching the ledge or plateau was sublime in the extreme, as well as terrific.

“As I thought,” said Van der Kemp, in a low tone. “It is Perboewatan that has broken out.”

“The cone from which I observed smoke rising?” asked Nigel.

“The same. The one over the very centre of the old crater, showing that we were wrong in supposing it to be extinct: it was only slumbering. It is in what vulcanologists term moderate eruption now, and, perhaps, may prove a safety-valve which will prevent a more violent explosion.”

That the cone of Perboewatan was indeed in a state of considerable activity, worthy of a stronger term than “moderate,” was very obvious. Although at a distance, as we have said, of four miles, the glare of its fires on the three figures perched near the top of Rakata was very intense, while explosion after explosion sent molten lava and red-hot rocks, pumice, and dust, high into the thickening air—clouds of smoke and steam being vomited forth at the same time. The wind, of which there was very little, blew it all away from the position occupied by the three observers.

“What if the wind were to change and blow it all this way?” asked Nigel, with very pardonable feelings of discomfort.

“We could return to the cavern,” said the hermit.

“But what if Rakata itself should become active?”

It was evident from the very solemn expression on the negro’s face that he awaited the reply to Nigel’s question with some anxiety.

“Rakata,” answered the hermit thoughtfully, “although the highest cone, is the one most distant from the great centre of activity. It is therefore not likely that the volcanic energy will seek a vent here while there are other cones between us and Perboewatan. But we shall soon see whether the one vent is likely to suffice. There is undoubtedly no diminution in the explosions at present.”

There certainly was not, for the voice of the speaker was almost drowned by the horrible din caused, apparently, by the hurtling of innumerable fragments of rock and stones in the air, while a succession of fiery flashes, each followed by a loud explosion, lit up the dome-shaped mass of vapour that was mounting upwards and spreading over the sky. Vivid flashes of lightning were also seen playing around the vapour-column. At the same time, there began a fall of fine white dust, resembling snow, which soon covered the foliage and the ground of all the lower part of the island. The sea around was also ere long covered with masses of pumice, which, being very light, floated away into the Indian ocean, and these were afterwards encountered in large quantities by various vessels passing through Sunda Straits.

The Scientific Committee, which ultimately wrote on the details of this eruption in Krakatoa, mention this first outburst as being a phase of moderate activity, similar to that which is said to have been exhibited for some months during the years 1680 and 1681, and they added that “the outburst was one of considerable violence, especially at

its commencement," that falls of dust were noticed at the distance of three hundred miles, and that "the commander of the German war-vessel *Elizabeth* estimated the height of the dust-column issuing from the volcano at 11 kilometres (36,000 feet or about 7 miles)."

To our hero, however, and to Moses, the outburst seemed anything but "moderate," and that night as they two sat together in the cave after supper, listening with awe-struck faces to the cannonading and wild musketry going on as it seemed under their very feet, the negro solemnly imparted to Nigel in a low whisper that he thought "de end ob de wurld hab come at last!"

Returning at that moment from his observatory, to which he had ascended for a few minutes to view the scene through one of his glasses, Van der Kemp relieved their anxieties somewhat by remarking, in his quiet manner, that there was a distinct diminution in the violence of the explosions, and that, from his knowledge and experience of other volcanoes in Java, Sumatra, and elsewhere, he thought it probable they had seen the worst of it at that time, and that none of the other cones would be likely to break out.

"I'm glad to hear you say so," observed Nigel, "for although the sight is extremely magnificent and very interesting, both from a scientific and artistic point of view, I cannot help thinking that we should be safer away from this island at present—at least while the volcano is active."

The hermit smiled almost pitifully. "I do not apprehend danger," he said, "at least nothing unusual. But it happens that my business requires me to leave in the course of a few days at any rate, so, whether the eruption becomes fiercer or feebler, it will not matter to us. I have preparations to make, however, and I have no doubt you won't object to remain till all is ready for a start?"

"Oh, as to that," returned the youth, slightly hurt by the implied doubt as to his courage, "if *you* are willing to risk going off the earth like a skyrocket, I am quite ready to take my chance of following you!"

"An' Moses am de man," said the negro, smiting his broad chest with his fist, "what's ready to serve as a rocket-stick to bof, an' go up along wid you!"

The hermit made the nearest approach to a laugh which Nigel had yet seen, as he left the cave to undertake some of the preparations above referred to.

Note 1. See *The Eruption of Krakatoa and Subsequent Phenomena* page 11. (Tribner and Company, London.)

Chapter Nine.

Describes, among other Things, a Singular Meeting under Peculiar Circumstances.

There is unquestionably a class of men—especially Englishmen—who are deeply imbued with the idea that the Universe in general, and our world in particular, has been created with a view to afford them what they call fun.

"It would be great fun," said an English commercial man to a friend who sat beside him, "to go and have a look at this eruption. They say it is Krakatoa which has broken out after a sleep of two centuries, and as it has been bursting away now for nearly a week, it is likely to hold on for some time longer. What would you say to charter a steamer and have a grand excursion to the volcano?"

The friend said he thought it would indeed be "capital fun!"

We have never been able to ascertain who these Englishmen were, but they must have been men of influence, or able to move men of influence, for they at once set to work and organised an excursion.

The place where this excursion was organised was Batavia. Although that city was situated in Java, nearly a hundred miles distant from Krakatoa, the inhabitants had not only heard distinctly the explosions of the volcano, but had felt some quakings of the earth and much rattling of doors and windows, besides a sprinkling of ashes, which indicated that the eruption, even in that eruptive region, was of unusual violence. They little imagined to what mighty throes the solid rocks of Krakatoa were yet to be subjected before those volcanic fires could find a vent. Meanwhile, as we have said, there was enough of the unusual in it to warrant our merchants in their anticipation of a considerable amount of fun.

A steamer was got ready; a number of sightseeing enthusiasts were collected, and they set forth on the morning of the 26th of May. Among these excursionists was our friend Captain David Roy—not that *he* was addicted to running about in search of "fun," but, being unavoidably thrown idle at the time, and having a poetical turn of mind—derived from his wife—he thought he could not do better than take a run to the volcano and see how his son was getting along.

The party reached the scene of the eruption on the morning of the 27th, having witnessed during the night several tolerably strong explosions, which were accompanied by earthquake shocks. It was found that Krakatoa and all the adjoining islands were covered with a fine white dust, like snow, and that the trees on the northern part of the former island and Varlaten had been to a great extent deprived of their leaves and branches by falling pumice, while those on Lang Island and Polish Hat, as well as those on the Peak of Rakata, had to a great extent escaped—no doubt owing to the prevailing direction of the wind.

It was soon seen that Perboewatan on Krakatoa was the cone in active eruption, and the steamer made for its neighbourhood, landing her party within a short distance of its base. Explosions were occurring at intervals of from

five to ten minutes. Each explosion being accompanied by an uncovering of the molten lava in the vent, the overhanging steam-cloud was lighted up with a grand glow for a few seconds. Some of the party, who seemed to be authorities on such matters, estimated that the vapour-column rose to a height of nearly 10,000 feet, and that fragments of pumice were shot upwards to a height of 600 feet.

“That’s a sign that the violence of the eruption is diminished,” remarked the young merchant, who was in search of fun, as he prepared to wade ankle-deep in the loose pumice up the slopes of the cone.

“Diminished!” repeated our captain, who had fraternised much with this merchant during their short voyage. “If that’s what you call diminishin’, I shouldn’t like to be here when it’s increasin’.”

“Pooh!” exclaimed the merchant, “that’s nothing. I’ve seen, at other volcanoes, pieces of pumice blown up so high that they’ve been caught by the upper currents of the atmosphere and carried away in an opposite direction to the wind that was blowing below at the time. Ay, I believe that dust is sometimes blown *miles* up into the air.”

As Captain Roy thought that the merchant was drawing the long bow he made no reply, but changed the subject by asking what was the height of Perboewatan.

“Three hundred feet or thereabouts,” replied his friend.

“I hope my son will have the sense to clear out of the island if things look like gittin’ worse,” muttered the captain, as an unusually violent explosion shook the whole side of the cone.

“No fear of him,” returned the merchant. “If he is visiting the hermit of Rakata, as you tell me, he’ll be safe enough. Although something of a dare-devil, the hermit knows how to take care of himself. I’m afraid, however, that you’ll not find it so easy to ‘look up’ your son as you seem to think. Just glance round at these almost impenetrable forests. You don’t know what part of the island he may be in just now; and you might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay as look for him there. He is probably at the other end of Krakatoa—four or five miles off—on the South side of Rakata, where the hermit’s cave is supposed to be, for no one seems to be quite sure as to its whereabouts. Besides, you’ll have to stick by the excursionists if you wish to return to Batavia.”

Captain Roy paused for a moment to recover breath, and looking down upon the dense tropical forest that stretched between him and the Peak of Rakata, he shook his head, and admitted that the merchant was right. Turning round he addressed himself once more to the ascent of the cone, on the sides of which the whole excursion party now straggled and struggled, remarking, as he panted along, that hill-climbing among ashes and cinders didn’t “come easy to a sea-farin’ man.”

Now, nothing was more natural than that Van der Kemp and his guest should be smitten with the same sort of desire which had brought these excursionists from Batavia. The only thing that we do not pretend to account for is the strange coincidence that they should have been so smitten, and had so arranged their plans, that they arrived at Perboewatan almost at the same time with the excursionists—only about half an hour before them!

Their preliminary walk, however, through the tangled, almost impassable, forest had been very slow and toilsome, and having been involved in its shadow from daybreak, they were, of course, quite unaware of the approach of the steamer or the landing of the excursion party.

“If the volcano seems quieting down,” said Nigel to his host, “shall you start to-morrow?”

“Yes; by daybreak. Even if the eruption does *not* quiet down I must set out, for my business presses.”

Nigel felt much inclined to ask what his business was, but there was a quiet something in the air of the hermit, when he did not choose to be questioned, which effectually silenced curiosity. Falling behind a little, till the negro came up with him, Nigel tried to obtain information from him, for he felt that he had a sort of right to know at least something about the expedition in which he was about to act a part.

“Do you know, Moses, what business your master is going about?” he asked, in a low voice.

“No more nor de man ob de moon, Massa Nadgel,” said Moses, with an air at once so truthful and so solemn that the young man gave it up with a laugh of resignation.

On arriving at Perboewatan, and ascending its sides, they at last became aware of the approach of the excursion steamer.

“Strange,” muttered the hermit, “vessels don’t often touch here.”

“Perhaps they have run short of water,” suggested Nigel.

“Even if they had it would not be worth their while to stop here for that,” returned the hermit, resuming the ascent of the cone after an intervening clump of trees had shut out the steamer from view.

It was with feelings of profound interest and considerable excitement that our hero stood for the first time on the top of a volcanic cone and gazed down into its glowing vent.

The crater might be described as a huge basin of 3000 feet in diameter. From the rim of this basin on which the visitors stood the sides sloped so gradually inward that the flat floor at the bottom was not more than half that in diameter. This floor—which was about 150 feet below the upper edge—was covered with a black crust, and in the centre of it was the tremendous cavity—between one and two hundred feet in diameter—from which issued the great steam-cloud. The cloud was mixed with quantities of pumice and fragments of what appeared to be black glass. The

roar of this huge vent was deafening and stupendous. If the reader will reflect on the wonderful hubbub that can be created even by a kitchen kettle when superheated, and on the exasperating shrieks of a steamboat's safety-valve in action, or the bellowing of a fog-horn, he may form some idea of the extent of his incapacity to conceive the thunderous roar of Krakatoa when it began to boil over.

When to this awful sound there were added the intermittent explosions, the horrid crackling of millions of rock-masses meeting in the air, and the bubbling up of molten lava—verily it did not require the imagination of a Dante to see in all this the very vomiting of Gehenna!

So amazed and well-nigh stunned was Nigel at the sights and sounds that he neither heard nor saw the arrival of the excursionists, until the equally awe-stricken Moses touched him on the elbow and drew his attention to several men who suddenly appeared on the crater-brim not fifty yards off, but who, like themselves, were too much absorbed with the volcano itself to observe the other visitors. Probably they took them for some of their own party who had reached the summit before them.

Nigel was yet looking at these visitors in some surprise, when an elderly nautical man suddenly stood not twenty yards off gazing in open-mouthed amazement, past our hero's very nose, at the volcanic fires.

"Hallo, Father!" shouted the one.

"Zounds! Nigel!" exclaimed the other.

Both men glared and were speechless for several seconds. Then Nigel rushed at the captain, and the captain met him halfway, and they shook hands with such hearty goodwill as to arrest in his operations for a few moments a photographer who was hastily setting up his camera!

Yes, science has done much to reveal the marvellous and arouse exalted thoughts in the human mind, but it has also done something to crush enthusiasts and shock the romantic. Veracity constrains us to state that there he was, with his tripod, and his eager haste, and his hideous black cloth, preparing to "take" Perboewatan on a "dry plate"! And he "took" it too! And you may see it, if you will, as a marvellous frontispiece to the volume by the "Krakatoa Committee"—a work which is apparently as exhaustive of the subject of Krakatoa as was the great explosion itself of those internal fires which will probably keep that volcano quiet for the next two hundred years.

But this was not the Great Eruption of Krakatoa—only a rehearsal, as it were.

"What brought you here, my son?" asked the captain, on recovering speech.

"My legs, father."

"Don't be insolent, boy."

"It's not insolence, father. It's only poetical licence, meant to assure you that I did not come by 'bus or rail, though you did by steamer! But let me introduce you to my friend, Mr —"

He stopped short on looking round, for Van der Kemp was not there.

"He hoed away wheneber he saw de peepil comin' up de hill," said Moses, who had watched the meeting of father and son with huge delight. "But you kin interdooce *me* instead," he added, with a crater-like smile.

"True, true," exclaimed Nigel, laughing. "This is Moses, father, my host's servant, and my very good friend, and a remarkably free-and-easy friend, as you see. He will guide us back to the cave, since Van der Kemp seems to have left us."

"Who's Van der Kemp?" asked the captain.

"The hermit of Rakata, father—that's his name. His father was a Dutchman and his mother an English or Irish woman—I forget which. He's a splendid fellow; quite different from what one would expect; no more like a hermit than a hermit-crab, except that he lives in a cave under the Peak of Rakata, at the other end of the island. But you must come with us and pay him a visit. He will be delighted to see you."

"What! steer through a green sea of leaves like that?" said the captain, stretching his arm towards the vast forest that lay stretched out below them, "and on my legs, too, that have been used all their lives to a ship's deck? No, my son. I will content myself with this lucky meetin'. But, I say, Nigel, lad," continued the old man, somewhat more seriously, "what if the Peak o' Rakata, what's 'is name, should take to spoutin' like this one, an you, as you say, livin' under it?"

"Ha! das 'zackly what *I* say," interposed Moses. "Das what I oftin says to massa, but he nebber answers. He only smile. Massa's not always so purlite as he might be!"

"There is no fear," said Nigel, "not at present, anyhow, for Van der Kemp says that the force of this eruption is diminishing—"

"It don't look much like it," muttered the captain, as the volcano at that moment gave vent to a burst which seemed like a sarcastic laugh at the hermit's opinion, and sent the more timid of the excursionists sprawling down the cinder-slope in great alarm.

"There's reason in what you say, father," said Nigel, when the diminution of noise rendered speech more easy; "and after all, as we start off on our travels to-morrow, your visit could not have been a long one."

“Where do you go first?” asked the captain.

“Not sure. Do *you* know, Moses?”

“No; no more’n de man ob de moon. P’r’aps Borneo. He go dar sometimes.”

At this point another roar from the volcano, and a shout from the leader of the excursionists to return on board, broke up the conference.

“Well, lad, I’m glad I’ve seen you. Don’t forget to write your whereabouts. They say there’s a lot o’ wild places as well as wild men and beasts among them islands, so keep your weather-eye open an’ your powder dry. Good-bye, Nigel. Take care of him, Moses, and keep him out o’ mischief if ye can—which is more than ever I could. Good-bye, my boy.”

“Good-bye, father.”

They shook hands vigorously. In another minute the old seaman was sailing down the cinder-cone at the rate of fourteen knots an hour, while his son, setting off under the guidance of Moses towards a different point of the compass, was soon pushing his way through the tangled forest in the direction of the hermit’s cave.

Chapter Ten.

A Curious Sea-Going Craft—The Unknown Voyage begun.

It was early next morning when Van der Kemp and his man left their couches and descended to the shore, leaving their visitor enjoying the benefit of that profound slumber which bids defiance to turmoil and noise, however stupendous, and which seems to be the peculiar privilege of healthy infants and youthful seamen.

Perboewatan had subsided considerably towards morning, and had taken to that internal rumbling, which in the feline species indicates mitigated indignation. The hermit had therefore come to the conclusion that the outburst was over, and went with Moses to make arrangements for setting forth on his expedition after breakfast.

They had scarcely left the cave when Nigel awoke. Feeling indisposed for further repose, he got up and went out in that vague state of mind which is usually defined as “having a look at the weather.” Whether or not he gathered much information from the look we cannot tell, but, taking up his short gun, which stood handy at the entrance of the cave, he sauntered down the path which his host had followed a short time before. Arrived at the shore, he observed that a branch path diverged to the left, and appeared to run in the direction of a high precipice. He turned into it, and after proceeding through the bushes for a short way he came quite unexpectedly on a cavern, the mouth of which resembled, but was much higher and wider than that which led to the hermit’s home.

Just as he approached it there issued from its gloomy depths a strange rumbling sound which induced him to stop and cock his gun. A curious feeling of serio-comic awe crept over him as the idea of a fiery dragon leaped into his mind! At the same time, the fancy that the immense abyss of darkness might be one of the volcanic vents diminished the comic and increased the serious feeling. Ere long the sound assumed the definite tone of footsteps, and the dragon fancy seemed about to become a reality when he beheld a long narrow thing of uncertain form emerging from the darkness.

“It must be coming out tail-foremost!” he muttered, with a short laugh at his semi-credulity.

Another instant and the hermit emerged into the blazing sunshine, and stood pictured against the intense darkness like a being of supernatural radiance, with the end of a long narrow canoe on his shoulder.

As Nigel passed round a bush to reach him he perceived the dark form of Moses emerging from the depths and supporting the body of the canoe.

“I see you are active and an early riser,” said the hermit, with a nod of approval on seeing our hero.

“I almost took you for a Krakatoa monster!” said Nigel, as they came out in front of the cavern and laid the canoe on the ground. “Why, you’ve got here one of the craft which we in England call a Rob Roy canoe.”

“It is fashioned on the same pattern,” said the hermit, “but with one or two alterations of my own devising, and an improvement—as I think—founded on what I have myself seen, when travelling with the Eskimos of Greenland.”

Van der Kemp here pointed out that the canoe was not only somewhat broader than the kind used in England, but was considerably longer, and with three openings or manholes in the deck, so that it was capable of holding three persons. Also, that there was a large rounded mass of wood fixed in front of the three manholes.

“These saddles, as I call them,” said the hermit, “have been suggested to me by the Eskimos, who, instead of wearying their arms by supporting the double-bladed paddle continuously, rest it on the saddle and let it slide about thereon while being used. Thus they are able to carry a much longer and heavier paddle than that used in the Rob Roy canoe, the weight of which, as it rests on the saddle, is not felt. Moreover it does not require nearly so much dip to put it in the water. I have heard of a sort of upright with a universal joint being applied to the English canoe, but it seems to me a much more clumsy and much less effective, because rigid, contrivance than the Eskimo saddle. Inside, under the deck, as I will show you by and by, I have lighter and shorter paddles for use when in narrow rivers, but I prefer the long heavy paddle when traversing great stretches of ocean.”

“You don’t mean to say you ever go to sea in an eggshell like that!” exclaimed Nigel in surprise.

“Indeed we do,” returned the hermit, “and we are fitted out for longish voyages and rough weather. Besides, it is not so much of an eggshell as you suppose. I made it myself, and took care that it should be fit for the work required of it. The wood of which it is made, although light, is very tough, and it is lined with a skin of strong canvas which is fixed to the planks with tar. This makes the craft watertight as well as strong. The ribs also are very light and close together, and every sixth rib is larger and longer than the others and made of tougher wood. All these ribs are bound together by longitudinal pieces, or laths, of very tough wood, yet so thin that the whole machine is elastic without being weak. Besides this, there are two strong oiled-canvas partitions, which divide the canoe into three watertight compartments, any two of which will float it if the third should get filled.”

“Is this then the craft in which you intend to voyage?” asked Nigel.

“It is. We shall start in an hour or two. I keep it in this cave because it is near the landing-place. But come, you will understand things better when you see us making our arrangements. Of course you understand how to manage sails of every kind?”

“If I did not it would ill become me to call myself a sailor,” returned our hero.

“That is well, because you will sit in the middle, from which position the sail is partly managed. I usually sit in the bow to have free range for the use of my gun, if need be, and Moses steers.”

Van der Kemp proceeded down the track as he said this, having, with the negro, again lifted the canoe on his shoulder.

A few minutes’ walk brought them to the beach at the spot where Nigel had originally landed. Here a quantity of cargo lay on the rocks ready to be placed in the canoe. There were several small bags of pemmican, which Van der Kemp had learned to make while travelling on the prairies of North America among the Red Indians,—for this singular being seemed to have visited most parts of the habitable globe during his not yet very long life. There were five small casks of fresh water, two or three canisters of gunpowder, a small box of tea and another of sugar, besides several bags of biscuits. There were also other bags and boxes which did not by their appearance reveal their contents, and all the articles were of a shape and size which seemed most suitable for passing through the manholes, and being conveniently distributed and stowed in the three compartments of the canoe. There was not very much of anything, however, so that when the canoe was laden and ready for its voyage, the hermit and his man were still able to raise and carry it on their shoulders without the assistance of Nigel.

There was one passenger whom we have not yet mentioned, namely, a small monkey which dwelt in the cave with the canoe, and which, although perfectly free to come and go when he pleased, seldom left the cave except for food, but seemed to have constituted himself the guardian of the little craft.

Spinkie, as Moses had named him, was an intensely affectionate creature, with a countenance of pathetic melancholy which utterly belied his character, for mischief and fun were the dominating qualities of that monkey. He was seated on a water-cask when Nigel first caught sight of him, holding the end of his long tail in one hand, and apparently wiping his nose with it.

“Is that what he is doing?” asked Nigel of the negro.

“Oh no, Massa Nadgel,” said Moses. “Spinkie nebber ketch cold an’ hab no need ob a pocket-hang-kitcher. He only tickles his nose wid ’is tail. But he’s bery fond ob doin’ dat.”

Being extremely fond of monkeys, Nigel went forward to fondle him, and Spinkie being equally fond of fondling, resigned himself placidly—after one interrogative gaze of wide-eyed suspicion—into the stranger’s hands. A lifelong friendship was cemented then and there.

After stowing the cargo the party returned to the upper cavern, leaving the monkey to guard the canoe.

“An’ he’s a good defender ob it,” said Moses, “for if man or beast happen to come near it when Spinkie’s in charge, dat monkey sets up a skriekin’ fit to cause a ’splosion ob Perboewatan!”

Breakfast over, the hermit put his cave in order for a pretty long absence, and they again descended to the shore, each man carrying his bed on his shoulder. Each bed, however, was light and simple. It consisted merely of one blanket wrapped up in an oil-cloth sheet. Besides, an old-fashioned powder-flask and shot belt. Van der Kemp and Nigel had slung a bullet-pouch on their shoulders, and carried small hatchets and hunting-knives in their belts. Moses was similarly armed, with this difference, that his *couteau de chasse* bore stronger resemblance to an ancient Roman sword than a knife, and his axe was of larger size than the hatchets of his companions.

Launching the canoe, the hermit and his man held it fast at either end while Nigel was directed to take his place in the central of the three openings or manholes. He did so and found himself seated on a flat board on the bottom of the canoe, which was so shallow that the deck scarcely rose as high as his waist.

Round the manhole there was a ledge of thin wood, about three inches high, to which a circular apron of oiled-canvas was attached.

“Yes, you’d better understand that thing before we start,” said Van der Kemp, observing that Nigel was examining the contrivance with some curiosity. “It’s an apron to tie round you in bad weather to keep the water out. In fine weather it is rolled as you see it now round the ledge. Undo the buckle before and behind and you will see how it is to be used.”

Acting as directed, Nigel unbuckled the roll and found that he was surrounded by a sort of petticoat of oil-skin which could be drawn up and buckled round his chest. In this position it could be kept by a loop attached to a button, or a wooden pin, thrust through the coat.

“You see,” explained the hermit, “the waves may wash all over our deck and round our bodies without being able to get into the canoe while we have these things on—there are similar protections round the other holes.”

“I understand,” said Nigel. “But how if water gets in through a leak below?”

“Do you see that brass thing in front of you?” returned the hermit. “That is a pump which is capable of keeping under a pretty extensive leak. The handle unships, so as to be out of the way when not wanted. I keep it here, under the deck in front of me, along with mast and sails and a good many other things.”

As he spoke he raised a plank of the deck in front of the foremost hole, and disclosed a sort of narrow box about six feet long by six inches broad. The plank was hinged at one end and fastened with a hook at the other so as to form a lid to the box. The hole thus disclosed was not an opening into the interior of the canoe, but was a veritable watertight box just under the deck, so that even if it were to get filled with water not a drop could enter the canoe itself. But the plank-lid was so beautifully fitted, besides shutting tightly down on india-rubber, that the chance of leakage through that source was very remote. Although very narrow, this box was deep, and contained a variety of useful implements; among them a slender mast and tiny sail, which could be rendered still smaller by means of reef-points. All these things were fitted into their respective places with so keen an eye to economy of space that the arrangement cannot be better described than by the familiar phrase—*multum in parvo*.

“We don’t use the sails much; we depend chiefly on this,” said the hermit, as he seated himself in the front hole and laid the long, heavy, double-bladed paddle on the saddle in front of him. “Moses uses a single-blade, partly because it is handier for steering and partly because he has been accustomed to it in his own land. You are at liberty to use which you prefer.”

“Thanks, I will follow the lead of Moses, for I also have been accustomed to the single-blade and prefer it—at least while I am one of three. If alone, I should prefer the double-blade.”

“Now, Moses, are you ready?” asked the hermit.

“All ready, massa.”

“Get in then and shove off. Come along, Spinkie.”

The monkey, which all this time had been seated on a rock looking on with an expression of inconsolable sorrow, at once accepted the invitation, and with a lively bound alighted on the deck close to the little mast, which had been set up just in front of Nigel, and to which it held on when the motions of the canoe became unsteady.

“You need not give yourself any concern about Spinkie,” said the hermit, as they glided over the still water of the little cove in which the canoe and boat were harboured. “He is quite able to take care of himself.”

Rounding the entrance to the cove and shooting out into the ocean under the influence of Van der Kemp’s powerful strokes, they were soon clear of the land, and proceeded eastward at a rate which seemed unaccountable to our hero, for he had not sufficiently realised the fact that in addition to the unusual physical strength of Van der Kemp as well as that of Moses, to say nothing of his own, the beautiful fish-like adaptation of the canoe to the water, the great length and leverage of the bow-paddle, and the weight of themselves as well as the cargo, gave this canoe considerable advantage over other craft of the kind.

About a quarter of an hour later the sun arose in cloudless splendour on a perfectly tranquil sea, lighted up the shores of Java, glinted over the mountains of Sumatra, and flooded, as with a golden haze, the forests of Krakatoa—emulating the volcanic fires in gilding the volumes of smoke that could be seen rolling amid fitful mutterings from Perboewatan, until the hermit’s home sank from view in the western horizon.

Chapter Eleven.

Canoeing on the Sea—A Mysterious Night—Surprise and Sudden Flight.

At first the voyagers paddled over the glassy sea in almost total silence.

Nigel was occupied with his own busy thoughts; speculating on the probable end and object of their voyage, and on the character, the mysterious life, and unknown history of the man who sat in front of him wielding so powerfully the great double-bladed paddle. Van der Kemp himself was, as we have said, naturally quiet and silent, save when roused by a subject that interested him. As for Moses, although quite ready at any moment to indulge in friendly intercourse, he seldom initiated a conversation, and Spinkie, grasping the mast and leaning against it with his head down, seemed to be either asleep or brooding over his sorrows. Only a few words were uttered now and then when Nigel asked the name of a point or peak which rose in the distance on either hand. It seemed as if the quiescence of sea and air had fallen like a soft mantle on the party and subdued them into an unusually sluggish frame of mind.

They passed through the Sunda Straits between Sumatra and Java—not more at the narrowest part than about thirteen miles wide—and, in course of time, found themselves in the great island-studded archipelago beyond.

About noon they all seemed to wake up from their lethargic state. Van der Kemp laid down his paddle, and, looking round, asked Nigel if he felt tired.

“Not in the least,” he replied, “but I feel uncommonly hungry, and I have just been wondering how you manage to feed when at sea in so small a craft.”

“Ho! ho!” laughed Moses, in guttural tones, “you soon see dat—I ’spose it time for me to get out de grub, massa?”

“Yes, Moses—let’s have it.”

The negro at once laid down his steering paddle and lifted a small square hatch or lid in the deck which was rendered watertight by the same means as the lid in front already described. From the depths thus revealed he extracted a bird of some sort that had been shot and baked the day before. Tearing off a leg he retained it, and handed the remainder to Nigel.

“Help you’self, Massa Nadgel, an’ pass ’im forward.” Without helping himself he passed it on to Van der Kemp, who drew his knife, sliced off a wing with a mass of breast, and returned the rest.

“Always help yourself *before* passing the food in future,” said the hermit; “we don’t stand on ceremony here.”

Nigel at once fell in with their custom, tore off the remaining drumstick and began.

“Biskit,” said Moses, with his mouth full, “an’ look out for Spinkie.”

He handed forward a deep tray of the sailor’s familiar food, but Nigel was too slow to profit by the warning given, for Spinkie darted both hands into the tray and had stuffed his mouth and cheeks full almost before a man could wink! The negro would have laughed aloud, but the danger of choking was too great; he therefore laughed internally—an operation which could not be fully understood unless seen. “’Splosions of Perboewatan,” may suggest the thing.

Sorrow, grief—whatever it was that habitually afflicted that monkey—disappeared for the time being, while it devoted itself heart and soul to dinner.

Feelings of a somewhat similar kind animated Nigel as he sat leaning back with his mouth full, a biscuit in one hand, and a drumstick in the other, and his eyes resting dreamily on the horizon of the still tranquil sea, while the bright sun blazed upon his already bronzed face.

To many men the fierce glare of the equatorial sun might have proved trying, but Nigel belonged to the salamander type of humanity and enjoyed the great heat. Van der Kemp seemed to be similarly moulded, and as for Moses, he was in his native element—so was Spinkie.

Strange as it may seem, sea-birds appeared to divine what was going on, for several specimens came circling round the canoe with great outstretched and all but motionless wings, and with solemn sidelong glances of hope which Van der Kemp evidently could not resist, for he flung them scraps of his allowance from time to time.

“If you have plenty of provisions on board, I should like to do that too,” said Nigel.

“Do it,” returned the hermit. “We have plenty of food for some days, and our guns can at any time replenish the store. I like to feed these creatures,” he added, “they give themselves over so thoroughly to the enjoyment of the moment, and *seem* to be grateful. Whether they are so or not, of course, is matter of dispute. Cynics will tell us that they only come to us and fawn upon us because of the memory of past favours and the hope of more to come. I don’t agree with them.”

“Neither do I,” said Nigel, warmly. “Any man who has ever had to do with dogs knows full well that gratitude is a strong element of their nature. And it seems to me that the speaking eyes of Spinkie, to whom I have just given a bit of biscuit, tell of a similar spirit.”

As he spoke, Nigel was conveying another piece of biscuit to his own mouth, when a small brown hand flashed before him, and the morsel, in the twinkling of an eye, was transferred to the monkey’s already swollen cheek—whereat Moses again became suddenly “’splosive” and red, as well as black in the face, for his capacious mouth was inordinately full as usual.

Clear water, from one of the casks, and poured into a tin mug, washed down their cold collation, and then, refreshed and reinvigorated, the trio resumed their paddles, which were not again laid down till the sun was descending towards the western horizon. By that time they were not far from a small wooded islet near the coast of Java, on which Van der Kemp resolved to spend the night.

During the day they had passed at some distance many boats and *prahus* and other native vessels, the crews of which ceased to row for a few moments, and gazed with curiosity at the strange craft which glided along so swiftly, and seemed to them little more than a long plank on the water, but these took no further notice of our voyagers. They also passed several ships—part of that constant stream of vessels which pass westward through those straits laden with the valuable teas and rich silks of China and Japan. In some cases a cheer of recognition, as being an exceptional style of craft, was accorded them, to which the hermit replied with a wave of the hand—Moses and Nigel with an answering cheer.

There is something very pleasant in the rest which follows a day of hard and healthful toil.

Our Maker has so ordained it as well as stated it, for is it not written, “The sleep of the labouring man is sweet”? and our travellers experienced the truth of the statement that night in very romantic circumstances.

The small rocky islet, not more than a few hundred yards in diameter, which they now approached, had several sheltered sandy bays on its shore, which were convenient for landing. The centre was clothed with palm-trees and

underwood, so that fuel could be procured, and cocoa-nuts.

“Sometimes,” said the hermit, while he stooped to arrange the fire, after the canoe and cargo had been carried to their camping-place at the edge of the bushes,—“sometimes it is necessary to keep concealed while travelling in these regions, and I carry a little spirit-lamp which enables me to heat a cup of tea or coffee without making a dangerous blaze; but here there is little risk in kindling a fire.”

“I should not have thought there was any risk at all in these peaceful times,” said Nigel, as he unstrapped his blanket and spread it on the ground under an overhanging bush.

“There are no peaceful times among pirates,” returned the hermit; “and some of the traders in this archipelago are little better than pirates.”

“Where I puts your bed, massa?” asked Moses, turning his huge eyes on his master.

“There—under the bush, beside Nigel.”

“An’ where would *you* like to sleep, Massa Spinkie?” added the negro, with a low obeisance to the monkey, which sat on the top of what seemed to be its favourite seat—a water-cask.

Spinkie treated the question with calm contempt, turned his head languidly to one side, and scratched himself.

“Unpurliteness is your k’racter from skin to marrow, you son of a insolent mother!” said Moses, shaking his fist, whereat Spinkie, promptly making an O of his mouth, looked fierce.

The sagacious creature remained where he was till after supper, which consisted of another roast fowl—hot this time—and ship’s-biscuit washed down with coffee. Of course Spinkie’s portion consisted only of the biscuit with a few scraps of cocoa-nut. Having received it he quietly retired to his native wilds, with the intention of sleeping there, according to custom, till morning; but his repose was destined to be broken, as we shall see.

After supper, the hermit, stretching himself on his blanket, filled an enormous meerschaum, and began to smoke. The negro, rolling up a little tobacco in tissue paper, sat down, tailor-wise, and followed his master’s example, while our hero—who did not smoke—lay between them, and gazed contemplatively over the fire at the calm dark sea beyond, enjoying the aroma of his coffee.

“From what you have told me of your former trading expeditions,” said Nigel, looking at his friend, “you must have seen a good deal of this archipelago before you took—excuse me—to the hermit life.”

“Ay—a good deal.”

“Have you ever travelled in the interior of the larger islands?” asked Nigel, in the hope of drawing from him some account of his experiences with wild beasts or wild men—he did not care which, so long as they were wild!

“Yes, in all of them,” returned the hermit, curtly, for he was not fond of talking about himself.

“I suppose the larger islands are densely wooded?” continued Nigel interrogatively.

“They are, very.”

“But the wood is not of much value, I fancy, in the way of trade,” pursued our hero, adopting another line of attack which proved successful, for Van der Kemp turned his eyes on him with a look of surprise that almost forced him to laugh.

“Not of much value in the way of trade!” he repeated—“forgive me, if I express surprise that you seem to know so little about us—but, after all, the world is large, and one cannot become deeply versed in everything.”

Having uttered this truism, the hermit resumed his meerschaum and continued to gaze thoughtfully at the embers of the fire. He remained so long silent that Nigel began to despair, but thought he would try him once again on the same lines.

“I suppose,” he said in a careless way, “that none of the islands are big enough to contain many of the larger wild animals.”

“My friend,” returned Van der Kemp, with a smile of urbanity, as he refilled his pipe, “it is evident that you do not know much about our archipelago. Borneo, to the woods and wild animals of which I hope ere long to introduce you, is so large that if you were to put your British islands, including Ireland, down on it they would be engulfed and surrounded by a sea of forests. New Guinea is, perhaps, larger than Borneo. Sumatra is only a little smaller. France is not so large as some of our islands. Java, Luzon, and Celebes are each about equal in size to Ireland. Eighteen more islands are, on the average, as large as Jamaica, more than a hundred are as large as the Isle of Wight, and the smaller isles and islets are innumerable. In short, our archipelago is comparable with any of the primary divisions of the globe, being full 4000 miles in length from east to west and about 1,300 in breadth from north to south, and would in extent more than cover the whole of Europe.”

It was evident to Nigel that he had at length succeeded in opening the flood-gates. The hermit paused for a few moments and puffed at the meerschaum, while Moses glared at his master with absorbed interest, and pulled at the cigarette with such oblivious vigour that he drew it into his mouth at last, spat it out, and prepared another. Nigel sat quite silent and waited for more.

“As to trade,” continued Van der Kemp, resuming his discourse in a lower tone, “why, of gold—the great representative of wealth—we export from Sumatra alone over 26,000 ounces annually, and among other gold regions we have a Mount Ophir in the Malay Peninsula from which there is a considerable annual export.”

Continuing his discourse, Van der Kemp told a great deal more about the products of these prolific islands with considerable enthusiasm—as one who somewhat resented the underrating of his native land.

“Were you born in this region, Van der Kemp?” asked Nigel, during a brief pause.

“I was—in Java. My father, as my name tells, was of Dutch descent. My mother was Irish. Both are dead.”

He stopped. The fire that had been aroused seemed to die down, and he continued to smoke with the sad absent look which was peculiar to him.

“And what about large game?” asked Nigel, anxious to stir up his friend’s enthusiasm again, but the hermit had sunk back into his usual condition of gentle dreaminess, and made no answer till the question had been repeated.

“Pardon me,” he said, “I was dreaming of the days that are gone. Ah! Nigel; you are yet too young to understand the feelings of the old—the sad memories of happy years that can never return: of voices that are hushed for ever. No one can *know* till he has *felt*!”

“But you are not old,” said Nigel, wishing to turn the hermit’s mind from a subject on which it seemed to dwell too constantly.

“Not in years,” he returned; “but old, *very* old in experience, and—stay, what was it that you were asking about? Ah, the big game. Well, we have plenty of that in some of the larger of the islands; we have the elephant, the rhinoceros, the tiger, the puma, that great man-monkey the orang-utan, or, as it is called here, the mias, besides wild pigs, deer, and innumerable smaller animals and birds—”

The hermit stopped abruptly and sat motionless, with his head bent on one side, like one who listens intently. Such an action is always infectious. Nigel and the negro also listened, but heard nothing.

By that time the fire had died down, and, not being required for warmth, had not been replenished. The faint light of the coming moon, which, however, was not yet above the horizon, only seemed to render darkness visible, so that the figure of Moses was quite lost in the shadow of the bush behind him, though the whites of his solemn eyes appeared like two glow-worms.

“Do you hear anything?” asked Nigel in a low tone.

“Oars,” answered the hermit.

“I hear ’im, massa,” whispered the negro, “but das not su’prisin’—plenty boats about.”

“This boat approaches the island, and I can tell by the sound that it is a large *prahu*. If it touches here it will be for the purpose of spending the night, and Malay boatmen are not always agreeable neighbours. However, it is not likely they will ramble far from where they land, so we may escape observation if we keep quiet.”

As he spoke he emptied the remains of the coffee on the dying fire and effectually put it out.

Meanwhile the sound of oars had become quite distinct, and, as had been anticipated, the crew ran their boat into one of the sandy bays and leaped ashore with a good deal of shouting and noise. Fortunately they had landed on the opposite side of the islet, and as the bush on it was very dense there was not much probability of any one crossing over. Our voyagers therefore lay close, resolving to be off in the morning before the unwelcome visitors were stirring.

As the three lay there wrapped in their blankets and gazing contemplatively at the now risen moon, voices were heard as if of men approaching. It was soon found that two of the strangers had sauntered round by the beach and were slowly drawing near the encampment.

Nigel observed that the hermit had raised himself on one elbow and seemed to be again listening intently.

The two men halted on reaching the top of the ridges of rock which formed one side of the little bay, and their voices became audible though too far distant to admit of words being distinguishable. At the same time their forms were clearly defined against the sky.

Nigel glanced at Van der Kemp and was startled by the change that had come over him. The moonbeams, which had by that time risen above some intervening shrubs, shone full on him and showed that his usually quiet gentle countenance was deadly pale and transformed by a frown of almost tiger-like ferocity. So strange and unaccountable did this seem to our hero that he lay quite still, as if spell-bound. Nor did his companions move until the strangers, having finished their talk, turned to retrace their steps and finally disappeared.

Then Van der Kemp rose with a sigh of relief. The negro and Nigel also sprang up.

“What’s wrong, massa?” asked Moses, in much anxiety.

“Nothing, nothing,” said the hermit hurriedly. “I must cross over to see these fellows.”

“All right, massa. I go wid you.”

“No, I go alone.”

“Not widout arms?” exclaimed the negro, laying his hand on his master’s shoulder.

“Yes, without arms!” As he spoke he drew the long knife that usually hung at his girdle and flung it down. “Now attend, both of you,” he added, with sudden and almost threatening earnestness.

“Do not on any account follow me. I am quite able to take care of myself.”

Next moment he glided into the bushes and was gone.

“Can you guess what is the matter with him?” asked Nigel, turning to his companion with a perplexed look.

“Not more nor de man ob de moon. I nebber saw’d ’im like dat before. I t’ink he’s go mad! I tell you what—I’ll foller him wid a rifle an’ knife and two revolvers.”

“You’ll do nothing of the sort,” said Nigel, laying hold of the negro’s wrist with a grip of iron; “when a man like Van der Kemp gives an order it’s the duty of inferior men like you and me strictly to obey.”

“Well—p’raps you’re right, Nadgel,” returned Moses calmly. “If you wasn’t, I’d knock you into de middle ob nixt week for takin’ a grip o’ me like dat.”

“You’ll wish yourself into the middle of next fortnight if you disobey orders,” returned our hero, tightening the grip.

Moses threw back his head, opened his cavern, and laughed silently; at the same time he twisted his arm free with a sudden wrench.

“You’s awrful strong, Nadgel, but you don’t quite come up to niggers! Howse’ber, you’s right. I’ll obey orders; neberdeless I’ll get ready for action.”

So saying, the negro extracted from the canoe several revolvers, two of which he handed to Nigel, two he thrust into his own belt, and two he laid handy for “massa” when he should return.

“Now, if you’re smart at arit’metic, you’ll see dat six time six am t’irty-six, and two double guns das forty-forty dead men’s more’n enuff—besides de knives.”

Moses had barely finished these deadly preparations when Van der Kemp returned as quietly as he had gone. His face was still fierce and haggard, and his manner hurried though quite decided.

“I have seen him,” he said, in a low voice.

“Seen who?” asked Nigel.

“Him whom I had hoped and prayed never more to see. My enemy! Come, quick, we must leave at once, and without attracting their notice.”

He gave his comrades no time to put further questions, but laid hold of one end of the canoe; Moses took the other end and it was launched in a few seconds, while Nigel carried down such part of the lading as had been taken out. Five minutes sufficed to put all on board, and that space of time was also sufficient to enable Spinkie to observe from his retreat in the bushes that a departure was about to take place; he therefore made for the shore with all speed and bounded to his accustomed place beside the mast.

Taking their places they pushed off so softly that they might well have been taken for phantoms. A cloud conveniently hid the moon at the time. Each man plied his paddle with noiseless but powerful stroke, and long before the cloud uncovered the face of the Queen of Night they were shooting far away over the tranquil sea.

Chapter Twelve.

Weathering a Storm in The Open Sea.

In profound silence they continued to paddle until there was no chance of their being seen by the party on the islet. Then Van der Kemp rested his paddle in front of him and looked slowly round the horizon and up at the sky as if studying the weather.

Nigel longed to ask him more about the men they had seen, and of this “enemy” whom he had mentioned, but there was that in the hermit’s grave look which forbade questioning, and indeed Nigel now knew from experience that it would be useless to press him to speak on any subject in regard to which he chose to be reticent.

“I don’t like the look of the sky,” he said at last. “We are going to have a squall, I fear.”

“Had we not better run for the nearest land?” said Nigel, who, although not yet experienced in the signs of the weather in those equatorial regions, had quite enough of knowledge to perceive that bad weather of some sort was probably approaching.

“The nearest island is a good way off,” returned the hermit, “and we might miss it in the dark, for daylight won’t help us yet awhile. No, we will continue our course and accept what God sends.”

This remark seemed to our hero to savour of unreasoning contempt of danger, for the facing of a tropical squall in

such an eggshell appeared to him the height of folly. He ventured to reply, therefore, in a tone of remonstrance—

“God sends us the capacity to appreciate danger, Van der Kemp, and the power to take precautions.”

“He does, Nigel—therefore I intend to use both the capacity and the power.”

There was a tone of finality in this speech which effectually sealed Nigel’s lips, and, in truth, his ever-increasing trust in the wisdom, power, and resource of his friend indisposed him to further remark.

The night had by this time become intensely dark, for a bank of black cloud had crept slowly over the sky and blotted out the moon. This cloud extended itself slowly, obliterating, ere long, most of the stars also, so that it was scarcely possible to distinguish any object more than a yard or two in advance of them. The dead calm, however, continued unbroken, and the few of heaven’s lights which still glimmered through the obscurity above were clearly reflected in the great black mirror below. Only the faint gleam of Krakatoa’s threatening fires was visible on the horizon, while the occasional boom of its artillery sounded in their ears.

It was impossible for any inexperienced man, however courageous, to avoid feelings of awe, almost amounting to dread, in the circumstances, and Nigel—as he tried to penetrate the darkness around him and glanced at the narrow craft in which he sat and over the sides of which he could dip both hands at once into the sea—might be excused for wishing, with all his heart, that he were safely on shore, or on the deck of his father’s brig. His feelings were by no means relieved when Van der Kemp said, in a low soliloquising tone—

“The steamers will constitute our chief danger to-night. They come on with such a rush that it is not easy to make out how they are steering, so as to get out of their way in time.”

“But should we not hear them coming a long way off?” asked Nigel.

“Ay. It is not during a calm like this that we run risk, but when the gale begins to blow we cannot hear, and shall not, perhaps, see very well.”

As he spoke the hermit lifted the covering of the fore-hatch and took out a small sail which he asked Nigel to pass aft to the negro.

“Close-reef it, Moses; we shall make use of the wind as long as possible. After that we will lay-to.”

“All right, massa,” said the negro, in the same cheerful free-and-easy tone in which he was wont to express his willingness to obey orders whether trifling or important. “Don’ forgit Spinkie, massa.”

“You may be sure I won’t do that,” replied the hermit. “Come along, monkey!”

Evidently Van der Kemp had trained his dumb companion as thoroughly to prompt obedience as his black follower, for the little creature instantly bounded from its place by the mast on to the shoulder of its master, who bade it go into the place from which he had just extracted the sail. Nigel could not see this—not only because of the darkness, but because of the intervention of the hermit’s bulky person, but he understood what had taken place by the remark —

“That’s a good little fellow. Keep your head down, now, while I shut you in!”

From the same place Van der Kemp had drawn a small triangular foresail, which he proceeded to attach to the bow of the canoe—running its point out by means of tackle laid along the deck—while Moses was busy reefing the mainsail.

From the same repository were extracted three waterproof coats, which, when put on by the canoemen, the tails thrust below deck, and the aprons drawn over them and belted round their waists, protected their persons almost completely from water.

“Now, Nigel,” said the hermit, “unship the mast, reeve the halyard of this foresail through the top and then re-ship it. Moses will give you the mainsail when ready, and you can hook the halyards on to it. The thing is too simple to require explanation to a sailor. I attend to the foresail and Moses manages the mainsheet, but you have to mind the halyards of both, which, as you would see if it were light enough, run down alongside the mast. All I ask you to remember is to be smart in obeying orders, for squalls are sometimes very sudden here—but I doubt not that such a caution is needless.”

“I’ll do my best,” said Nigel.

By this time a slight puff of air had ruffled the sea, thereby intensifying, if possible, the blackness which already prevailed. The tiny sails caught the puff, causing the canoe to lean slightly over, and glide with a rippling sound through the water, while Moses steered by means of his paddle.

“You have put Spinkie down below, I think,” said Nigel, who had been struck more than once with the hermit’s extreme tenderness and care of the little creature.

“Yes, to prevent it from being washed overboard. I nearly lost the poor little thing once or twice, and now when we are likely to be caught in bad weather I put him below.”

“Is he not apt to be suffocated?” asked Nigel. “With everything made so tight to prevent water getting into the canoe, you necessarily prevent air entering also.”

“I see you have a mechanical turn of mind,” returned the hermit. “You are right. Yet in so large a canoe the air would

last a considerable time to satisfy a monkey. Nevertheless, I have made provision for that. There is a short tube alongside the mast, and fixed to it, which runs a little below the deck and rises a foot above it so as to be well above the wash of most waves, and in the deck near the stern there is a small hole with a cap fitted so as to turn the water but admit the air. Thus free circulation of air is established below deck."

Suddenly a hissing sound was heard to windward.

"Look out, Moses," said Van der Kemp. "There it comes. Let go the sheet. Keep good hold of your paddle, Nigel."

The warning was by no means unnecessary, for as the canoe's head was turned to meet the blast, a hissing sheet of white water swept right over the tiny craft, completely submerging it, insomuch that the three men appeared to be sitting more than waist-deep in the water.

"Lower the mainsail!" shouted the hermit, for the noise of wind and sea had become deafening.

Nigel obeyed and held on to the flapping sheet. The hermit had at the same moment let go the foresail, the flapping of which he controlled by a rope-tackle arranged for the purpose. He then grasped his single-blade paddle and aided Moses in keeping her head to wind and sea. For a few minutes this was all that could be done. Then the first violence of the squall passed off, allowing the deck of the little craft to appear above the tormented water. Soon the waves began to rise.

The mere keeping of the canoe's head to wind required all the attention of both master and man, while Nigel sat waiting for orders and looking on with mingled feelings of surprise and curiosity. Of course they were all three wet to the skin, for the water had got up their sleeves and down their necks; but, being warm, that mattered little, and the oiled aprons before mentioned, being securely fastened round their waists, effectually prevented any of it from getting below save the little that passed through the thickness of their own garments.

No word was spoken for at least a quarter of an hour, during which time, although they rose buoyantly on the water, the waves washed continually over the low-lying deck. As this deck was flush with the gunwale, or rather, had no gunwale at all, the water ran off it as it does off a whale's back.

Then there came a momentary lull.

"Now, Moses—'bout ship!" shouted Van der Kemp. "Stand by, Nigel!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

Although the canoe was long—and therefore unfitted to turn quickly—the powerful strokes of the two paddles in what may be called counteracting-harmony brought the little craft right round with her stern to the waves.

"Hoist away, Nigel! We must run right before it now."

Up went the mainsail, the tiny foresail bulged out at the same moment, and away they went like the driving foam, appearing almost to leap from wave to wave. All sense of danger was now overwhelmed in Nigel's mind by that feeling of excitement and wild delight which accompanies some kinds of rapid motion. This was, if possible, intensified by the crashing thunder which now burst forth and the vivid lightning which began to play, revealing from time to time the tumultuous turmoil as if in clearest moonlight, only to plunge it again in still blacker night.

By degrees the gale increased in fury, and it soon became evident that neither sails nor cordage could long withstand the strain to which they were subjected.

"A'most too much, massa," said the negro in a suggestive shout.

"Right, Moses," returned his master. "I was just thinking we must risk it."

"Risk what? I wonder," thought Nigel.

He had not long to wait for an answer to his thought.

"Down wi' the mainsail," was quickly followed by the lowering of the foresail until not more than a mere corner was shown, merely to keep the canoe end-on to the seas. Soon even this was lowered, and Van der Kemp used his double-blade paddle to keep them in position, at the same time telling Nigel to unship the mast.

"And plug the hole with that," he added, handing him a bit of wood which exactly fitted the hole in the deck.

Watching for another lull in the blast, the hermit at last gave the order, and round they came as before, head to wind, but not quite so easily, and Nigel felt that they had narrowly escaped overturning in the operation.

"Keep her so, Moses. You can help with your paddle, Nigel, while I get ready our anchor."

"Anchor!" exclaimed our hero in amazement—obeying orders, however, at the same moment.

The hermit either did not hear the exclamation or did not care to notice it. He quickly collected the mast and sails, with a couple of boat-hooks and all the paddles excepting two single ones. These he bound together by means of the sheets and halyards, attached the whole to a hawser,—one end of which passed through an iron ring at the bow—and tossed it into the sea—paying out the hawser rapidly at the same time so as to put a few yards between them and their floating anchor—if it may be so called—in the lee of which they prepared to ride out the gale.

It was well that they had taken the precaution to put on their waterproofs before the gale began, because, while

turned head to wind every breaking wave swept right over their heads, and even now while under the lee of the floating anchor they were for some time almost continually overwhelmed by thick spray. Being, however, set free from the necessity of keeping their tiny craft in position, they all bowed their heads on the deck, sheltered their faces in their hands and awaited the end!

Whilst in this attitude—so like to that of prayer—Nigel almost naturally thought of Him who holds the water in the hollow of His hand, and lifted his soul to God; for, amid the roaring of the gale, the flashes of lightning, the appalling thunder, the feeling that he was in reality all but under the waves and the knowledge that the proverbial plank between him and death was of the very thinnest description, a sensation of helplessness and of dependence on the Almighty, such as he had never before experienced, crept over him. What the thoughts of the hermit were he could not tell, for that strange man seldom spoke about himself; but Moses was not so reticent, for he afterwards remarked that he had often been caught by gales while in the canoe, and had been attached for hours to their floating anchor, but that "dat was out ob sight de wust bust ob wedder dey'd had since dey come to lib at Krakatoa, an' he had bery nigh giben up in despair!"

The use of the floating breakwater was to meet the full force of the seas and break them just before they reached the canoe. In spite of this some of them were so tremendous that, broken though they were, the swirling foam completely buried the craft for a second or two, but the sharp bow cut its way through, and the water poured off the deck and off the stooping figures like rain from a duck's back. Of course a good deal got in at their necks, sleeves, and other small openings, and wet them considerably, but that, as Moses remarked, "was not'ing to speak ob."

Thus they lay tossing in the midst of the raging foam for several hours. Now and then each would raise his head a little to see that the rope held fast, but was glad to lower it again. They hardly knew when day broke. It was so slow in coming, and so gloomy and dark when it did come, that the glare of the lightning-flash seemed more cheerful.

It may be easily believed that there was no conversation during those hours of elemental strife, though the thoughts of each were busy enough. At last the thunder ceased, or, rather, retired as if in growling defiance of the world which it had failed to destroy. Then the sky began to lighten a little, and although the wind did not materially abate in force it became more steady and equal. Before noon, however, it had subsided so much that Moses suggested the propriety of continuing the voyage. To this Van der Kemp agreed, and the floating anchor was hauled in; the large paddle was resumed by the hermit, and the dangerous process of turning the canoe was successfully accomplished.

When the mast was again set up and the close-reefed main and foresails were hoisted, the light craft bounded away once more before the wind like a fleck of foam. Then a gleam of sunshine forced its way through the driving clouds, and painted a spot of emerald green on the heaving sea. Soon after that Van der Kemp opened the lid, or hatch, of the fore-hold, and Spinkie, jumping out with alacrity, took possession of his usual seat beside the mast, to which he clung with affectionate tenacity. Gradually the wind went down. Reef after reef of the two sails was shaken out, and for several hours thereafter our travellers sped merrily on, plunging into the troughs and cutting through the crests of the stormy sea.

Chapter Thirteen.

Friends are met with, also Pirates, and a Life-or-Death Paddle ensues.

In physics, as in morals, a storm is frequently the precursor of a dead calm.

Much to the monkey's joy, to say nothing of the men, the sun ere long asserted its equatorial power, and, clearing away the clouds, allowed the celestial blue to smile on the turmoil below. The first result of that smile was that the wind retired to its secret chambers, leaving the ships of men to flap their idle sails. Then the ocean ceased to fume, though its agitated bosom still continued for some time to heave. Gradually the swell went down and soon the unruffled surface reflected a dimpling smile to the sky.

When this happy stage had been reached our voyagers lowered and stowed the canoe-sails, and continued to advance under paddles.

"We get along wonderfully fast, Van der Kemp," said Nigel, while resting after a pretty long spell; "but it seems to me, nevertheless, that we shall take a considerable time to reach Borneo at this rate, seeing that it must be over two hundred miles away, and if we have much bad weather or contrary wind, we shan't be able to reach it for weeks—if at all."

"I have been thrown somewhat out of my reckoning," returned the hermit, "by having to fly from the party on the islet, where I meant to remain till a steamer, owned by a friend of mine, should pass and pick us up, canoe and all. The steamer is a short-voyage craft, and usually so punctual that I can count on it to a day. But it may have passed us in the gale. If so, I shall take advantage of the first vessel that will agree to lend us a hand."

"How!—Do you get them to tow you?"

"Nay, that were impossible. A jerk from the tow-rope of a steamer at full speed would tear us asunder. Have you observed these two strong ropes running all round our gunwale, and the bridles across with ring-bolts in them?"

"I have, and did not ask their use, as I thought they were merely meant to strengthen the canoe."

"So they are," continued the hermit, "but they have other uses besides—"

"Massa," cried Moses, at this point. "You'll 'scuse me for 'truptin' you, but it's my opinion dat Spinkie's sufferin' jus'

now from a empty stummik!”

The hermit smiled and Nigel laughed. Laying down his paddle the former said—

“I understand, Moses. That speech means that you are suffering from the same complaint. Well—get out the biscuit.”

“Jus’ de way ob de wurld,” muttered the negro with a bland smile. “If a poor man obsarves an feels for de sorrows ob anoder, he allers gits credit for t’inkin’ ob his-self. Neber mind, I’s used to it!”

Evidently the unjust insinuation did not weigh heavily on the negro’s spirit, for he soon began to eat with the appetite of a healthy alligator.

While he was thus engaged, he chanced to raise his eyes towards the south-western horizon, and there saw something which caused him to splutter, for his mouth was too full to speak, but his speaking eyes and pointing finger caused his companions to turn their faces quickly to the quarter indicated.

“A steamer!” exclaimed the hermit and Nigel in the same breath.

The vessel in question was coming straight towards them, and a very short time enabled Van der Kemp to recognise with satisfaction the steamer owned by his friend.

“Look here, run that to the mast-head,” said Van der Kemp, handing a red flag to Nigel. “We lie so low in the water that they might pass quite close without observing us if we showed no signal.”

An immediate, though slight, change in the course of the steamer showed that the signal had been seen. Hereupon the hermit and Moses performed an operation on the canoe which still farther aroused Nigel’s surprise and curiosity. He resolved to ask no questions, however, but to await the issue of events.

From the marvellous hold of the canoe, which seemed to be a magazine for the supply of every human need, Moses drew a short but strong rope or cable, with a ring in the middle of it, and a hook at each end. He passed one end along to his master who hooked it to the bridle-rope at the bow before referred to. The other end was hooked to the bridle in the stern, so that the ring in the centre came close to Nigel’s elbow.

This arrangement had barely been completed when the steamer was within hail, but no hail was given, for the captain knew what was expected of him. He reduced speed as the vessel approached the canoe, and finally came almost to a stop as he ranged alongside.

“What cheer, Van der Kemp? D’ye want a lift to-day?” shouted the skipper, looking over the side.

A nod and a wave of the hand was the hermit’s reply.

“Heave a rope, boys—bow and stern—and lower away the tackle,” was the skipper’s order.

A coil was flung to Van der Kemp, who deftly caught it and held on tight. Another was flung to Moses, who also caught it and held on—slack. At the same moment, Nigel saw a large block with a hook attached descending towards his head.

“Catch it, Nigel, and hook it to the ring at your elbow,” said the hermit.

Our hero obeyed, still in surprise, though a glimmer of what was to follow began to dawn.

“Haul away!” shouted the skipper, and next moment the canoe was swinging in the air, kept in position by the lines in the hands of Van der Kemp and Moses. At the same time another order was given, and the steamer went ahead full speed.

It was all so suddenly done, and seemed such a reckless proceeding, that Nigel found himself on the steamer’s deck, with the canoe reposing beside him, before he had recovered from his surprise sufficiently to acknowledge in suitable terms the welcome greeting of the hospitable skipper.

“You see, Nigel,” said Van der Kemp that night, as the two friends paced the deck together after supper, “I have other means, besides paddles and sails, of getting quickly about in the Java seas. Many of the traders and skippers here know me, and give me a lift in this way when I require it.”

“Very kind of them, and very convenient,” returned Nigel. He felt inclined to add: “But why all this moving about?” for it was quite evident that trade was not the hermit’s object, but the question, as usual, died on his lips, and he somewhat suddenly changed the subject.

“D’ye know, Van der Kemp, that I feel as if I must have seen you somewhere or other before now, for your features seem strangely familiar to me. Have you ever been in England?”

“Never. As I have told you, I was born in Java, and was educated in Hong Kong at an English School. But a fancy of this sort is not very uncommon. I myself once met a perfect stranger who bore so strong a resemblance to an old friend, that I spoke to him as such, and only found out from his voice that I was mistaken.”

The captain of the steamer came on deck at that moment and cut short the conversation.

“Are you engaged, Van der Kemp?” he asked.

“No—I am at your service.”

“Come below then, I want to have a talk with you.”

Thus left alone, and overhearing a loud burst of laughter at the fore part of the steamer, Nigel went forward to see what was going on. He found a group of sailors round his comrade Moses, apparently engaged in good-natured “chaff.”

“Come, now, blackey,” said one; “be a good fellow for once in your life an’ tell us what makes your master live on a desert island like Robinson Crusoe, an’ go about the ocean in a canoe.”

“Look ’ere now, whitey,” returned Moses, “what you take me for?”

“A nigger, of course.”

“Ob course, an’ you’re right for once, which is such an unusual t’ing dat I ’dvise you go an’ ax de cappen to make a note ob it in de log. I’s a nigger, an a nigger’s so much more ’cute dan a white man dat you shouldn’t ought to expect him to blab his massa’s secrets.”

“Right you are, Moses. Come, then, if you won’t reveal secrets, give us a song.”

“Couldn’t t’ink ob such a t’ing,” said the negro, with a solemn, remonstrant shake of the head.

“Why not?”

“’Cause I neber sing a song widout a moral, an’ I don’t like to hurt your feelin’s by singin’ a moral dat would be sure to waken up *some* o’ your consciences.”

“Never mind that, darkey. Our consciences are pretty tough. Heave ahead.”

“But dere’s a chorus,” said Moses, looking round doubtfully.

“What o’ that? We’ll do our best with it—if it ain’t too difficult.”

“Oh, it’s not diffikilt, but if de lazy fellers among you sings de chorus dey’ll be singin’ lies, an’ I don’t ’zackly like to help men to tell lies. Howseber, here goes. It begins wid de chorus so’s you may know it afore you has to sing it.”

So saying, Moses struck two fingers on the capstan after the manner of a tuning-fork, and, holding them gravely to his ear as if to get the right pitch, began in a really fine manly voice to chant the following ditty:—

“Go to Work.”

Oh when de sun am shinin’ bright, and eberyt’ing am fair,
Clap on de steam an’ go to work, an’ take your proper share.
De wurld hab got to go ahead, an’ dem what’s young and strong
Mus’ do deir best, wid all de rest, to roll
de wurld along.

De lazy man does all he can to stop its whirlin’ round.
If he was king he’d loaf an’ sing—and guzzle, I’ll be bound,
He always shirk de hardest work, an’ t’ink he’s awful clebbar,
But boder his head to earn his bread, Oh! no, he’ll nebber, nebber.
Chorus—Oh when de sun, etcetera.

De selfish man would rader dan put out his hand to work,
Let women toil, an’ sweat and moil—as wicked as de Turk.
De cream ob eberyt’ing he wants, let oders hab de skim;
In fact de wurld and all it holds was only made for him.
Chorus—Oh when de sun, etcetera.

So keep de ball a-rollin’, boys, an’ each one do his best
To make de wurld a happy one—for dat’s how man is blest.
Do unto oders all around de t’ing what’s good and true,
An’ oders, ’turning tit for tat, will do do same to you.
Chorus—Oh when de sun, etcetera.

The sailors, who were evidently much pleased, took up the chorus moderately at the second verse, came out strong at the third, and sang with such genuine fervour at the last that it was quite evident, as Moses remarked, there was not a lazy man amongst them—at least, if they all sang conscientiously!

The weather improved every hour, and after a fine run of about twenty-four hours over that part of the Malay Sea, our three voyagers were lowered over the steamer’s side in their canoe when within sight of the great island of Borneo.

“I’m sorry,” said the captain at parting, “that our courses diverge here, for I would gladly have had your company a little longer. Good-bye. I hope we’ll come across you some other time when I’m in these parts.”

“Thanks—thanks, my friend,” replied Van der Kemp, with a warm grip of the hand, and a touch of pathos in his tones. “I trust that we shall meet again. You have done me good service by shortening my voyage considerably.—Farewell.”

“I say, Moses,” shouted one of the seamen, as he looked down on the tiny canoe while they were pushing off.

“Hallo?”

“Keep your heart up, for—we’ll try to ‘do to oders all around de t’ing what’s good an’ true!’”

“Das de way, boy—‘an’ oders, ’turning tit for tat, will do de same to you!’”

He yelled rather than sang this at the top of his tuneful voice, and waved his hand as the sharp craft shot away over the sea.

Fortunately the sea was calm, for it was growing dark when they reached the shores of Borneo and entered the mouth of a small stream, up which they proceeded to paddle. The banks of the stream were clothed with mangrove trees. We have said the banks, but in truth the mouth of that river had no distinguishable banks at all, for it is the nature of the mangrove to grow in the water—using its roots as legs with which, as it were, to wade away from shore. When darkness fell suddenly on the landscape, as it is prone to do in tropical regions, the gnarled roots of those mangroves assumed the appearance of twining snakes in Nigel’s eyes. Possessing a strongly imaginative mind he could with difficulty resist the belief that he saw them moving slimily about in the black water, and, in the dim mysterious light, tree-stems and other objects assumed the appearance of hideous living forms, so that he was enabled to indulge the uncomfortable fancy that they were traversing some terrestrial Styx into one of Dante’s regions of horror.

In some respects this was not altogether a fancy, for they were unwittingly drawing near to a band of human beings whose purposes, if fully carried out, would render the earth little better than a hell to many of their countrymen.

It is pretty well-known that there is a class of men in Borneo called Head Hunters. These men hold the extraordinary and gruesome opinion that a youth has not attained to respectable manhood until he has taken the life of some human being.

There are two distinct classes of Dyaks—those who inhabit the hills and those who dwell on the sea-coast. It is the latter who recruit the ranks of the pirates of those eastern seas, and it was to the camp of a band of such villains that our adventurers were, as already said, unwittingly drawing near.

They came upon them at a bend of the dark river beyond which point the mangroves gave place to other trees—but what sort of trees they were it was scarcely light enough to make out very distinctly, except in the case of the particular tree in front of which the Dyaks were encamped, the roots of which were strongly illuminated by their camp fire. We say *roots* advisedly, for this singular and gigantic tree started its branches from a complexity of aerial roots which themselves formed a pyramid some sixty feet high, before the branches proper of the tree began.

If our voyagers had used oars the sharp ears of the pirates would have instantly detected them.

As it was, the softly moving paddles and the sharp cutwater of the canoe made no noise whatever. The instant that Van der Kemp, from his position in the bow, observed the camp, he dipped his paddle deep, and noiselessly backed water. There was no need to give any signal to his servant. Such a thorough understanding existed between them that the mere action of the hermit was sufficient to induce the negro to support him by a similar movement on the opposite side, and the canoe glided as quickly backward as it had previously advanced. When under the deep shadow of the bank Moses thrust the canoe close in, and his master, laying hold of the bushes, held fast and made a sign to him to land and reconnoitre.

Creeping forward to an opening in the bushes close at hand, Moses peeped through. Then he turned and made facial signals of a kind so complicated that he could not be understood, as nothing was visible save the flashing of his teeth and eyes. Van der Kemp therefore recalled him by a sign, and, stepping ashore, whispered Nigel to land.

Another minute and the three travellers stood on the bank with their heads close together.

“Wait here for me,” said the hermit, in the lowest possible whisper. “I will go and see who they are.”

“Strange,” said Nigel, when he was gone; “strange that in so short a time your master should twice have to stalk strangers in this way. History repeats itself, they say. It appears to do so rather fast in these regions! Does he not run a very great risk of being discovered?”

“Not de smallest,” replied the negro, with as much emphasis as was possible in a whisper. “Massa hab ride wid de Vaquieros ob Ameriky an’ hunt wid de Injuns on de Rockies. No more fear ob deir ketchin’ him dan ob ketchin’ a streak o’ lightnin’. He come back bery soon wid all de news.”

Moses was a true prophet. Within half-an-hour Van der Kemp returned as noiselessly as he had gone. He did not keep them long in uncertainty.

“I have heard enough,” he whispered, “to assure me that a plot, of which I had already heard a rumour, has nearly been laid. We fell in with the chief plotters on the islet the other night; the band here is in connection with them and awaits their arrival before carrying out their dark designs. There is nothing very mysterious about it. One tribe plotting to attack another—that is all; but as a friend of mine dwells just now with the tribe to be secretly attacked, it behoves me to do what I can to save him. I am perplexed, however. It would seem sometimes as if we were left in perplexity for wise purposes which are beyond our knowledge.”

“Perhaps to test our willingness to *do right*,” suggested Nigel.

“I know not,” returned the hermit, as if musing, but never raising his voice above the softest whisper. “My difficulty

lies here; I *must* go forward to save the life of my friend. I must *not* leave you at the mouth of a mangrove river to die or be captured by pirates, and yet I have no right to ask you to risk your life on my account!"

"You may dismiss your perplexities then," said Nigel, promptly, "for I decline to be left to die here or to be caught by pirates, and I am particularly anxious to assist you in rescuing your friend. Besides, am I not your hired servant?"

"The risk we run is only at the beginning," said Van der Kemp. "If we succeed in passing the Dyaks unseen all will be well. If they see us, they will give chase, and our lives, under God, will depend on the strength of our arms, for I am known to them and have thwarted their plans before now. If they catch us, death will be our certain doom. Are you prepared?"

"Ready!" whispered Nigel.

Without another word the hermit took his place in the bow of the canoe. Moses stepped into the stern, and our hero sat down in the middle.

Before pushing off, the hermit drew a revolver and a cutlass from his store-room in the bow and handed them to Nigel, who thrust the first into his belt and fastened the other to the deck by means of a strap fixed there on purpose to prevent its being rolled or swept off. This contrivance, as well as all the other appliances in the canoe, had previously been pointed out and explained to him. The hermit and negro having armed themselves in similar way, let go the bushes which held them close to the bank and floated out into the stream. They let the canoe drift down a short way so as to be well concealed by the bend in the river and a mass of bushes. Then they slowly paddled over to the opposite side, and commenced to creep up as close to the bank as possible, under the deep shadow of overhanging trees, and so noiselessly that they appeared in the darkness like a passing phantom.

But the sharp eyes of the pirates were too much accustomed to phantoms of every kind to be easily deceived. Just as the canoe was about to pass beyond the line of their vision a stir was heard in their camp. Then a stern challenge rolled across the river and awoke the slumbering echoes of the forest—perchance to the surprise and scaring away of some prowling beast of prey.

"No need for concealment now," said Van der Kemp, quietly; "we must paddle for life. If you have occasion to use your weapons, Nigel, take no life needlessly. Moses knows my mind on this point and needs no warning. Any fool can take away life. Only God can give it."

"I will be careful," replied Nigel, as he dipped his paddle with all the muscular power at his command. His comrades did the same, and the canoe shot up the river like an arrow.

A yell from the Dyaks, and the noise of jumping into and pushing off their boats told that there was no time to lose.

"They are strong men, and plenty of them to relieve each other," said the hermit, who now spoke in his ordinary tones, "so they have some chance of overhauling us in the smooth water; but a few miles further up there is a rapid which will stop them and will only check us. If we can reach it we shall be safe."

While he was speaking every muscle in his broad back and arms was strained to the uttermost; so also were the muscles of his companions, and the canoe seemed to advance by a series of rapid leaps and bounds. Yet the sound of the pursuers' oars seemed to increase, and soon the proverb "it is the pace that kills" received illustration, for the speed of the canoe began to decrease a little—very little at first—while the pursuers, with fresh hands at the oars, gradually overhauled the fugitives.

"Put on a spurt!" said the hermit, setting the example.

The pirates heard the words and understood either them or the action that followed, for they also "put on a spurt," and encouraged each other with a cheer.

Moses heard the cheer, and at the same time heard the sound of the rapid to which they were by that time drawing near. He glanced over his shoulder and could make out the dim form of the leading boat, with a tall figure standing up in the bow, not thirty yards behind.

"Shall we manage it, Moses?" asked Van der Kemp, in that calm steady voice which seemed to be unchangeable either by anxiety or peril.

"No, massa. Unpossable—widout *dis*."

The negro drew the revolver from his belt, slewed round, took rapid aim and fired.

The tall figure in the bow of the boat fell back with a crash and a hideous yell. Great shouting and confusion followed, and the boat dropped behind. A few minutes later and the canoe was leaping over the surges of a shallow rapid. They dashed from eddy to eddy, taking advantage of every stone that formed a tail of backwater below it, and gradually worked the light craft upward in a way that the hermit and his man had learned in the nor'-western rivers of America.

"We are not safe yet," said the former, resting and wiping his brow as they floated for a few seconds in a calm basin at the head of the rapid.

"Surely they cannot take a boat up such a place as that!"

"Nay, but they can follow up the banks on foot. However, we will soon baffle them, for the river winds like a serpent just above this, and by carrying our canoe across one, two, or three spits of land we will gain a distance in an hour or so that would cost them nearly a day to ascend in boats. They know that, and will certainly give up the chase. I think

they have given it up already, but it is well to make sure."

"I wonder why they did not fire at us," remarked Nigel.

"Probably because they felt sure of catching us," returned the hermit, "and when they recovered from the confusion that Moses threw them into we were lost to them in darkness, besides being pretty well beyond range. I hope, Moses, that you aimed low."

"Yes, massa—but it's sca'cely fair when life an' def am in de balance to expect me to hit 'im on de legs on a dark night. Legs is a bad targit. Bullet's apt to pass between 'em. Howseber, dat feller won't hop much for some time to come!"

A couple of hours later, having carried the canoe and baggage across the spits of land above referred to, and thus put at least half-a-day's journey between themselves and their foes, they came to a halt for the night.

"It won't be easy to find a suitable place to camp on," remarked Nigel, glancing at the bank, where the bushes grew so thick that they overhung the water, brushing the faces of our travellers and rendering the darkness so intense that they had literally to feel their way as they glided along.

"We will encamp where we are," returned the hermit. "I'll make fast to a bush and you may get out the victuals, Moses."

"Das de bery best word you've said dis day, massa," remarked the negro with a profound sigh. "I's pritty well tired now, an' de bery t'ought ob grub comforts me!"

"Do you mean that we shall sleep in the canoe?" asked Nigel.

"Ay, why not?" returned the hermit, who could be heard, though not seen, busying himself with the contents of the fore locker. "You'll find the canoe a pretty fair bed. You have only to slip down and pull your head and shoulders through the manhole and go to sleep. You won't want blankets in this weather, and, see—there is a pillow for you and another for Moses."

"I cannot *see*, but I can feel," said Nigel, with a soft laugh, as he passed the pillow aft.

"T'ank ee, Nadgel," said Moses; "here—feel behind you an' you'll find grub for yourself an' some to pass forid to massa. Mind when you slip down for go to sleep dat you don't dig your heels into massa's skull. Dere's no bulkhead to purtect it."

"I'll be careful," said Nigel, beginning his invisible supper with keen appetite. "But how about *my* skull, Moses? Is there a bulkhead between it and *your* heels?"

"No, but you don't need to mind, for I allers sleeps doubled up, wid my knees agin my chin. It makes de arms an' legs feel more sociable like."

With this remark Moses ceased to encourage conversation—his mouth being otherwise engaged.

Thereafter they slipped down into their respective places, laid their heads on their pillows and fell instantly into sound repose, while the dark waters flowed sluggishly past, and the only sound that disturbed the universal stillness was the occasional cry of some creature of the night or the flap of an alligator's tail.

Chapter Fourteen.

A New Friend found—New Dangers encountered and New Hopes Delayed.

When grey dawn began to dispel the gloom of night, Nigel Roy awoke with an uncomfortable sensation of having been buried alive. Stretching himself as was his wont he inadvertently touched the head of Van der Kemp, an exclamation from whom aroused Moses, who, uncoiling himself, awoke Spinkie. It was usually the privilege of that affectionate creature to nestle in the negro's bosom.

With the alacrity peculiar to his race, Spinkie sprang through the manhole and sat down in his particular place to superintend, perhaps to admire, the work of his human friends, whose dishevelled heads emerged simultaneously from their respective burrows.

Dawn is a period of the day when the spirit of man is calmly reflective. Speech seemed distasteful that morning, and as each knew what had to be done, it was needless. The silently conducted operations of the men appeared to arouse fellow-feeling in the monkey, for its careworn countenance became more and more expressive as it gazed earnestly and alternately into the faces of its comrades. To all appearance it seemed about to speak—but it didn't.

Pushing out from the shore they paddled swiftly up stream, and soon put such a distance between them and their late pursuers that all risk of being overtaken was at an end.

All day they advanced inland without rest, save at the breakfast hour, and again at mid-day to dine. Towards evening they observed that the country through which they were passing had changed much in character and aspect. The low and swampy region had given place to hillocks and undulating ground, all covered with the beautiful virgin forest with its palms and creepers and noble fruit-trees and rich vegetation, conspicuous among which magnificent ferns of many kinds covered the steep banks of the stream.

On rounding a point of the river the travellers came suddenly upon an interesting group, in the midst of a most beautiful woodland scene. Under the trees on a flat spot by the river-bank were seated round a fire a man and a boy and a monkey. The monkey was a tame orang-utan, youthful but large. The boy was a Dyak in light cotton drawers, with the upper part of his body naked, brass rings on his arms, heavy ornaments in his ears, and a bright kerchief worn as a turban on his head. The man was a sort of nondescript in a semi-European shooting garb, with a wide-brimmed sombrero on his head, black hair, a deeply tanned face, a snub nose, huge beard and moustache, and immense blue spectacles.

Something not unlike a cheer burst from the usually undemonstrative Van der Kemp on coming in sight of the party, and he waved his hand as if in recognition. The nondescript replied by starting to his feet, throwing up both arms and giving vent to an absolute roar of joy.

“He seems to know you,” remarked Nigel, as they made for a landing-place.

“Yes. He is the friend I have come to rescue,” replied the hermit in a tone of quiet satisfaction. “He is a naturalist and lives with the Rajah against whom the pirates are plotting.”

“He don’t look z’if he needs much rescuin’,” remarked Moses with a chuckle, as they drew to land.

The man looked in truth as if he were well able to take care of himself in most circumstances, being of colossal bulk although somewhat short of limb.

“Ah! mein frond! mine brodder!” he exclaimed, in fairly idiomatic English, but with a broken pronunciation that was a mixture of Dutch, American, and Malay. His language therefore, like himself, was nondescript. In fact he was an American-born Dutchman, who had been transported early in life to the Straits Settlements, had received most of his education in Hong Kong, was an old school-fellow of Van der Kemp, became an enthusiastic naturalist, and, being possessed of independent means, spent most of his time in wandering about the various islands of the archipelago, making extensive collections of animal and vegetable specimens, which he distributed with liberal hand to whatever museums at home or abroad seemed most to need or desire them. Owing to his tastes and habits he had been dubbed Professor by his friends.

“Ach! Van der Kemp,” he exclaimed, while his coal-black eyes glittered as they shook hands, “*vat* a bootterfly I saw to-day! It beat all creation! The vay it flew—oh! But, excuse me—v’ere did you come from, and vy do you come? An’ who is your frond?”

He turned to Nigel as he spoke, and doffed his sombrero with a gracious bow.

“An Englishman—Nigel Roy—who has joined me for a few months,” said the hermit. “Let me introduce you, Nigel, to my good friend, Professor Verkimier.”

Nigel held out his hand and gave the naturalist’s a shake so hearty, that a true friendship was begun on the spot—a friendship which was rapidly strengthened when the professor discovered that the English youth had a strong leaning towards his own favourite studies.

“Ve vill hont an’ shot togezzer, mine frond,” he said, on making this discovery, “ant I vill show you v’ere de best bootterflies are to be fount—Oh! sooch a von as I saw to—but, excuse me, Van der Kemp. Vy you come here joost now?”

“To save *you*,” said the hermit, with a scintillation of his half-pitiful smile.

“To safe *me*!” exclaimed Verkimier, with a look of surprise which was greatly intensified by the rotundity of the blue spectacles. “Vell, I don’t feel to vant safing joost at present.”

“It is not that danger threatens *you* so much as your friend the Rajah,” returned the hermit. “But if he falls, all under his protection fall along with him. I happen to have heard of a conspiracy against him, on so large a scale that certain destruction would follow if he were taken by surprise, so I have come on in advance of the conspirators to warn him in time. You know I have received much kindness from the Rajah, so I could do no less than warn him of impending danger, and then the fact that you were with him made me doubly anxious to reach you in time.”

While the hermit was saying this, the naturalist removed his blue glasses, and slowly wiped them with a corner of his coat-tails. Replacing them, he gazed intently into the grave countenance of his friend till he had finished speaking.

“Are zee raskils near?” he asked, sternly.

“No. We have come on many days ahead of them. But we found a party at the river’s mouth awaiting their arrival.”

“Ant zey cannot arrife, you say, for several veeks?”

“Probably not—even though they had fair and steady winds.”

A sigh of satisfaction broke through the naturalist’s moustache on hearing this.

“Zen I vill—*ve* vill, you and I, Mister Roy,—go after ze bootterflies to-morrow!”

“But we must push on,” remonstrated Van der Kemp, “for preparations to resist an attack cannot be commenced too soon.”

“*You* may push on, mine frond; go ahead if you vill, but I vill not leave zee bootterflies. You know vell zat I vill die—if

need be—for zee Rajah. Ve must all die vonce, at least, and I should like to die—if I must die—in a goot cause. What cause better zan frondship? But you say joost now zere is no dancher. Vell, I vill go ant see zee bootterflies to-morrow. After zat, I will go ant die—if it must be—with zee!"

"I heartily applaud your sentiment," said Nigel, with a laugh, as he helped himself to some of the food which the Dyak youth and Moses had prepared, "and if Van der Kemp will give me leave of absence I will gladly keep you company."

"Zank you. Pass round zee victuals. My appetite is strong. It always vas more or less strong. Vat say you, Van der Kemp?"

"I have no objection. Moses and I can easily take the canoe up the river. There are no rapids, and it is not far to the Rajah's village; so you are welcome to go, Nigel."

"Das de most 'straord'nary craze I eber know'd men inflicted wid!" said Moses that night, as he sat smoking his pipe beside the Dyak boy. "It passes my compr'ension what fun dey find runnin' like child'n arter butterflies, an' beetles, an' sitch like varmint. My massa am de wisest man on eart', yet *he* go a little wild dat way too—sometimes!"

Moses looked at the Dyak boy with a puzzled expression, but as the Dyak boy did not understand English, he looked intently at the fire, and said nothing.

Next morning Nigel entered the forest under the guidance of Verkimier and the Dyak youth, and the orang-utan, which followed like a dog, and sometimes even took hold of its master's arm and walked with him as if it had been a very small human being. It was a new experience to Nigel to walk in the sombre shade beneath the tangled arches of the wilderness. In some respects it differed entirely from his expectations, and in others it surpassed them. The gloom was deeper than he had pictured it, but the shade was not displeasing in a land so close to the equator. Then the trees were much taller than he had been led to suppose, and the creeping plants more numerous, while, to his surprise, the wild-flowers were comparatively few and small. But the scarcity of these was somewhat compensated by the rich and brilliant colouring of the foliage.

The abundance and variety of the ferns also struck the youth particularly.

"Ah! zey are magnificent!" exclaimed Verkimier with enthusiasm. "Look at zat tree-fern. You have not'ing like zat in England—eh! I have found nearly von hoondred specimens of ferns. Zen, look at zee fruit-trees. Ve have here, you see, zee Lansat, Mangosteen, Rambutan, Jack, Jambon, Blimbing ant many ozers—but zee queen of fruits is zee Durian. Have you tasted zee Durian?"

"No, not yet."

"Ha! a new sensation is before you! Stay, you vill eat von by ant by. Look, zat is a Durian tree before you."

He pointed as he spoke to a large and lofty tree, which Mr A.R. Wallace, the celebrated naturalist and traveller, describes as resembling an elm in general character but with a more smooth and scaly bark. The fruit is round, or slightly oval, about the size of a man's head, of a green colour, and covered all over with short spines which are very strong and so sharp that it is difficult to lift the fruit from the ground. Only the experienced and expert can cut the tough outer rind. There are five faint lines extending from the base to the apex of the fruit, through which it may be divided with a heavy knife and a strong hand, so as to get to the delicious creamy pulp inside.

There is something paradoxical in the descriptions of this fruit by various writers, but all agree that it is inexpressibly good! Says one—writing of the sixteenth century—"It is of such an excellent taste that it surpasses in flavour all the other fruits of the world." Another writes: "This fruit is of a hot and humid nature. To those not used to it, it seems at first to smell like rotten onions! but immediately they have tasted it they prefer it to all other food." Wallace himself says of it: "When brought into the house, the smell is so offensive that some persons can never bear to taste it. This was my own case in Malacca, but in Borneo I found a ripe fruit on the ground, and, eating it out of doors, I at once became a confirmed Durian-eater!"

This was exactly the experience of Nigel Roy that day, and the way in which the fruit came to him was also an experience, but of a very different sort. It happened just as they were looking about for a suitable spot on which to rest and eat their mid-day meal. Verkimier was in front with the orang-utan reaching up to his arm and hobbling affectionately by his side—for there was a strong mutual affection between them. The Dyak youth brought up the rear, with a sort of game-bag on his shoulders.

Suddenly Nigel felt something graze his arm, and heard a heavy thud at his side. It was a ripe Durian which had fallen from an immense height and missed him by a hairbreadth.

"Zank Got, you have escaped!" exclaimed the professor, looking back with a solemn countenance.

"I have indeed escaped what might have been a severe blow," said Nigel, stooping to examine the fruit, apparently forgetful that more might follow.

"Come—come avay. My boy vill bring it. Men are sometimes killed by zis fruit. Here now ve vill dine."

They sat down on a bank which was canopied by ferns. While the boy was arranging their meal, Verkimier drew a heavy hunting-knife from his belt and, applying it with an unusually strong hand to the Durian, laid it open. Nigel did not at all relish the smell, but he was not fastidious or apt to be prejudiced. He tasted—and, like Mr Wallace, "became a confirmed Durian-eater" from that day.

"Ve draw near to zee region vere ve shall find zee bootterflies," said the naturalist, during a pause in their luncheon.

“I hope we shall be successful,” said Nigel, helping himself to some more of what may be styled Durian cream. “To judge from the weight and hardness of this fruit, I should think a blow on one’s head from it would be fatal.”

“Sometimes, not always. I suppose zat Dyak skulls are strong. But zee wound is terrible, for zee spikes tear zee flesh dreadfully. Zee Dyak chief, Rajah, with whom I dwell joost now, was floored once by one, and he expected to die—but he did not. He is alife ant vell, as you shall see.”

As he spoke a large butterfly fluttered across the scene of their festivities. With all the energy of his enthusiastic spirit and strong muscular frame the naturalist leaped up, overturned his dinner, rushed after the coveted specimen, tripped over a root, and measured his length on the ground.

“Zat comes of too much horry!” he remarked, as he picked up his glasses and returned, humbly, to continue his dinner. “Mine frond, learn a lesson from a foolish man!”

“I shall learn two lessons,” said Nigel, laughing—“first, to avoid your too eager haste, and, second, to copy, if I can, your admirable enthusiasm.”

“You are very goot. Some more cheekin’ if you please. Zanks. Ve most make haste viz our meal ant go to vork.”

The grandeur and novelty of the scenery through which they passed when they did go to work was a source of constant delight and surprise to our hero, whose inherent tendency to take note of and admire the wonderful works of God was increased by the unflagging enthusiasm and interesting running commentary of his companion, whose flow of language and eager sympathy formed a striking contrast to the profound silence and gravity of the Dyak youth, as well as to the pathetic and affectionate selfishness of the man-monkey.

It must not, however, be supposed that the young orang-utan was unworthy of his victuals, for, besides being an amusing and harmless companion, he had been trained to use his natural capacity for climbing trees in the service of his master. Thus he ascended the tall Durian trees, when ordered, and sent down some of the fruit in a few minutes—an operation which his human companions could not have accomplished without tedious delay and the construction of an ingenious ladder having slender bamboos for one of its sides, and the tree to be ascended for its other side, with splinters of bamboo driven into it by way of rounds.

“Zat is zee pitcher-plant,” said Verkimier, as Nigel stopped suddenly before a plant which he had often read of but never seen. He was told by his friend that pitcher-plants were very numerous in that region; that every mountain-top abounded with them; that they would be found trailing along the ground and climbing over shrubs and stunted trees, with their elegant pitchers hanging in every direction. Some of these, he said, were long and slender, others broad and short. The plant at which they were looking was a broad green one, variously tinted and mottled with red, and was large enough to hold two quarts of water.

Resuming the march Nigel observed that the group of orchids was abundant, but a large proportion of the species had small inconspicuous flowers. Some, however, had large clusters of yellow flowers which had a very ornamental effect on the sombre forest. But, although the exceptions were striking, he found that in Borneo, as elsewhere, flowers were scarcer than he had expected in an equatorial forest. There were, however, more than enough of striking and surprising things to engage the attention of our hero, and arouse his interest.

One tree they came to which rendered him for some moments absolutely speechless! to the intense delight of the professor, who marched his new-found sympathiser from one object of interest to another with the secret intention of surprising him, and when he had got him to the point of open-mouthed amazement he was wont to turn his spectacles full on his face, like the mouths of a blue binocular, in order to witness and enjoy his emotions!

Nigel found this out at last and was rather embarrassed in consequence.

“Zat,” exclaimed the naturalist, after gazing at his friend for some time in silence, “zat is a tree vitch planted itself in mid-air and zen sent its roots down to zee ground and its branches up to zee sky!”

“It looks as if it had,” returned Nigel; “I have seen a tree of the same kind near the coast. How came it to grow in this way?”

“I know not. It is zought zat zey spring from a seed dropped by a bird into zee fork of anozer tree. Zee seed grows, sends his roots down ant his branches up. Ven his roots reach zee ground he lays hold, ant, ven strong enough, kills his support—zus returning efil for good, like a zankless dependent. Ah! zere is much resemblance between plants and animals! Com’, ve must feed here,” said the professor, resting his gun against one of the roots, “I had expected to find zee bootterflies sooner. It cannot be helped. Let us make zis our banqueting-hall. Ve vill have a Durian to refresh us, ant here is a handy tree which seems to have ripe vones on it.—Go,” he added, turning to the orang-utan, “and send down von or two.”

The creature looked helplessly incapable, pitifully unwilling, scratching its side the while. Evidently it was a lazy monkey.

“Do you hear?” said Verkimier, sternly.

The orang moved uneasily, but still declined to go.

Turning sharply on it, the professor bent down, placed a hand on each of his knees and stared through the blue goggles into the animal’s face.

This was more than it could stand. With a very bad grace it hobbled off to the Durian tree, ascended it with a sort of lazy, lumbering facility, and hurled down some of the fruit without warning those below to look out.

“My little frond is obstinate sometimes,” remarked the naturalist, picking up the fruit, “but ven I bring my glasses to bear on him he always gives in, I never found zem fail. Come now; eat, an’ ve vill go to vork again. Ve must certainly find zee bootterflies somevere before night.”

But Verkimier was wrong. It was his destiny not to find the butterflies that night, or in that region at all, for he and his companion had not quite finished their meal when a Dyak youth came running up to them saying that he had been sent by the Rajah to order their immediate return to the village.

“Alas! ve most go. It is dancherous to disobey zee Rajah—ant I am sorry—very sorry—zat I cannot show you zee bootterflies to-day. No matter.—Go,” (to the Dyak youth), “tell your chief ve vill come. Better lock zee next time!”

Chapter Fifteen.

Hunting the Great Man-Monkey.

Although Professor Verkimier had promised to return at once, he was compelled to encamp in the forest, being overtaken by night before he could reach the river and procure a boat.

Next morning they started at daybreak. The country over which they passed had again changed its character and become more hilly. On the summits of many of the hills Dyak villages could be seen, and rice fields were met with as they went along. Several gullies and rivulets were crossed by means of native bamboo bridges, and the professor explained, as he went along, the immense value of the bamboo to the natives. With it they make their suspension bridges, build their houses, and procure narrow planking for their floors. If they want broader planks they split a large bamboo on one side and flatten it out to a plank of about eighteen inches wide. Portions of hollow bamboo serve as receptacles for milk or water. If a precipice stops a path, the Dyaks will not hesitate to construct a bamboo path along the face of it, using branches of trees wherever convenient from which to hang the path, and every crevice or notch in the rocks to receive the ends of the bamboos by which it is supported.

Honey-bees in Borneo hang their combs, to be out of danger no doubt, under the branches of the Tappan, which towers above all the other trees of the forest. But the Dyaks love honey and value wax as an article of trade; they therefore erect their ingenious bamboo ladder—which can be prolonged to any height on the smooth branchless stem of the Tappan—and storm the stronghold of the bees with much profit to themselves, for bees’-wax will purchase from the traders the brass wire, rings, gold-edged kerchiefs and various ornaments with which they decorate themselves. When travelling, the Dyaks use bamboos as cooking vessels in which to boil rice and other vegetables; as jars in which to preserve honey, sugar, etcetera, or salted fish and fruit. Split bamboos form aqueducts by which water is conveyed to the houses. A small neatly carved piece of bamboo serves as a case in which are carried the materials used in the disgusting practice of betel-nut chewing—which seems to be equivalent to the western tobacco-chewing. If a pipe is wanted the Dyak will in a wonderfully short space of time make a huge hubble-bubble out of bamboos of different sizes, and if his long-bladed knife requires a sheath the same gigantic grass supplies one almost ready-made. But the uses to which this reed may be applied are almost endless, and the great outstanding advantage of it is that it needs no other tools than an axe and a knife to work it.

At about mid-day the river was reached, and they found a native boat, or prahu, which had been sent down to convey them to the Rajah’s village. Here Nigel was received with the hospitality due to a friend of Van der Kemp, who, somehow—probably by unselfish readiness, as well as ability, to oblige—had contrived to make devoted friends in whatever part of the Malay Archipelago he travelled.

Afterwards, in a conversation with Nigel, the professor, referring to those qualities of the hermit which endeared him to men everywhere, said, with a burst of enthusiasm, which almost outdid himself—

“You cannot oonderstant Van der Kemp. No man can oonderstant him. He is goot, right down to zee marrow—kind, amiable, oonselfish, obliging, nevair seems to zink of himself at all, ant, abof all zings, is capable. Vat he vill do, he can do—vat he can do he vill do. But he is sad—very sad.”

“I have observed that, of course,” said Nigel. “Do you know what makes him so sad?”

The professor shook his head.

“No, I do not know. Nobody knows. I have tried to find out, but he vill not speak.”

The Orang-Kaya, or rich man, as this hill chief was styled, had provided lodgings for his visitors in the “head-house.” This was a large circular building erected on poles. There is such a house in nearly all Dyak villages. It serves as a trading-place, a strangers’ room, a sleeping-room for unmarried youths, and a general council-chamber. Here Nigel found the hermit and Moses enjoying a good meal when he arrived, to which he and the professor sat down after paying their respects to the chief.

“The Orang-Kaya hopes that we will stay with him some time and help to defend the village,” said Van der Kemp, when they were all seated.

“Of course you have agreed?” said Nigel.

“Yes; I came for that purpose.”

“We’s allers ready to fight in a good cause,” remarked Moses, just before filling his mouth with rice.

“Or to die in it!” added Verkimier, engulfing the breast of a chicken at a bite. “But as zee pirates are not expected for

some days, ve may as vell go after zee mias—zat is what zee natifs call zee orang-utan. It is a better word, being short."

Moses glanced at the professor out of the corners of his black eyes and seemed greatly tickled by his enthusiastic devotion to business.

"I am also," continued the professor, "extremely anxious to go at zee bootterflies before—"

"You die," suggested Nigel, venturing on a pleasantry, whereat Moses opened his mouth in a soundless laugh, but, observing the professor's goggles levelled at him, he transformed the laugh into an astounding sneeze, and immediately gazed with pouting innocence and interest at his plate.

"Do you always sneeze like zat?" asked Verkimier.

"Not allers," answered the negro simply, "sometimes I gibs way a good deal wuss. Depends on de inside ob my nose an' de state ob de wedder."

What the professor would have replied we cannot say, for just then a Dyak youth rushed in to say that an unusually large and gorgeous butterfly had been seen just outside the village!

No application of fire to gunpowder could have produced a more immediate effect. The professor's rice was scattered on the floor, and himself was outside the head-house before his comrades knew exactly what was the matter.

"He's always like that," said the hermit, with a slight twinkle in his eyes. "Nothing discourages—nothing subdues him. Twice I pulled him out of deadly danger into which he had run in his eager pursuit of specimens. And he has returned the favour to me, for he rescued me once when a mias had got me down and would certainly have killed me, for my gun was empty at the moment, and I had dropped my knife."

"Is, then, the orang-utan so powerful and savage?"

"Truly, yes, when wounded and driven to bay," returned the hermit. "You must not judge of the creature by the baby that Verkimier has tamed. A full-grown male is quite as large as a man, though very small in the legs in proportion, so that it does not stand high. It is also very much stronger than the most powerful man. You would be quite helpless in its grip, I assure you."

"I hope, with the professor," returned Nigel, "that we may have a hunt after them, either before or after the arrival of the pirates. I know he is very anxious to secure a good specimen for some museum in which he is interested—I forget which."

As he spoke, the youth who had brought information about the butterfly returned and said a few words to Moses in his native tongue.

"What does he say?" asked Niger.

"Dat Massa Verkimier is in full chase, an' it's my opinion dat when he comes back he'll be wet all ober, and hab his shins and elbows barked."

"Why d'you think so?"

"'Cause dat's de way he hoed on when we was huntin' wid him last year. He nebber larns fro' 'sperience."

"That's a very fine-looking young fellow," remarked Nigel, referring to the Dyak youth who had just returned, and who, with a number of other natives, was watching the visitors with profound interest while they ate.

As the young man referred to was a good sample of the youth of his tribe, we shall describe him. Though not tall, he was well and strongly proportioned, and his skin was of a reddish-brown colour. Like all his comrades, he wore little clothing. A gay handkerchief with a gold lace border encircled his head, from beneath which flowed a heavy mass of straight, jet-black hair. Large crescent-shaped ornaments hung from his ears. His face was handsome and the expression pleasing, though the mouth was large and the lips rather thick. Numerous brass rings encircled his arms above and below the elbows. His only other piece of costume was a waist-cloth of blue cotton, which hung down before and behind. It ended in three bands of red, blue, and white. There were also rows of brass rings on his legs, and armlets of white shells. At his side he wore a long slender knife and a little pouch containing the materials for betel-chewing.

"Yes, and he is as good as he looks," said the hermit. "His name is Gurulam, and all the people of his tribe have benefited by the presence in Borneo of that celebrated Englishman Sir James Brooke,—Rajah Brooke as he was called,—who did so much to civilise the Dyaks of Borneo and to ameliorate their condition."

The prophecy of Moses about the professor was fulfilled. Just as it was growing dark that genial scientist returned, drenched to the skin and covered with mud, having tumbled into a ditch. His knuckles also were skinned, his knees and shins damaged, and his face scratched, but he was perfectly happy in consequence of having secured a really splendid specimen of a "bootterfly" as big as his hand; the scientific name of which, for very sufficient reasons, we will not attempt to inflict on our readers, and the description of which may be shortly stated by the single word—gorgeous!

Being fond of Verkimier, and knowing his desire to obtain a full-grown orang-utan, Gurulam went off early next morning to search for one. Half-a-dozen of his comrades accompanied him armed only with native spears, for their object was not to hunt the animal, but to discover one if possible, and let the professor know so that he might go

after it with his rifle, for they knew that he was a keen sportsman as well as a man of science.

They did not, indeed, find what they sought for, but they were told by natives with whom they fell in that a number of the animals had been seen among the tree-tops not more than a day's march into the forest. They hurried home therefore with this information, and that day—accompanied by the Dyak youths, Nigel, the hermit, and Moses—Verkimier started off in search of the mias; intending to camp out or to take advantage of a native hut if they should chance to be near one when night overtook them.

Descending the hill region, they soon came to more level ground, where there was a good deal of swamp, through which they passed on Dyak roads. These roads consisted simply of tree-trunks laid end to end, along which the natives, being barefooted, walk with ease and certainty, but our booted hunters were obliged to proceed along them with extreme caution. The only one who came to misfortune was, as usual, the professor; and in the usual way! It occurred at the second of these tree-roads.

"Look, look at that remarkable insect!" exclaimed Nigel, eagerly, in the innocence of his heart. The professor was in front of him; he obediently looked, saw the insect, made an eager step towards it, and next moment was flat on the swamp, while the woods rang with his companions laughter. The remarkable insect, whatever it was, vanished from the scene, and the professor was dragged, smiling though confused, out of the bog. These things affected him little. His soul was large and rose superior to such trifles.

The virgin forest into which they penetrated was of vast extent; spreading over plain, mountain, and morass in every direction for hundreds of miles, for we must remind the reader that the island of Borneo is considerably larger than all the British islands put together, while its inhabitants are comparatively few. Verkimier had been absolutely revelling in this forest for several months—ranging its glades, penetrating its thickets, bathing, (inadvertently), in its quagmires, and maiming himself generally, with unwearied energy and unextinguishable enthusiasm; shooting, skinning, stuffing, preserving, and boiling the bones of all its inhabitants—except the human—to the great advantage of science and the immense interest and astonishment of the natives. Yet with all his energy and perseverance the professor had failed, up to that time, to obtain a large specimen of a male orang-utan, though he had succeeded in shooting several small specimens and females, besides catching the young one which he had tamed.

It was therefore with much excitement that he learned from a party of bees'-wax hunters, on the second morning of their expedition, that a large male mias had been seen that very day. Towards the afternoon they found the spot that had been described to them, and a careful examination began.

"You see," said Verkimier, in a low voice, to Nigel, as he went a step in advance peering up into the trees, with rifle at the "ready" and bending a little as if by that means he better avoided the chance of being seen. "You see, I came to Borneo for zee express purpose of obtaining zee great man-monkey and vatching his habits.—Hush! Do I not hear somet'ing?"

"Nothing but your own voice, I think," said Nigel, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Vell—hush! Keep kviet, all of you."

As the whole party marched in single file after the professor, and were at the moment absolutely silent, this order induced the display of a good many teeth.

Just then the man of science was seen to put his rifle quickly to the shoulder; the arches of the forest rang with a loud report; various horrified creatures were seen and heard to scamper away, and next moment a middle-sized orang-utan came crashing through the branches of a tall tree and fell dead with a heavy thud on the ground.

The professor's rifle was a breech-loader. He therefore lost no time in re-charging, and hurried forward as if he saw other game, while the rest of the party—except Van der Kemp, Nigel, and Gurulam—fell behind to look at and pick up the fallen animal.

"Look out!" whispered Nigel, pointing to a bit of brown hair that he saw among the leaves high overhead.

"Vere? I cannot see him," whispered the naturalist, whose eyes blazed enough almost to melt his blue glasses. "Do *you* fire, Mr Roy?"

"My gun is charged only with small-shot, for birds. It is useless for such game," said Nigel.

"Ach! I see!"

Up went the rifle and again the echoes were startled and the animal kingdom astounded, especially that portion at which the professor had fired, for there was immediately a tremendous commotion among the leaves overhead, and another orang of the largest size was seen to cross an open space and disappear among the thick foliage. Evidently the creature had been hit, but not severely, for it travelled among the tree-tops at the rate of full five miles an hour, obliging the hunters to run at a rapid pace over the rough ground in order to keep up with it. In its passage from tree to tree the animal showed caution and foresight, selecting only those branches that interlaced with other boughs, so that it made uninterrupted progress, and also had a knack of always keeping masses of thick foliage underneath it so that for some time no opportunity was found of firing another shot. At last, however, it came to one of those Dyak roads of which we have made mention, so that it could not easily swing from one tree to another, and the stoppage of rustling among the leaves told that the creature had halted. For some time they gazed up among the branches without seeing anything, but at last, in a place where the leaves seemed to have been thrust aside near the top of one of the highest trees, a great red hairy body was seen, and a huge black face gazed fiercely down at the hunters.

Verkimier fired instantly, the branches closed, and the monster moved off in another direction. In desperate anxiety

Nigel fired both barrels of his shot-gun. He might as well have fired at the moon. Gurulam was armed only with a spear, and Van der Kemp, who was not much of a sportsman, carried a similar weapon. The rest of the party were still out of sight in rear looking after the dead mias.

It was astonishing how little noise was made by so large an animal as it moved along. More than once the hunters had to halt and listen intently for the rustling of the leaves before they could make sure of being on the right track.

At last they caught sight of him again on the top of a very high tree, and the professor got two more shots, but without bringing him down. Then he was seen, quite exposed for a moment, walking in a stooping posture along the large limb of a tree, but the hunter was loading at the time and lost the chance. Finally he got on to a tree whose top was covered with a dense mass of creepers which completely hid him from view. Then he halted and the sound of snapping branches was heard.

“You’ve not much chance of him now,” remarked the hermit, as they all stood in a group gazing up into the tree-top. “I have often seen the mias act thus when severely wounded. He is making a nest to lie down and die in.”

“Zen ve must shoot again,” said the professor, moving round the tree and looking out for a sign of the animal. At last he seemed to have found what he wanted, for raising his rifle he took a steady aim and fired.

A considerable commotion of leaves and fall of broken branches followed. Then the huge red body of the mias appeared falling through, but it was not dead, for it caught hold of branches as it fell and hung on as long as it could; then it came crashing down, and alighted on its face with an awful thud.

After firing the last shot Verkimier had not reloaded, being too intent on watching the dying struggles of the creature, and when it fell with such violence he concluded that it was dead. For the same reason Nigel had neglected to reload after firing. Thus it happened that when the enormous brute suddenly rose and made for a tree with the evident intention of climbing it, no one was prepared to stop it except the Dyak youth Gurulam. He chanced to be standing between the mias and the tree.

Boldly he levelled his spear and made a thrust that would probably have killed the beast, if it had not caught the point of the spear and turned it aside. Then with its left paw it caught the youth by the neck, seized his thigh with one of its hind paws, and fixed its teeth in his right shoulder.

Never was man rendered more suddenly and completely helpless, and death would have been his sure portion before the hunters had reloaded if Van der Kemp had not leaped forward, and, thrusting his spear completely through the animal’s body, killed it on the spot.

Chapter Sixteen.

Begins with a Terrible Fight and ends with a Hasty Flight.

The hunt, we need scarcely say, was abruptly terminated, and immediate preparations were made for conveying the wounded man and the two orangs to the Dyak village. This was quickly arranged, for the convenient bamboo afforded ready-made poles wherewith to form a litter on which to carry them.

The huge creature which had given them so much trouble, and so nearly cost them one human life, was found to be indeed of the largest size. It was not tall but very broad and large. The exact measurements, taken by the professor, who never travelled without his tape-measure, were as follows:—

Height from heel to top of head, 4 feet 2 inches.

Outstretched arms across chest, 7 feet 8 inches.

Width of face, 1 foot 2 inches.

Girth of arm, 1 foot 3 inches.

Girth of wrist, 5 inches.

The muscular power of such a creature is of course immense, as Nigel and the professor had a rare chance of seeing that very evening—of which, more presently.

On careful examination by Nigel, who possessed some knowledge of surgery, it was found that none of Gurulam’s bones had been broken, and that although severely lacerated about the shoulders and right thigh, no very serious injury had been done—thanks to the promptitude and vigour of the hermit’s spear-thrust. The poor youth, however, was utterly helpless for the time being, and had to be carried home.

That afternoon the party reached a village in a remote part of the forest where they resolved to halt for the night, as no other resting-place could be reached before dark.

While a supper of rice and fowl was being cooked by Moses, Van der Kemp attended to the wounded man, and Nigel accompanied the professor along the banks of the stream on which the village stood. Having merely gone out for a stroll they carried no weapons except walking-sticks, intending to go only a short distance. Interesting talk, however, on the character and habits of various animals, made them forget time until the diminution of daylight warned them to turn. They were about to do so when they observed, seated in an open place near the stream, the largest orang they had yet seen. It was feeding on succulent shoots by the waterside: a fact which surprised the professor, for his

inquiries and experience had hitherto taught him that orangs never eat such food except when starving. The fat and vigorous condition in which this animal was, forbade the idea of starvation. Besides, it had brought a Durian fruit to the banks of the stream and thrown it down, so that either taste or eccentricity must have induced it to prefer the shoots. Perhaps its digestion was out of order and it required a tonic.

Anyhow, it continued to devour a good many young shoots while our travellers were peeping at it in mute surprise through the bushes. That they had approached so near without being observed was due to the fact that a brawling rapid flowed just there, and the mias was on the other side of the stream. By mutual consent the men crouched to watch its proceedings. They were not a little concerned, however, when the brute seized an overhanging bough, and, with what we may style sluggish agility, swung itself clumsily but lightly to their side of the stream. It picked up the Durian which lay there and began to devour it. Biting off some of the strong spikes with which that charming fruit is covered, it made a small hole in it, and then with its powerful fingers tore off the thick rind and began to enjoy a feast.

Now, with monkeys, no less than with men, there is many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip, for the mias had just begun its meal, or, rather, its dessert, when a crocodile, which the professor had not observed and Nigel had mistaken for a log, suddenly opened its jaws and seized the big monkey’s leg. The scene that ensued baffles description! Grasping the crocodile with its other three hands by nose, throat, and eyes, the mias almost performed the American operation of gouging—digging its powerful thumbs and fingers into every crevice and tearing open its assailant’s jaws. The crocodile, taken apparently by surprise, went into dire convulsions, and making for deep water, plunged his foe therein over head and ears. Nothing daunted, the mias regained his footing, hauled his victim on to a mudbank, and, jumping on his back began to tear and pommel him. There was nothing of the prize-fighter in the mias. He never clenched his fist—never hit straight from the shoulder, but the buffeting and slapping which he gave resounded all over the place. At last he caught hold of a fold of his opponent’s throat, which he began to tear open with fingers and teeth. Wrenching himself free with a supreme effort the crocodile shot into the stream and disappeared with a sounding splash of its tail, while the mias waded lamely to the shore with an expression of sulky indignation on its great black face.

Slowly the creature betook itself to the shelter of the forest, and we need scarcely add that the excited observers of the combat made no attempt to hinder its retreat.

It is said that the python is the only other creature that dares to attack the orang-utan, and that when it does so victory usually declares for the man-monkey, which bites and tears it to death.

The people of the village in which the hunters rested that night were evidently not accustomed to white men—perhaps had never seen them before—for they crowded round them while at supper and gazed in silent wonder as if they were watching a group of white-faced baboons feeding! They were, however, very hospitable, and placed before their visitors an abundance of their best food without expecting anything in return. Brass rings were the great ornament in this village—as they are, indeed, among the Dyaks generally. Many of the women had their arms completely covered with them, as well as their legs from the ankle to the knee. Their petticoats were fastened to a coil of rattan, stained red, round their bodies. They also wore coils of brass wire, girdles of small silver coins, and sometimes broad belts of brass ring-armour.

It was break of dawn next morning when our hunters started, bearing their wounded comrade and the dead orangs with them.

Arrived at the village they found the people in great excitement preparing for defence, as news had been brought to the effect that the pirates had landed at the mouth of the river, joined the disaffected band which awaited them, and that an attack might be expected without delay, for they were under command of the celebrated Malay pirate Baderoon.

Nigel observed that the countenance of his friend Van der Kemp underwent a peculiar change on hearing this man’s name mentioned. There was a combination of anxiety, which was unnatural to him, and of resolution, which was one of his chief characteristics.

“Is Baderoon the enemy whom you saw on the islet on our first night out?” asked Nigel, during a ramble with the hermit that evening.

“Yes, and I fear to meet him,” replied his friend in a low voice.

Nigel was surprised. The impression made on his mind since their intercourse was that Van der Kemp was incapable of the sensation of fear.

“Is he so very bitter against you?” asked Nigel.

“Very,” was the curt reply.

“Have you reason to think he would take your life if he could?”

“I am sure he would. As I told you before, I have thwarted his plans more than once. When he hears that it is I who have warned the Orang Kaya against him, he will pursue me to the death, and—and I *must not* meet him.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Nigel, with renewed surprise.

But the hermit took no note of the exclamation. Anxiety had given place to a frown, and his eyes were fixed on the ground. It seemed to Nigel so evident that he did not wish to pursue the subject, that he slightly changed it.

“I suppose,” he said, “that there is no fear of the Dyaks of the village being unable to beat off the pirates now that they have been warned?”

“None whatever. Indeed, this is so well-known to Baderoon that I think he will abandon the attempt. But he will not abandon his designs on me. However, we must wait and see how God will order events.”

Next morning spies returned to the village with the information that the pirates had taken their departure from the mouth of the river.

“Do you think this is an attempt to deceive us?” asked the chief, turning to Van der Kemp, when he heard the news.

“I think not. And even should it be so, and they should return, you are ready and well able to meet them.”

“Yes, ready—and *well* able to meet them,” replied the Orang-Kaya, drawing himself up proudly.

“Did they *all* go in one direction?” asked Van der Kemp of the youths who had brought the news.

“Yes, all went in a body to the north—except one boat which rowed southward.”

“Hmm! I thought so. My friends, listen to me. This is no pretence. They do not mean to attack you now you are on your guard; but that boat which went south contains Baderoon, and I feel certain that he means to hang about here till he gets the chance of killing me.”

“That is well,” returned the chief, calmly. “My young men will hunt till they find where he is. Then they will bring us the information and Van der Kemp will go out with a band and slay his enemy.”

“No, my friend,” said the hermit, firmly; “that shall not be. I must get out of his way, and in order to do so will leave you at once, for there will be no further need for my services here.”

The chief looked at his friend in surprise. “Well,” he said, “you have a good judgment, and understand your own affairs. But you have already rendered me good service, and I will help you to fly—though such is not the habit of the Dyaks! There is a trader’s vessel to start for Sumatra by the first light of day. Will my friend go by that?”

“I am grateful,” answered the hermit, “but I need no help—save some provisions, for I have my little canoe, which will suffice.”

As this colloquy was conducted in the native tongue it was unintelligible to Nigel, but after the interview with the chief the hermit explained matters to him, and bade Moses get ready for a start several hours before dawn.

“You see we must do the first part of our trip in the dark, for Baderoon has a keen eye and ear. Then we will land and sleep all day where the sharpest eye will fail to find us—and, luckily, pirates have been denied the power of scenting out their foes. When night comes we will start again and get out of sight of land before the next dawn.”

“Mine frond,” said the professor, turning his moon-like goggles full on the hermit. “I vill go viz you.”

“I should be only too happy to have your company,” returned the hermit, “but my canoe cannot by any contrivance be made to hold more than three.”

“Zat is no matter to me,” rejoined Verkimier; “you forget zee trader’s boat. I vill go in zat to Sumatra. Ve vill find out zee port he is going to, ant you vill meet me zere. Vait for me if I have not arrived—or I vill vait for you. I have longed to visit Sumatra, ant vat better fronds could I go viz zan yourselfs?”

“But, my good friend,” returned the hermit, “my movements may not exactly suit yours. Here they are,—you can judge for yourself. First I will, God permitting, cross over to Sumatra in my canoe.”

“But it is t’ree hoondert miles across, if not more!”

“No matter—there are plenty of islands on the way. Besides, some passing vessel will give me a lift, no doubt. Then I will coast along to one of the eastern ports, where I know there is a steamboat loading up about this time. The captain is an old friend of mine. He brought me and my companions the greater part of the way here. If I find him I will ask him to carry my canoe on his return voyage through Sunda Straits, and leave it with another friend of mine at Telok Betong on the south coast of Sumatra—not far, as you know, from my home in Krakatoa. Then I will proceed overland to the same place, so that my friend Nigel Roy may see a little of the country.”

“Ant vat if you do *not* find your frond zee captain of zee steamer?”

“Why, then I shall have to adopt some other plan. It is the uncertainty of my movements that makes me think you should not depend on them.”

“Zat is not’ing to me, Van der Kemp; you joost go as you say. I vill follow ant take my chance. I am use’ to ooncertainties ant difficoolties. Zey can not influence me.”

After a good deal of consideration this plan was agreed to. The professor spent part of the night in giving directions about the preserving of his specimens, which he meant to leave at the village in charge of a man whom he had trained to assist him, while Van der Kemp with his companions lay down to snatch a little sleep before setting out on their voyage, or, as the Dyak chief persisted in calling it, their flight! When Nigel had slept about five minutes—as he thought—he was awakened by Moses.

“Don’t make a noise, Massa Nadgel! Dere may be spies in de camp for all we knows, so we mus’ git off like mice.

Canoe’s ready an’ massa waitin’; we gib you to de last momint.”

In a few minutes our hero was sleepily following the negro through the woods to the spot where the canoe was in waiting.

The night was very dark. This was in their favour,—at least as regarded discovery.

“But how shall we ever see to make our way down stream?” asked Nigel of the hermit in a whisper on reaching the place of embarkation.

“The current will guide us. Besides, I have studied the river with a view to this flight. Be careful in getting in. Now, Moses, are you ready?”

“All right, massa.”

“Shove off, then.”

There was something so eerie in the subdued tones, and stealthy motions, and profound darkness, that Nigel could not help feeling as if they were proceeding to commit some black and criminal deed!

Floating with the current, with as little noise as possible, and having many a narrow escape of running against points of land and sandbanks, they flew swiftly towards the sea, so that dawn found them among the mud flats and the mangrove swamps. Here they found a spot where mangrove roots and bushes formed an impenetrable screen, behind which they spent the day, chiefly in sleep, and in absolute security.

When darkness set in they again put forth, and cautiously clearing the river’s mouth, were soon far out on the open sea, which was fortunately calm at the time, the slight air that blew being in their favour.

“We are safe from pursuit now,” said Van der Kemp in a tone of satisfaction, as they paused for a breathing spell.

“O massa!” exclaimed Moses at that moment, in a voice of consternation; “we’s forgotten Spinkie!”

“So we have!” returned the hermit in a voice of regret so profound that Nigel could scarce restrain a laugh in spite of his sympathy.

But Spinkie had not forgotten himself. Observing probably, that these night expeditions were a change in his master’s habits, he had kept an unusually watchful eye on the canoe, so that when it was put in the water, he had jumped on board unseen in the darkness, and had retired to the place where he usually slept under hatches when the canoe travelled at night.

Awakened from refreshing sleep at the sound of his name, Spinkie emerged suddenly from the stern-manhole, right under the negro’s nose, and with a sleepy “Oo, oo!” gazed up into his face.

“Ho! Dare you is, you mis’rible hyperkrite!” exclaimed Moses, kissing the animal in the depth of his satisfaction. “He’s here, massa, all right. Now, you go to bed agin, you small bundle ob hair.”

The creature retired obediently to its place, and laying its little cheek on one of its small hands, committed itself to repose.

Van der Kemp was wrong when he said they were safe. A pirate scout had seen the canoe depart. Being alone and distant from the rendezvous of his commander, some time elapsed before the news could be conveyed to him. When Baderoon was at length informed and had sailed out to sea in pursuit, returning daylight showed him that his intended victim had escaped.

Chapter Seventeen.

Tells of the Joys, etcetera, of the Professor in the Sumatran Forests, also of a Catastrophe averted.

Fortunately the weather continued fine at first, and the light wind fair, so that the canoe skimmed swiftly over the wide sea that separates Borneo from Sumatra. Sometimes our travellers proceeded at night when the distance between islets compelled them to do so. At other times they landed on one of these isles when opportunity offered to rest and replenish the water-casks.

We will not follow them step by step in this voyage, which occupied more than a week, and during which they encountered without damage several squalls in which a small open boat could not have lived. Reaching at last the great island of Sumatra—which, like its neighbour Borneo, is larger in extent than the British Islands—they coasted along southwards, without further delay than was absolutely necessary for rest and refreshment, until they reached a port where they found the steamer of which they were in search just about to start on its return voyage. Van der Kemp committed his little craft to the care of the captain, who, after vainly advising his friend to take a free passage with him to the Straits of Sunda, promised to leave the canoe in passing at Telok Betong. We may add that Spinkie was most unwillingly obliged to accompany the canoe.

“Now, we must remain here till our friend Verkimier arrives,” said the hermit, turning to Nigel after they had watched the steamer out of sight.

“I suppose we must,” said Nigel, who did not at all relish the delay—“of course we must,” he added with decision.

“I sees no ‘ob course’ about it, Massa Nadgel,” observed Moses, who never refrained from offering his opinion from motives of humility, or of respect for his employer. “My ’dvice is to go on an’ let de purfesser foller.”

“But I promised to wait for him,” said the hermit, with one of his kindly, half-humorous glances, “and you know I *never* break my promises.”

“Das true, massa, but you di’n’t promise to wait for him for eber an’ eber!”

“Not quite; but of course I meant that I would wait a reasonable time.”

The negro appeared to meditate for some moments on the extent of a “reasonable” time, for his huge eyes became huger as he gazed frowningly at the ground. Then he spoke.

“A ‘reasonable’ time, massa, is such an oncertain time—wariable, so to speak, accordin’ to the mind that t’inks upon it! Hows’eber, if you’s *promised*, ob coorse dat’s an end ob it; for w’en a man promises, he’s bound to stick to it.”

Such devotion to principle was appropriately rewarded the very next day by the arrival of the trading prahu in which the professor had embarked.

“We did not expect you nearly so soon,” said Nigel, as they heartily shook hands.

“It vas because zee vind freshen soon after ve set sail—ant, zen, ve made a straight line for zis port, w’ereas you possibly crossed over, ant zen push down zee coast.”

“Exactly so, and that accounts for your overtaking us,” said the hermit. “Is that the lad Baso I see down there with the crew of the prahu?”

“It is. You must have some strainch power of attracting frondship, Van der Kemp, for zee poor yout’ is so fond of you zat he began to entreat me to take him, ant he says he vill go on vit zee traders if you refuse to let him follow you.”

“Well, he may come. Indeed, we shall be the better for his services, for I had intended to hire a man here to help to carry our things. Much of our journeying, you see, must be done on foot.”

Baso, to his great joy, thus became one of the party.

We pass over the next few days, which were spent in arranging and packing their provisions, etcetera, in such a way that each member of the party should carry on his shoulders a load proportioned to his strength. In this arrangement the professor, much against his will, was compelled to accept the lightest load in consideration of his liability to dart off in pursuit of creeping things and “bootterflies” at a moment’s notice. The least damageable articles were also assigned to him in consideration of his tendency at all times to tumble into bogs and stumble over fallen trees, and lose himself, and otherwise get into difficulties.

We also pass over part of the journey from the coast, and plunge with our travellers at once into the interior of Sumatra.

One evening towards sunset they reached the brow of an eminence which, being rocky, was free from much wood, and permitted of a wide view of the surrounding country. It was covered densely with virgin forest, and they ascended the eminence in order that the hermit, who had been there before, might discover a forest road which led to a village some miles off, where they intended to put up for the night. Having ascertained his exact position, Van der Kemp led his followers down to this footpath, which led through the dense forest.

The trees by which they were surrounded were varied and magnificent—some of them rising clear up seventy and eighty feet without a branch, many of them had superb leafy crowns, under any one of which hundreds of men might have found shelter. Others had trunks and limbs warped and intertwined with a wild entanglement of huge creepers, which hung in festoons and loops as if doing their best to strangle their supports, themselves being also encumbered, or adorned, with ferns and orchids, and delicate twining epiphytes. A forest of smaller trees grew beneath this shade, and still lower down were thorny shrubs, rattan-palms, broad-leaved bushes, and a mass of tropical herbage which would have been absolutely impenetrable but for the native road or footpath along which they travelled.

“A most suitable abode for tigers, I should think,” remarked Nigel to the hermit, who walked in front of him—for they marched in single file. “Are there any in these parts?”

“Ay, plenty. Indeed, it is because I don’t like sleeping in their company that I am so anxious to reach a village.”

“Are zey dangerows?” asked the professor, who followed close on Nigel.

“Well, they are not safe!” replied the hermit. “I had an adventure with one on this very road only two years ago.”

“Indeed! vat vas it?” asked the professor, whose appetite for anecdote was insatiable. “Do tell us about it.”

“With pleasure. It was on a pitch-dark night that it occurred. I had occasion to go to a neighbouring village at a considerable distance, and borrowed a horse from a friend—”

“Anozer frond!” exclaimed the professor; “vy, Van der Kemp, zee country seems to be svarming vid your fronds.”

“I have travelled much in it and made many friends,” returned the hermit. “The horse that I borrowed turned out to be a very poor one, and went lame soon after I set out. Business kept me longer than I expected, and it was getting dark before I started to return. Ere long the darkness became so intense that I could scarcely see beyond the horse’s

head, and could not distinguish the path. I therefore let the animal find his own way—knowing that he would be sure to do so, for he was going home. As we jogged along, I felt the horse tremble. Then he snorted and came to a dead stop, with his feet planted firmly on the ground. I was quite unarmed, but arms would have been useless in the circumstances. Suddenly, and fortunately, the horse reared, and next moment a huge dark object shot close past my face—so close that its fur brushed my cheek—as it went with a heavy thud into the jungle on the other side. I knew that it was a tiger and felt that my life, humanly speaking, was due to the rearing of the poor horse."

"Are ve near to zee spote?" asked the professor, glancing from side to side in some anxiety.

"Not far from it!" replied the hermit, "but there is not much fear of such an attack in broad daylight and with so large a party."

"Ve are not a very large party," returned the professor. "I do not zink I would fear much to face a tiger vid my goot rifle, but I do not relish his choomping on me unavares. Push on, please."

They pushed on and reached the village a little before nightfall.

Hospitality is a characteristic of the natives of Sumatra. The travellers were received with open arms, so to speak, and escorted to the public building which corresponds in some measure to our western town-halls. It was a huge building composed largely of bamboo wooden-planks and wicker-work, with a high thatched roof, and it stood, like all the other houses, on posts formed of great tree-stems which rose eight or ten feet from the ground.

"You have frunds here too, I zink," said Verkimier to the hermit, as they ascended the ladder leading to the door of the hall.

"Well, yes—I believe I have two or three."

There could be no doubt upon that point, unless the natives were consummate hypocrites, for they welcomed Van der Kemp and his party with effusive voice, look and gesture, and immediately spread before them part of a splendid supper which had just been prepared; for they had chanced to arrive on a festive occasion.

"I do believe," said Nigel in some surprise, "that they are lighting up the place with petroleum lamps!"

"Ay, and you will observe that they are lighting the lamps with Congreve matches—at least with matches of the same sort, supplied by the Dutch and Chinese. Many of their old customs have passed away, (among others that of procuring fire by friction), and now we have the appliances of western civilisation to replace them."

"No doubt steam is zee cause of zee change," remarked the professor.

"That," said Nigel, "has a good deal to do with most things—from the singing of a tea-kettle to the explosion of a volcano; though, doubtless, the commercial spirit which is now so strong among men is the proximate cause."

"Surely dese people mus' be reech," said the professor, looking round him with interest.

"They are rich enough—and well off in every respect, save that they don't know very well how to make use of their riches. As you see, much of their wealth is lavished on their women in the shape of ornaments, most of which are of solid gold and silver."

There could be little doubt about that, for, besides the ornaments proper, such as the bracelets and rings with which the arms of the young women were covered, and earrings, etcetera,—all of solid gold and native-made—there were necklaces and collars composed of Spanish and American dollars and British half-crowns and other coins. In short, these Sumatran young girls carried much of the wealth of their parents on their persons, and were entitled to wear it until they should be relegated to the ranks of the married—the supposed-to-be unfrivolous, and the evidently unadorned!

As this was a region full of birds, beasts, and insects of many kinds, it was resolved, for the professor's benefit, that a few days should be spent in it. Accordingly, the village chief set apart a newly-built house for the visitors' accommodation, and a youth named Grogo was appointed to wait on them and act as guide when they wished to traverse any part of the surrounding forest.

The house was on the outskirts of the village, a matter of satisfaction to the professor, as it enabled him at once to plunge into his beloved work unobserved by the youngsters. It also afforded him a better opportunity of collecting moths, etcetera, by the simple method of opening his window at night. A mat or wicker-work screen divided the hut into two apartments, one of which was entirely given over to the naturalist and his *matériel*.

"I vil begin at vonce," said the eager man, on taking possession.

And he kept his word by placing his lamp on a table in a conspicuous position, so that it could be well seen from the outside. Then he threw his window wide open, as a general invitation to the insect world to enter!

Moths, flying beetles, and other creatures were not slow to accept the invitation. They entered by twos, fours, sixes—at last by scores, insomuch that the room became uninhabitable except by the man himself, and his comrades soon retired to their own compartment, leaving him to carry on his work alone.

"You enjoy this sort of thing?" said Nigel, as he was about to retire.

"Enchoy it? yes—it is 'paradise regained!'" He pinned a giant moth at the moment and gazed triumphant through his blue glasses.

"'Paradise lost' to the moth, anyhow," said Nigel with a nod, as he bade him good-night, and carefully closed the wicker door to check the incursions of uncaptured specimens. Being rather tired with the day's journey, he lay down on a mat beside the hermit, who was already sound asleep.

But our hero found that sleep was not easily attainable so close to an inexhaustible enthusiast, whose every step produced a rattling of the bamboo floor, and whose unwearied energy enabled him to hunt during the greater part of the night.

At length slumber descended on Nigel's spirit, and he lay for some time in peaceful oblivion, when a rattling crash awoke him. Sitting up he listened, and came to the conclusion that the professor had upset some piece of furniture, for he could hear him distinctly moving about in a stealthy manner, as if on tip-toe, giving vent to a grumble of dissatisfaction every now and then.

"What *can* he be up to now, I wonder?" murmured the disturbed youth, sleepily.

The hermit, who slept through all noises with infantine simplicity, made no answer, but a peculiar snort from the negro, who lay not far off on his other side, told that he was struggling with a laugh.

"Hallo, Moses! are you awake?" asked Nigel, in a low voice.

"Ho yes, Massa Nadgel. I's bin wakin' a good while, larfin' fit to bu'st my sides. De purfesser's been a-goin' on like a mad renoceros for more'n an hour. He's arter suthin', which he can't ketch. Listen! You hear 'im goin' round an' round on his tip-toes. Dere goes anoder chair. I only hope he won't smash de lamp an' set de house a-fire."

"Vell, vell; I've missed him zee tence time. Nevair mind. Have at you vonce more, you aggravating leetle zing!"

Thus the unsuccessful man relieved his feelings, in a growling tone, as he continued to move about on tip-toe, rattling the bamboo flooring in spite of his careful efforts to move quietly.

"Why, Verkimier, what are you after?" cried Nigel at last, loud enough to be heard through the partition.

"Ah—I am sorry to vake you," he replied, without, however, suspending his hunt. "I have tried my best to make no noice, but zee bamboo floor is—hah! I have 'im at last!"

"What is it?" asked Nigel, becoming interested.

"Von leetle bat. He come in vis a moss—"

"A what?"

"A moss—a big, beautiful moss."

"Oh! a moth—well?"

"Vell, I shut zee window, capture zee moss, ant zen I hunt zee bat with my bootterfly-net for an hour, but have only captured him zis moment. Ant he is—sooch a—sooch a splendid specimen of a *very* rar' species, zee *Caelops frizii*—gootness! Zere goes zee lamp!"

The crash that followed told too eloquently of the catastrophe, and broke the slumbers even of the hermit. The whole party sprang up, and entered the naturalist's room with a light, for the danger from fire was great. Fortunately the lamp had been extinguished in its fall, so that, beyond an overpowering smell of petroleum and the destruction of a good many specimens, no serious results ensued.

After securing the *Caelops frithii*, removing the shattered glass, wiping up the oil, and putting chairs and tables on their legs, the professor was urged to go to bed,—advice which, in his excitement, he refused to take until it was suggested that, if he did not, he would be totally unfit for exploring the forest next day.

"Vy, it is next day already!" he exclaimed, consulting his watch.

"Just so. Now *do* turn in."

"I vill."

And he did.

Chapter Eighteen.

A Trying Ordeal—Danger threatens and Flight again resolved on.

When the early birds are singing, and the early mists are scattering, and the early sun is rising to gladden, as with the smile of God, all things with life in earth and sea and sky—then it is that early-rising man goes forth to reap the blessings which his lazy fellow-man fails to appreciate or enjoy.

Among the early risers that morning was our friend Moses. Gifted with an inquiring mind, the negro had proceeded to gratify his propensities by making inquiries of a general nature, and thus had acquired, among other things, the particular information that the river on the banks of which the village stood was full of fish. Now, Moses was an ardent angler.

“I lub fishing,” he said one day to Nigel when in a confidential mood; “I can’t tell you how much I lub it. Seems to me dat der’s nuffin’ like it for proggin’ a man!”

When Nigel demanded an explanation of what proggin’ meant, Moses said he wasn’t quite sure. He could “understand t’ings easy enough though he couldn’t allers ’splain ’em.” On the whole he thought that prog had a compound meaning—it was a combination of poke and pull “wid a flavour ob ticklin’ about it,” and was rather pleasant.

“You see,” he continued, “when a leetle fish plays wid your hook, it progs your intellec’ an’ tickles up your fancy a leetle. When he grabs you, dat progs your hopes a good deal. When a big fish do de same, dat progs you deeper. An’ when a real walloper almost pulls you into de ribber, dat progs your heart up into your t’roat, where it stick till you land him.”

With surroundings and capacities such as we have attempted to describe, it is no wonder that Moses sat down on the river-bank and enjoyed himself, in company with a little Malay boy, who lent him his bamboo rod and volunteered to show him the pools.

But there were no particular pools in that river. It was a succession of pools, and fish swarmed in all of them. There were at least fifteen different species which nothing short of an ichthyologist could enumerate correctly. The line used by Moses was a single fibre of bark almost as strong as gut; the hook was a white tinned weapon like a small anchor, supplied by traders, and meant originally for service in the deep sea. The bait was nothing in particular, but, as the fish were not particular, that was of no consequence. The reader will not be surprised, then, when we state that in an hour or so Moses had had his heart progged considerably and had filled a large bag with superb fish, with which he returned, perspiring, beaming, and triumphant to breakfast.

After breakfast the whole party went forth for what Verkimier styled “zee business of zee day,” armed with guns, spears, botanical boxes, bags, wallets, and butterfly-nets.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the village large clearings in the forest were planted as coffee gardens, each separated from the other for the purpose of isolation, for it seems that coffee, like the potato, is subject to disease. Being covered with scarlet flowers these gardens had a fine effect on the landscape when seen from the heights behind the village. Passing through the coffee grounds the party was soon in the tangled thickets of underwood through which many narrow paths had been cut.

We do not intend to drag our readers through bog and brake during the whole of this day’s expedition; suffice it to say that the collection of specimens made, of all kinds, far surpassed the professor’s most sanguine expectations, and, as for the others, those who could more or less intelligently sympathise did so, while those who could not were content with the reflected joy of the man of science.

At luncheon—which they partook of on the river-bank, under a magnificently umbrageous tree—plans for the afternoon were fixed.

“We have kept together long enough, I think,” said Van der Kemp. “Those of us who have guns must shoot something to contribute to the national feast on our return.”

“Vell, let us divide,” assented the amiable naturalist. Indeed he was so happy that he would have assented to anything—except giving up the hunt. “Von party can go von vay, anoder can go anoder vay. I vill continue mine business. Zee place is more of a paradise zan zee last. Ve must remain two or tree veeks.”

The hermit glanced at Nigel.

“I fear it is impossible for me to do so,” said the latter. “I am pledged to return to Batavia within a specified time, and from the nature of the country I perceive it will take all the time at my disposal to reach that place so as to redeem my pledge.”

“Ha! Zat is a peety. Vell, nevair mind. Let us enchoy to-day. Com’, ve must not vaste more of it in zee mere gratification of our animal natures.”

Acting on this broad hint they all rose and scattered in different groups—the professor going off ahead of his party in his eager haste, armed only with a butterfly-net.

Now, as the party of natives,—including Baso, who carried the professor’s biggest box, and Grogo, who bore his gun,—did not overtake their leader, they concluded that he must have joined one of the other parties, and, as it was impossible to ascertain which of them, they calmly went hunting on their own account! Thus it came to pass that the man of science was soon lost in the depths of that primeval forest! But little cared the enthusiast for that—or, rather, little did he realise it. With perspiration streaming from every pore—except where the pores were stopped by mud—he dashed after “bootterflies” with the wisdom of Solomon and the eagerness of a school-boy, and not until the shades of evening began to descend did his true position flash upon him. Then, with all the vigour of a powerful intellect and an enlightened mind, he took it in at a glance—and came to a sudden halt.

“Vat *shall* I do?” he asked.

Not even an echo answered, and the animal kingdom was indifferent.

“Lat me see. I have been vandering avay all dis time. Now, I have not’ing to do but right-about-face and vander back.”

Could reasoning be clearer or more conclusive? He acted on it at once, but, after wandering back a long time, he did

not arrive at any place or object that he had recognised on the outward journey.

Meanwhile, as had been appointed, the rest of the party met a short time before dark at the rendezvous where they had lunched.

“Where is the professor, Baso?” asked Van der Kemp as he came up.

Baso did not know, and looked at Grogo, who also professed ignorance, but both said they thought the professor had gone with Nigel.

“I thought he was with *you*,” said the latter, looking anxiously at the hermit.

“He’s hoed an’ lost his-self!” cried Moses with a look of concern.

Van der Kemp was a man of action. “Not a moment to lose,” he said, and organised the band into several smaller parties, each led by a native familiar with the jungle.

“Let this be our meeting-place,” he said, as they were on the point of starting off together; “and let those of us who have fire-arms discharge them occasionally.”

Meanwhile, the professor was walking at full speed in what he supposed to be—and in truth was—“back.”

He was not alone, however. In the jungle close beside him a tiger prowled along with the stealthy, lithe, sneaking activity of a cat. By that time it was not absolutely dark, but the forest had assumed a very sombre appearance. Suddenly the tiger made a tremendous bound on to the track right in front of the man. Whether it had miscalculated the position of its intended victim or not we cannot say, but it crouched for another spring. The professor, almost instinctively, crouched also, and, being a brave man, stared the animal straight in the face without winking! and so the two crouched there, absolutely motionless and with a fixed glare, such as we have often seen in a couple of tom-cats who were mutually afraid to attack each other.

What the tiger thought at that critical and crucial moment we cannot tell, but the professor’s thoughts were swift, varied, tremendous—almost sublime, and once or twice even ridiculous!

“Vat shall I do? Deaf stares me in zee face! No veapons! only a net, ant he is *not* a bootterfly! Science, adieu! Home of my chilthood, farevell! My moder—Hah! zee fusees!”

Such were a few of the thoughts that burned but found no utterance. The last thought however led to action. Verkimier, foolish man! was a smoker. He carried fusees. Slowly, with no more apparent motion than the hour-hand on the face of a watch, he let his hand glide into his coat-pocket and took out the box of fusees. The tiger seemed uneasy, but the bold man never for one instant ceased to glare, and no disturbed expression or hasty movement gave the tiger the slightest excuse for a spring. Bringing the box up by painfully slow degrees in front of his nose the man opened it, took out a fusee, struck it, and revealed the blue binoculars!

The effect on the tiger was instantaneous and astounding. With a demi-volt or backward somersault it hurled itself into the jungle whence it had come with a terrific roar of alarm, and its tail—undoubtedly though not evidently—between its legs!

Heaving a deep, long-drawn sigh, the professor stood up and wiped his forehead. Then he listened intently.

“A shote, if mine ears deceive me not!” he said, and listened again.

He was right. Another shot, much nearer, was heard, and he replied with a shout to which joy as much as strength of lung gave fervour. Hurrying along the track—not without occasional side-glances at the jungle—the hero was soon again in the midst of his friends; and it was not until his eyes refused to remain open any longer that he ceased to entertain an admiring circle that night with the details of his face-to-face meeting with a tiger.

But Verkimier’s anticipations in regard to that paradise were not to be realised. The evil passions of a wicked man, with whom he had personally nothing whatever to do, interfered with his plans. In the middle of the night a native Malay youth named Babu arrived at the village and demanded an interview with the chief. That worthy, after the interview, conducted the youth to the hut where his visitors lived, and, rousing Van der Kemp without disturbing the others, bade him listen to what the young man had to say. An expression of great anxiety overspread the hermit’s usually placid countenance while Babu was speaking.

“It is fate!” he murmured, as if communing with himself—then, after a pause—“no, there is no such thing as fate. It is, it must be, the will of God. Go, young man, mention this to no one. I thank you for the kindness which made you take so long a journey for my sake.”

“It is not kindness, it is love that makes me serve you,” returned the lad earnestly. “Every one loves you, Van der Kemp, because that curse of mankind, *revenge*, has no place in your breast.”

“Strange! how little man does know or guess the secret thoughts of his fellow!” said the hermit with one of his pitiful smiles. “*Revenge* no place in me!—but I thank you, boy, for the kind thought as well as the effort to save me. My life is not worth much to any one. It will not matter, I think, if my enemy should succeed. Go now, Babu, and God be with you!”

“He will surely succeed if you do not leave this place at once,” rejoined the youth, in a tone of decision. “Baderoon is furious at all times. He is worse than ever just now, because you have thwarted his plans—so it is said—very often. If he knew that *I* am now thwarting them also, he would hunt me to death. I will not leave you till you are safe beyond

his reach."

The hermit looked at the lad with kindly surprise.

"How comes it," he said, "that you are so much interested in me? I remember seeing you two years ago, but have no recollection of having done you any service."

"Do you not remember that my mother was ill when you spent a night in our hut, and my little sister was dying? You nursed her, and tried your best to save her, and when you could not save her, and she died, you wept as if the child had been your own. I do not forget that, Van der Kemp. Sympathy is of more value than service."

"Strangely mistaken again!" murmured the hermit. "Who can know the workings of the human mind! Self was mixed with my feelings—profoundly—yet my sympathy with you and your mother was sincere."

"We never doubted that," returned Babu with a touch of surprise in his tone.

"Well now, what do you propose to do, as you refuse to leave me?" asked the hermit with some curiosity.

"I will go on with you to the next village. It is a large one. The chief man there is my uncle, who will aid me, I know, in any way I wish. I will tell him what I know and have heard of the pirate's intention, of which I have proof. He will order Baderoon to be arrested on suspicion when he arrives. Then we will detain him till you are beyond his reach. That is not unjust."

"True—and I am glad to know by your last words that you are sensitive about the justice of what you propose to do. Indifference to pure and simple justice is the great curse of mankind. It is not indeed the root, but it is the fruit of our sins. The suspicion that detains Baderoon is more than justified, for I could bring many witnesses to prove that he has vowed to take my life, and I *know* him to be a murderer."

At breakfast-time Van der Kemp announced to his friends his intention of quitting the village at once, and gave an account of his interview with the Malay lad during the night. This, of course, reconciled them to immediate departure, —though, in truth, the professor was the only one who required to be reconciled.

"It is *very* misfortunate," he remarked with a sigh, which had difficulty in escaping through a huge mass of fish and rice. "You see zee vonderful variety of ornizological specimens I could find here, ant zee herbareum, not to mention zee magnificent *Amblypodia eumolpus* ant ozer bootterflies—ach!—a leetle mor' feesh if you please. Zanks. My frond, it is a great sacrifice, but I vill go avay viz you, for I could not joostify myself if I forzook you, ant I cannot ask you to remain vile your life is in dancher."

"I appreciate your sentiments and sacrifice thoroughly," said the hermit.

"So does I," said Moses, helping himself to coffee; "but ob course if I didn't it would be all de same. Pass de venison, Massa Nadgel, an' don't look as if you was goin' to gib in a'ready. It spoils my appetite."

"You will have opportunities," continued Van der Kemp, addressing the professor, "to gather a good many specimens as we go along. Besides, if you will consent to honour my cave in Krakatoa with a visit, I promise you a hearty welcome and an interesting field of research. You have no idea what a variety of species in all the branches of natural history my little island contains."

Hereupon the hermit proceeded to enter into details of the flora, fauna, and geology of his island-home, and to expatiate in such glowing language on its arboreal and herbal wealth and beauty, that the professor became quite reconciled to immediate departure.

"But how," he asked, "am I to get zere ven ve reach zee sea-coast? for your canoe holds only t'ree, as you have told me."

"There are plenty of boats to be had. Besides, I can send over my own boat for you to the mainland. The distance is not great."

"Goot. Zat vill do. I am happay now."

"So," remarked Nigel as he went off with Moses to pack up, "his 'paradise regained' is rather speedily to be changed into paradise forsaken! 'Off wi' the old love and on wi' the new.' 'The expulsive power of a new affection!'"

"Das true, Massa Nadgel," observed Moses, who entertained profound admiration for anything that sounded like proverbial philosophy. "De purfesser am an affectionit creeter. 'Pears to me dat he lubs de whole creation. He kills an' tenderly stuffs 'most eberyt'ing he kin lay hands on. If he could only lay hold ob Baderoon an' stuff an' stick him in a moozeum, he'd do good service to my massa an' also to de whole ob mankind."

Chapter Nineteen.

A Terrible Murder and a Strange Revelation.

After letting the chief of the village know that the news just received rendered it necessary that they should proceed at once to the next town—but carefully refraining from going into particulars lest Baderoon should by any means be led to suspect their intentions—the party started off about daybreak under the guidance of the Malay youth Babu.

Anxious as he was that no evil should befall his friend, Nigel could not help wondering that a man of such a calm spirit, and such unquestionable courage, should be so anxious to escape from this pirate.

“I can’t understand it at all,” he said to Moses, as they walked through the forest together a little in rear of the party.

“No more kin I, Massa Nadgel,” answered the negro, with one of those shakes of the head and glares of solemn perplexity with which he was wont to regard matters that were too deep for him.

“Surely Van der Kemp is well able to take care of himself against any single foe.”

“Das true, Massa Nadgel,—’gainst any half-dozen foes as well.”

“Fear, therefore, cannot be the cause.”

The negro received this with a quiet chuckle.

“No,” said he. “Massa nebber knowed fear, but ob dis you may be bery sure, massa’s *allers* got good reasons for what he does. One t’ing’s sartin, I neber saw him do nuffin’ for fear, nor revenge, nor anger, no, nor yet for fun; allers for lub—and,” added Moses, after a moment’s thought, “sometimes for money, when we goes on a tradin’ ’spidition—but he don’t make much account ob dat.”

“Well, perhaps the mystery may be cleared up in time,” said Nigel, as they closed up with the rest of the party, who had halted for a short rest and some refreshment.

This last consisted largely of fruit, which was abundant everywhere, and a little rice with water from sparkling springs to wash it down.

In the afternoon they reached the town—a large one, with a sort of market-place in the centre, which at the time of their arrival was crowded with people. Strangers, especially Europeans, were not often seen in that region, so that Van der Kemp and his friends at once attracted a considerable number of followers. Among these was one man who followed them about very unobtrusively, usually hanging well in rear of the knot of followers whose curiosity was stronger than their sense of propriety. This man wore a broad sun-hat and had a bandage round his head pulled well over one eye, as if he had recently met with an accident or been wounded. He was unarmed, with the exception of the kriss, or long knife, which every man in that region carries.

This was no other than Baderoon himself, who had outwitted his enemies, had somehow discovered at least part of their plans, and had hurried on in advance of them to the town, where, disguising himself as described, he awaited their arrival.

Babu conducted his friends to the presence of his kinsman the chief man of the town, and, having told his story, received a promise that the pirate should be taken up when he arrived and put in prison. Meanwhile he appointed to the party a house in which to spend the night.

Baderoon boldly accompanied the crowd that followed them, saw the house, glanced between the heads of curious natives who watched the travellers while eating their supper, and noted the exact spot on the floor of the building where Van der Kemp threw down his mat and blanket, thus taking possession of his intended couch! He did not, however, see that the hermit afterwards shifted his position a little, and that Babu, desiring to be near his friend, lay down on the vacated spot.

In the darkest hour of the night, when even the owls and bats had sought repose, the pirate captain stole out of the brake in which he had concealed himself, and, kriss in hand, glided under the house in which his enemy lay.

Native houses, as we have elsewhere explained, are usually built on posts, so that there is an open space under the floors, which is available as a store or lumber-room. It is also unfortunately available for evil purposes. The bamboo flooring is not laid so closely but that sounds inside may be heard distinctly by any one listening below. Voices were heard by the pirate as he approached, which arrested his steps. They were those of Van der Kemp and Nigel engaged in conversation. Baderoon knew that as long as his enemy was awake and conversing he might probably be sitting up and not in a position suitable to his fell purpose. He crouched therefore among some lumber like a tiger abiding its time.

“Why are you so anxious not to meet this man?” asked Nigel, who was resolved, if possible without giving offence, to be at the bottom of the mystery.

For some moments the hermit was silent, then in a constrained voice he said slowly—“Because revenge burns fiercely in my breast. I have striven to crush it, but cannot. I fear to meet him lest I kill him.”

“Has he, then, done you such foul wrong?”

“Ay, he has cruelly—fiendishly—done the worst he could. He robbed me of my only child—but I may not talk of it. The unholy desire for vengeance burns more fiercely when I talk. ‘Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.’ My constant prayer is that I may not meet him. Good-night.”

As the hermit thus put an abrupt end to the conversation he lay down and drew his blanket over him. Nigel followed his example, wondering at what he had heard, and in a few minutes their steady regular breathing told that they were both asleep. Then Baderoon advanced and counted the bamboo planks from the side towards the centre of the house. When looking between the heads of the people he had counted the same planks above. Standing under one he looked up, listened intently for a few seconds, and drew his kriss. The place was almost pitch-dark, yet the blade caught a faint gleam from without, which it reflected on the pirate’s face as he thrust the long keen weapon swiftly,

yet deliberately, between the bamboos.

A shriek, that filled those who heard it with a thrill of horror, rang out on the silent night. At the same moment a gush of warm blood poured over the murderer's face before he could leap aside. Instant uproar and confusion burst out in the neighbourhood, and spread like wildfire until the whole town was aroused. When a light was procured and the people crowded into the hut where the strangers lay, Van der Kemp was found on his knees holding the hand of poor Babu, who was at his last gasp. A faint smile, that yet seemed to have something of gladness in it, flitted across his pale face as he raised himself, grasped the hermit's hand and pressed it to his lips. Then the fearful drain of blood took effect and he fell back—dead. One great convulsive sob burst from the hermit as he leaped up, drew his knife, and, with a fierce glare in his blue eyes, rushed out of the room.

Vengeance would indeed have been wreaked on Baderoon at that moment if the hermit had caught him, but, as might have been expected, the murderer was nowhere to be found. He was hid in the impenetrable jungle, which it was useless to enter in the darkness of night. When daybreak enabled the towns-people to undertake an organised search, no trace of him could be discovered.

Flight, personal safety, formed no part of the pirate's plan. The guilty man had reached that state of depravity which, especially among the natives of that region, borders close on insanity. While the inhabitants of the village were hunting far a-field for him, Baderoon lay concealed among some lumber in rear of a hut awaiting his opportunity. It was not very long of coming.

Towards afternoon the various searching parties began to return, and all assembled in the market-place, where the chief man, with the hermit and his party, were assembled discussing the situation.

"I will not now proceed until we have buried poor Babu," said Van der Kemp. "Besides, Baderoon will be sure to return. I will meet him now."

"I do not agree viz you, mine frond," said the professor. "Zee man is not a fool zough he is a villain. He knows vat avaits him if he comes."

"He will not come openly," returned the hermit, "but he will not now rest till he has killed me."

Even as he spoke a loud shouting, mingled with shrieks and yells, was heard at the other end of the main street. The sounds of uproar appeared to approach, and soon a crowd of people was seen rushing towards the market-place, uttering cries of fear in which the word "amok" was heard. At the sound of that word numbers of people—specially women and children—turned and fled from the scene, but many of the men stood their ground, and all of them drew their krisses. Among the latter of course were the white men and their native companions.

We have already referred to that strange madness, to which the Malays seem to be peculiarly liable, during the paroxysms of which those affected by it rush in blind fury among their fellows, slaying right and left. From the terrified appearance of some of the approaching crowd and the maniac shouts in rear, it was evident that a man thus possessed of the spirit of amok was venting his fury on them.

Another minute and he drew near, brandishing a kriss that dripped with the gore of those whom he had already stabbed. Catching sight of the white men he made straight for them. He was possessed of only one eye, but that one seemed to concentrate and flash forth the fire of a dozen eyes, while his dishevelled hair and blood-stained face and person gave him an appalling aspect.

"It is Baderoon!" said Van der Kemp in a subdued but stern tone.

Nigel, who stood next to him, glanced at the hermit. His face was deadly pale; his eyes gleamed with a strange almost unearthly light, and his lips were firmly compressed. With a sudden nervous motion, unlike his usually calm demeanour, he drew his long knife, and to Nigel's surprise cast it away from him. At that moment a woman who came in the madman's way was stabbed by him to the heart and rent the air with her dying shriek as she fell. No one could have saved her, the act was so quickly done. Van der Kemp would have leaped to her rescue, but it was too late; besides, there was no need to do so now, for the maniac, recognising his enemy, rushed at him with a shout that sounded like a triumphant yell. Seeing this, and that his friend stood unarmed, as well as unmoved, regarding Baderoon with a fixed gaze, Nigel stepped a pace in advance to protect him, but Van der Kemp seized his arm and thrust him violently aside. Next moment the pirate was upon him with uplifted knife, but the hermit caught his wrist, and with a heave worthy of Samson hurled him to the ground, where he lay for a moment quite stunned.

Before he could recover, the natives, who had up to this moment held back, sprang upon the fallen man with revengeful yells, and a dozen knives were about to be buried in his breast when the hermit sprang forward to protect his enemy from their fury. But the man whose wife had been the last victim came up at the moment and led an irresistible rush which bore back the hermit as well as his comrades, who had crowded round him, and in another minute the maniac was almost hacked to pieces.

"I did not kill him—thank God!" muttered Van der Kemp as he left the market-place, where the relatives of those who had been murdered were wailing over their dead.

After this event even the professor was anxious to leave the place, so that early next morning the party resumed their journey, intending to make a short stay at the next village. Failing to reach it that night, however, they were compelled to encamp in the woods. Fortunately they came upon a hill which, although not very high, was sufficiently so, with the aid of watch-fires, to protect them from tigers. From the summit, which rose just above the tree-tops, they had a magnificent view of the forest. Many of the trees were crowned with flowers among which the setting sun shone for a brief space with glorious effulgence.

Van der Kemp and Nigel stood together apart from the others, contemplating the wonderful scene.

“What must be the dwelling-place of the Creator Himself when his footstool is so grand?” said the hermit in a low voice.

“That is beyond mortal ken,” said Nigel.

“True—true. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived it. Yet, methinks, the glory of the terrestrial was meant to raise our souls to the contemplation of the celestial.”

“And yet how signally it has failed in the case of Baderoon,” returned Nigel, with a furtive glance at the hermit, whose countenance had quite recovered its look of quiet simple dignity. “Would it be presumptuous if I were to ask why it is that this pirate had such bitter enmity against you?”

“It is no secret,” answered the hermit, in a sad tone. “The truth is, I had discovered some of his nefarious plans, and more than once have been the means of preventing his intended deeds of violence—as in the case of the Dyaks whom we have so lately visited. Besides, the man had done me irreparable injury, and it is one of the curious facts of human experience that sometimes those who injure us hate us because they have done so.”

“May I venture to ask for a fuller account of the injury he did you?” said Nigel with some hesitancy.

For some moments the hermit did not answer. He was evidently struggling with some suppressed feeling. Turning a look full upon his young friend, he at length spoke in a low sad voice—“I have never mentioned my grief to mortal man since that day when it pleased God to draw a cloud of thickest darkness over my life. But, Nigel, there is that in you which encourages confidence. I confess that more than once I have been tempted to tell you of my grief—for human hearts crave intelligent sympathy. My faithful servant and friend Moses is, no doubt, intensely sympathetic, but—but—well, I cannot understand, still less can I explain, why I shrink from making a confidant of him. Certainly it is not because of his colour, for I hold that the *souls* of men are colourless!”

“I need not trouble you with the story of my early life,” continued the hermit. “I lost my dear wife a year after our marriage, and was left with a little girl whose lovely face became more and more like that of her mother every day she lived. My soul was wrapped up in the child. After three years I went with her as a passenger to Batavia. On the way we were attacked by a couple of pirate junks. Baderoon was the pirate captain. He killed many of our men, took some of us prisoners, sank the vessel, seized my child, and was about to separate us, putting my child into one junk while I was retained, bound, in the other.”

He paused, and gazed over the glowing tree-tops into the golden horizon, with a longing, wistful look. At the same time something like an electric shock passed through Nigel’s frame, for was not this narrative strangely similar in its main features to that which his own father had told him on the Keeling Islands about beautiful little Kathleen Holbein and her father? He was on the point of seizing the hermit by the hand and telling him what he knew, when the thought occurred that attacks by pirates were common enough in those seas, that other fathers might have lost daughters in this way, and that, perhaps, his suspicion might be wrong. It would be a terrible thing, he thought, to raise hope in his poor friend’s breast unless he were pretty sure of the hope being well founded. He would wait and hear more. He had just come to this conclusion, and managed to subdue the feelings which had been aroused, when Van der Kemp turned to him again, and continued his narrative—“I know not how it was, unless the Lord gave me strength for a purpose as he gave it to Samson of old, but when I recovered from the stinging blow I had received, and saw the junk hoist her sails and heard my child scream, I felt the strength of a lion come over me; I burst the bonds that held me and leaped into the sea, intending to swim to her. But it was otherwise ordained. A breeze which had sprung up freshened, and the junk soon left me far behind. As for the other junk, I never saw it again, for I never looked back or thought of it—only, as I left it, I heard a mocking laugh from the one-eyed villain, who, I afterwards found out, owned and commanded both junks.”

Nigel had no doubt now, but the agitation of his feelings still kept him silent.

“Need I say,” continued the hermit, “that revenge burned fiercely in my breast from that day forward? If I had met the man soon after that, I should certainly have slain him. But God mercifully forbade it. Since then He has opened my eyes to see the Crucified One who prayed for His enemies. And up till now I have prayed most earnestly that Baderoon and I might *not* meet. My prayer has not been answered in the way I wished, but a *better* answer has been granted, for the sin of revenge was overcome within me before we met.”

Van der Kemp paused again.

“Go on,” said Nigel, eagerly. “How did you escape?”

“Escape! Where was I—Oh! I remember,” said the hermit, awaking as if out of a dream; “Well, I swam after the junk until it was out of sight, and then I swam on in silent despair until so completely exhausted that I felt consciousness leaving me. Then I knew that the end must be near and I felt almost glad; but when I began to sink, the natural desire to prolong life revived, and I struggled on. Just as my strength began a second time to fail, I struck against something. It was a dead cocoa-nut tree. I laid hold of it and clung to it all that night. Next morning I was picked up by some fishermen who were going to Telok Betong by the outer passage round Sebesi Island, and were willing to land me there. But as my business connections had been chiefly with the town of Anjer, I begged of them to land me on the island of Krakatoa. This they did, and it has been my home ever since. I have been there many years.”

“Have you never seen or heard of your daughter since?” asked Nigel eagerly, and with deep sympathy.

“Never—I have travelled far and near, all over the archipelago; into the interior of the islands, great and small, but have failed to find her. I have long since felt that she must be dead—for—for she could not live with the monsters

who stole her away."

A certain contraction of the mouth, as he said this, and a gleam of the eyes, suggested to Nigel that revenge was not yet dead within the hermit's breast, although it had been overcome.

"What was her name?" asked Nigel, willing to gain time to think how he ought to act, and being afraid of the effect that the sudden communication of the news might have on his friend.

"Winnie—darling Winnie—after her mother," said the hermit with deep pathos in his tone.

A feeling of disappointment came over our hero. Winnie bore not the most distant resemblance to Kathleen!

"Did you ever, during your search," asked Nigel slowly, "visit the Cocos-Keeling Islands?"

"Never. They are too far from where the attack on us was made."

"And you never heard of a gun-boat having captured a pirate junk and—"

"Why do you ask, and why pause?" said the hermit, looking at his friend in some surprise.

Nigel felt that he had almost gone too far.

"Well, you know—" he replied in some confusion, "you—you are right when you expect me to sympathise with your great sorrow, which I do most profoundly, and—and—in short, I would give anything to be able to suggest hope to you, my friend. Men should *never* give way to despair."

"Thank you. It is kindly meant," returned the hermit, looking at the youth with his sad smile. "But it is vain. Hope is dead now."

They were interrupted at this point by the announcement that supper was ready. At the same time the sun sank, like the hermit's hope, and disappeared beyond the dark forest.

Chapter Twenty.

Nigel makes a Confidant of Moses—Undertakes a Lonely Watch and sees something Wonderful.

It was not much supper that Nigel Roy ate that night. The excitement resulting from his supposed discovery reduced his appetite seriously, and the intense desire to open a safety-valve in the way of confidential talk with some one induced a nervously absent disposition which at last attracted attention.

"You vant a goot dose of kvinine," remarked Verkimier, when, having satiated himself, he found time to think of others—not that the professor was selfish by any means, only he was addicted to concentration of mind on all work in hand, inclusive of feeding.

The hermit paid no attention to anything that was said. His recent conversation had given vent to a flood of memories and feelings that had been pent-up for many years.

After supper Nigel resolved to make a confidant of Moses. The negro's fidelity to and love for his master would ensure his sympathy at least, if not wise counsel.

"Moses," he said, when the professor had raised himself to the seventh heaven by means of tobacco fumes, "come with me. I want to have a talk."

"Das what I's allers wantin', Massa Nadgel; talkin's my strong point, if I hab a strong point at all."

They went together to the edge of a cliff on the hill-top, whence they could see an almost illimitable stretch of tropical wilderness bathed in a glorious flood of moonlight, and sat down.

On a neighbouring cliff, which was crowned with a mass of grasses and shrubs, a small monkey also sat down, on a fallen branch, and watched them with pathetic interest, tempered, it would seem, by cutaneous irritation.

"Moses, I am sorely in need of advice," said Nigel, turning suddenly to his companion with ill-suppressed excitement.

"Well, Massa Nadgel, you *does* look like it, but I'm sorry I ain't a doctor. P'r'aps de purfesser would help you better nor—"

"You misunderstand me. Can you keep a secret, Moses?"

"I kin try—if—if he's not too diffikilt to keep."

"Well, then; listen."

The negro opened his eyes and his mouth as if these were the chief orifices for the entrance of sound, and advanced an ear. The distant monkey, observing, apparently, that some unusual communication was about to be made, also stretched out its little head, cocked an ear, and suspended its other operations.

Then, in low earnest tones, Nigel told Moses of his belief that Van der Kemp's daughter might yet be alive and well,

and detailed the recent conversation he had had with his master.

“Now, Moses; what d’ye think of all that?”

Profundity unfathomable sat on the negro’s sable brow as he replied, “Massa Nadgel, I don’t bery well know *what* to t’ink.”

“But remember, Moses, before we go further, that I tell you all this in strict confidence; not a word of it must pass your lips.”

The awful solemnity with which Nigel sought to impress this on his companion was absolutely trifling compared with the expression of that companion’s countenance, as, with a long-drawn argumentative and remonstrative *Oh*! he replied:—

“Massa Nadgel. Does you really t’ink I would say or do any mortal t’ing w’atsumiver as would injure *my* massa?”

“I’m *sure* you would not,” returned Nigel, quickly. “Forgive me, Moses, I merely meant that you would have to be very cautious—very careful—that you do not let a word slip—by accident, you know—I believe you’d sooner die than do an intentional injury to Van der Kemp. If I thought you capable of *that*, I think I would relieve my feelings by giving you a good thrashing.”

The listening monkey cocked its ear a little higher at this, and Moses, who had at first raised his flat nose indignantly in the air, gradually lowered it, while a benignant smile supplanted indignation.

“You’re right dere, Massa Nadgel. I’d die a t’ousand times sooner dan injure massa. As to your last obserwation, it rouses two idees in my mind. First, I wonder how you’d manidge to gib me a t’rashin’, an’ second, I wonder if your own moder would rikognise you arter you’d tried it.”

At this the monkey turned its other ear as if to make quite sure that it heard aright. Nigel laughed shortly.

“But seriously, Moses,” he continued; “what do you think I should do? Should I reveal my suspicions to Van der Kemp?”

“Cer’nly not!” answered the negro with prompt decision. “What! wake up all his old hopes to hab ’em all dashed to bits p’raps when you find dat you’s wrong!”

“But I feel absolutely certain that I’m *not* wrong!” returned Nigel, excitedly. “Consider—there is, first, the one-eyed pirate; second, there is—”

“’Scuse me, Massa Nadgel, dere’s no occasion to go all ober it again. I’ll tell you what you do.”

“Well?” exclaimed Nigel, anxiously, while his companion frowned savagely under the force of the thoughts that surged through his brain.

“Here’s what you’ll do,” said Moses.

“Well?” (impatiently, as the negro paused.)

“We’re on our way home to Krakatoa.”

“Yes—well?”

“One ob our men leabes us to-morrer—goes to ’is home on de coast. Kitch one ob de steamers dat’s allers due about dis time.”

“Well, what of that?”

“What ob dat! why, you’ll write a letter to your fadder. It’ll go by de steamer to Batavia. He gits it long before we gits home, so dere’s plenty time for ’im to take haction.”

“But what good will writing to my father do?” asked Nigel in a somewhat disappointed tone. “*He* can’t help us.”

“Ho yes, he can,” said Moses with a self-satisfied nod. “See here, I’ll tell you what to write. You begin, ‘Dear fadder—or Dearest fadder’—I’s not quite sure ob de strengt’ ob your affection. P’raps de safest way.”

“Oh! get on, Moses. Never mind that.”

“Ho! it’s all bery well for you to say dat, but de ole gen’leman’ll mind it. Hows’ever, put it as you t’ink best—‘Dear fadder, victual your ship; up anchor; hois’ de sails, an’ steer for de Cocos-Keelin’ Islands. Go ashore; git hold ob do young ’ooman called Kat’leen Hobbleben.’”

“Holbein, Moses.”

“*What*! is she Moses too?”

“No, no! get on, man.”

“Well, ‘Dearest fadder, git a hold ob her, whateber her name is, an’ carry her off body and soul, an’ whateber else b’longs to her. Take her to de town ob Anjer an’ wait dere for furder orders.’ Ob course for de windin’ up o’ de letter

you must appeal agin to de state ob your affections, for, as—”

“Not a bad idea,” exclaimed Nigel. “Why, Moses, you’re a genius! Of course I’ll have to explain a little more fully.”

“’Splain what you please,” said Moses. “My business is to gib you de bones ob de letter; yours—bein’ a scholar—is to clove it wid flesh.”

“I’ll do it, Moses, at once.”

“I should like,” rejoined Moses, with a tooth-and-gum-disclosing smile, “to see your fadder when he gits dat letter!”

The picture conjured up by his vivid imagination caused the negro to give way to an explosive laugh that sent the eavesdropping monkey like a brown thunderbolt into the recesses of its native jungle, while Nigel went off to write and despatch the important letter.

Next day the party arrived at another village, where, the report of their approach having preceded them, they were received with much ceremony—all the more that the professor’s power with the rifle had been made known, and that the neighbourhood was infested by tigers.

There can be little doubt that at this part of the journey the travellers must have been dogged all the way by tigers, and it was matter for surprise that so small a party should not have been molested. Possibly the reason was that these huge members of the feline race were afraid of white faces, being unaccustomed to them, or, perchance, the appearance and vigorous stride of even a few stalwart and fearless men had intimidated them. Whatever the cause, the party reached the village without seeing a single tiger, though their footprints were observed in many places.

The wild scenery became more and more beautiful as this village was neared.

Although flowers as a rule were small and inconspicuous in many parts of the great forest through which they passed, the rich pink and scarlet of many of the opening leaves, and the autumn-tinted foliage which lasts through all seasons of the year, fully made up for the want of them—at least as regards colour, while the whole vegetation was intermingled in a rich confusion that defies description.

The professor went into perplexed raptures, his mind being distracted by the exuberant wealth of subjects which were presented to it all at the same time.

“Look zere!” he cried, at one turning in the path which opened up a new vista of exquisite beauty—“look at zat!”

“Ay, it is a Siamang ape—next in size to the orang-utan,” said Van der Kemp, who stood at his friend’s elbow.

The animal in question was a fine full-grown specimen, with long jet-black glancing hair. Its height might probably have been a few inches over three feet, and the stretch of its arms over rather than under five feet, but at the great height at which it was seen—not less than eighty feet—it looked much like an ordinary monkey. It was hanging in the most easy nonchalant way by one hand from the branch of a tree, utterly indifferent to the fact that to drop was to die!

The instant the Siamang observed the travellers it set up a loud barking howl which made the woods resound, but it did not alter its position or seem to be alarmed in any degree.

“Vat a ’straordinary noise!” remarked the professor.

“It is indeed,” returned the hermit, “and it has an extraordinary appliance for producing it. There is a large bag under its throat extending to its lips and cheeks which it can fill with air by means of a valve in the windpipe. By expelling this air in sudden bursts it makes the varied sounds you hear.”

“Mos’ vonderful! A sort of natural air-gun! I vill shoot it,” said the professor, raising his deadly rifle, and there is no doubt that the poor Siamang would have dropped in another moment if Van der Kemp had not quietly and gravely touched his friend’s elbow just as the explosion took place.

“Hah! you tooched me!” exclaimed the disappointed naturalist, looking fiercely round, while the amazed ape sent forth a bursting crack of its air-gun as it swung itself into the tree-top and made off.

“Yes, I touched you, and if you *will* shoot when I am so close to you, you cannot wonder at it—especially when you intend to take life uselessly. The time now at the disposal of my friend Nigel Roy will not permit of our delaying long enough to kill and preserve large specimens. To say truth, my friend, we must press on now, as fast as we can, for we have a very long way to go.”

Verkimier was not quite pleased with this explanation, but there was a sort of indescribable power about the hermit, when he was resolved to have his way, that those whom he led found it impossible to resist.

On arriving at the village they were agreeably surprised to find a grand banquet, consisting chiefly of fruit, with fowl, rice, and Indian corn, spread out for them in the Balai or public hall, where also their sleeping quarters were appointed. An event had recently occurred, however, which somewhat damped the pleasure of their reception. A young man had been killed by a tiger. The brute had leaped upon him while he and a party of lads were traversing a narrow path through the jungle, and had killed him with one blow of its paw. The other youths courageously rushed at the beast with their spears and axes, and, driving it off, carried the body of their comrade away.

“We have just buried the young man,” said the chief of the village, “and have set a trap for the tiger, for he will be sure to visit the grave.”

“My friends would like to see this trap,” said the hermit, who, of course, acted the part of interpreter wherever they went, being well acquainted with most of the languages and dialects of the archipelago.

“There will yet be daylight after you have finished eating,” said the chief.

Although anxious to go at once to see this trap, they felt the propriety of doing justice to what had been provided for them, and sat down to their meal, for which, to say truth, they were quite ready.

Then they went with a large band of armed natives to see this curious tiger-trap, the bait of which was the grave of a human being!

The grave was close to the outskirts of the village, and, on one side, the jungle came up to within a few yards of it. The spot was surrounded by a strong and high bamboo fence, except at one point where a narrow but very conspicuous opening had been left. Here a sharp spear was so arranged beside the opening that it could be shot across it at a point corresponding with the height of a tiger’s heart from the ground—as well, at least, as that point could be estimated by men who were pretty familiar with tigers. The motive power to propel this spear was derived from a green bamboo, so strong that it required several powerful men to bend it in the form of a bow. A species of trigger was arranged to let the bent bow fly, and a piece of fine cord passed from this across the opening about breast-high for a tiger. The intention was that the animal, in entering the enclosure, should become its own executioner—should commit unintentional suicide, if we may so put it.

“I have an ambition to shoot a tiger,” said Nigel to Van der Kemp that evening. “Do you think the people would object to my getting up into a tree with my rifle and watching beside the grave, part of the night?”

“I am sure that they would not. But your watch will probably be in vain, for tigers are uncommonly sagacious creatures and seem to me to have exceptional powers for scenting danger.”

“No matter, I will try.”

Accordingly, a little before dark that evening our hero borrowed the professor’s double-barrelled rifle, being more suitable for large game than his own gun, and sauntered with Moses down to the grave where he ensconced himself in the branches of a large tree about thirty feet from the ground. The form of the tree was such, that among its forks Nigel could form a sort of nest in which he could sit, in full view of the poor youth’s grave, without the risk of falling to the ground even if he should chance to drop asleep.

“Good-night, massa Nadgel,” said Moses as he turned to leave his companion to his solitary vigil. “See you not go to sleep.”

“No fear of *that*!” said Nigel.

“An’ whateber you do, don’t miss.”

“I’ll do my best—Good-night.”

While there was yet a little daylight, our hunter looked well about him; took note of the exact position of the fence, the entrance to the enclosure, and the grave; judged the various distances of objects, and arranged the sights of the rifle, which was already loaded with a brace of hardened balls. Then he looked up through the tree-tops and wished for darkness.

It came sooner than he expected. Night always descends more suddenly in tropical than in temperate regions. The sun had barely dipped below the horizon when night seemed to descend like a pall over the jungle, and an indescribable sensation of eerieness crept over Nigel’s spirit. Objects became very indistinct, and he fancied that he saw something moving on the newly-made grave. With a startled feeling he grasped his weapon, supposing that the tiger must have entered the enclosure with cat-like stealth. On second thoughts, however, he discarded the idea, for the entrance was between him and the grave, and still seemed quite visible. Do what he would, however, the thought of ghosts insisted on intruding upon him! He did not believe in ghosts—oh no!—had always scouted the idea of their existence. Why, therefore, did he feel uncomfortable? He could not tell. It must simply be the excitement natural to such a very new and peculiar situation. He would think of something else. He would devote his mind to the contemplation of tigers! In a short time the moon would rise, he knew—then he would be able to see better.

While he was in this very uncomfortable state of mind, with the jungle wrapped in profound silence as well as gloom, there broke on the night air a wail so indescribable that the very marrow in Nigel’s bones seemed to shrivel up. It ceased, but again broke forth louder than before, increasing in length and strength, until his ears seemed to tingle with the sound, and then it died away to a sigh of unutterable woe.

“I have always,” muttered Nigel, “believed myself to be a man of ordinary courage, but *now*—I shall write myself a coward, if not an ass!”

He attempted to laugh at this pleasantry, but the laugh was hollow and seemed to freeze in his gullet as the wail broke forth again, ten times more hideous than at first. After a time the wail became more continuous, and the watcher began to get used to it. Then a happy thought flashed into his mind—this was, perhaps, some sort of mourning for the dead! He was right. The duty of the father of the poor youth who had been killed was, for several days after the funeral, to sit alone in his house and chant from sunset till daybreak a death-dirge, or, as it is called, the *tjerita bari*. It was not till next day that this was told to him, but meanwhile the surmise afforded him instantaneous relief.

As if nature sympathised with his feelings, the moon arose at the same time and dispelled the thick darkness, though

it was not till much later that, sailing across a clear sky, she poured her bright beams through the tree-tops and finally rested on the dead man's grave.

By that time Nigel had quite recovered his equanimity, and mentally blotted out the writing of "coward" and "ass" which he had written against himself. But another trouble now assailed him. He became sleepy! Half-a-dozen times at least within half-an-hour he started wide awake under the impression that he was falling off the tree.

"This will never do," he exclaimed, rising to his feet, resting his rifle in a position of safety, and then stretching himself to his utmost extent so that he became thoroughly awake. After this "rouser," as he called it, he sat down again, and almost immediately fell fast asleep.

How long he sat in this condition it is impossible to say, but he opened his eyes at length with an indescribable sensation that *something* required attention, and the first thing they rested on, (for daylight was dawning), was an enormous tiger not forty yards away from him, gliding like a shadow and with cat-like stealth towards the opening of the enclosure. The sight was so sudden and so unexpected that, for the moment, he was paralysed. Perhaps he thought it was a dream. Before he could recover presence of mind to seize his rifle, the breast of the animal had touched the fatal line; the trigger was drawn; the stout bamboo straightened with a booming sound, and the spear—or, rather, the giant arrow—was shot straight through the tiger's side!

Then occurred a scene which might well have induced Nigel to imagine that he dreamt, for the transfixed creature bounded into the enclosure with a terrific roar that rang fearfully through the arches of the hitherto silent forest. Rushing across the grave, it sprang with one tremendous bound right over the high fence, carrying the spear along with it into the jungle beyond.

By that time Nigel was himself again, with rifle in hand, but too late to fire. The moment he heard the thud of the tiger's descent, he slid down the tree, and, forgetful or regardless of danger,—went crashing into the jungle, while the yells and shouts of hundreds of aroused natives suggested the peopling of the region with an army of fiends.

But our hero had not to go far. In his haste he almost tumbled over the tiger. It was lying stone dead on the spot where it had fallen!

A few minutes more and the natives came pouring round him, wild with excitement and joy. Soon he was joined by his own comrades.

"Well, you've managed to shoot him, I see," said Van der Kemp as he joined the group.

"Alas! no. I have not fired a shot," said Nigel, with a half disappointed look.

"You's got de better ob him anyhow," remarked Moses as he pushed to the front.

"The spear got the better of him, Moses."

"Vell now, zat is a splendid animal. Lat me see," said the professor, pulling out his tape-measure.

It was with difficulty that the man of science made and noted his measurements, for the people were pressing eagerly round the carcase to gratify their revenge by running their spears into the still warm body. They dipped the points in the blood and passed their krisses broadside over the creature that they might absorb the courage and boldness which were supposed to emanate from it! Then they skinned it, and pieces of the heart and brain were eaten raw by some of those whose relatives had been killed by tigers. Finally the skull was hacked to pieces for the purpose of distributing the teeth, which are used by the natives as charms.

Chapter Twenty One.

In which the Professor distinguishes himself.

Leaving this village immediately after the slaying of the tiger, the party continued to journey almost by forced marches, for not only was Nigel Roy very anxious to keep tryst with his father, and to settle the question of Kathleen's identity by bringing father and daughter together, but Van der Kemp himself, strange to say, was filled with intense and unaccountable anxiety to get back to his island-home.

"I don't know how it is," he said to Nigel as they walked side by side through the forest, followed by Moses and the professor, who had become very friendly on the strength of a certain amount of vacant curiosity displayed by the former in regard to scientific matters—"I don't know how it is, but I feel an unusually strong desire to get back to my cave. I have often been absent from home for long periods at a time, but have never before experienced these strange longings. I say strange, because there is no such thing as an effect without a cause."

"May not the cause be presentiment?" suggested Nigel, who, knowing what a tremendous possibility for the hermit lay in the future, felt a little inclined to be superstitious. It did not occur to him just then that an equally, if not more, tremendous possibility lay in the future for himself—touching his recent discovery or suspicion!

"I do not believe in presentiments," returned the hermit. "They are probably the result of indigestion or a disordered intellect, from neither of which complaints do I suffer—at least not consciously!"

"But you have never before left home in such peculiar circumstances," said Nigel. "Have you not told me that this is the first time for about two hundred years that Krakatoa has broken out in active eruption?"

“True, but that cannot be to me the cause of longings or anxieties, for I have seen many a long-dormant crater become active without any important result either to me or to any one else.”

“Stop, stop!” cried Professor Verkimier in a hoarse whisper at that moment; “look! look at zee monkeys!”

Monkeys are very abundant in Sumatra, but the nest of them which the travellers discovered at that time, and which had called forth the professor’s admiration, was enough—as Moses said—to make a “renocerus laugh.” The trees around absolutely swarmed with monkeys; those of a slender form and with very long tails being most numerous. They were engaged in some sort of game, swinging by arms, legs, and tails from branches, holding on to or chasing each other, and taking the most astonishing leaps in circumstances where a slip would have no doubt resulted in broken limbs or in death.

“Stand still! Oh! *do* stand still—like you vas petrivied,” said the professor in a low voice of entreaty.

Being quite willing to humour him, the whole party stood immovable, like statues, and thus avoided attracting the attention of the monkeys, who continued their game. It seemed to be a sort of “follow my leader,” for one big strong fellow led off with a bound from one branch to another which evidently tried the nerves of his more timid and less agile companions. They all succeeded, however, from the largest even to the smallest—which last was a very tiny creature with a pink face, a sad expression, and a corkscrew tail.

For a time they bounded actively among the branches, now high, now low, till suddenly the big leader took a tremendous leap, as if for the express purpose of baffling or testing his companions. It was immensely amusing to see the degrees of trepidation with which the others followed. The last two seemed quite unable to make up their minds to the leap, until the others seemed about to disappear, when one of them took heart and bounded wildly across. Thus little pink-face with the corkscrew tail was left alone! Twice did that little monkey make a desperate resolution to jump, and twice did its little heart fail as it measured the distance between the branches and glanced at the abyss below. Its companions seemed to entertain a feeling of pity for it. Numbers of them came back, as if to watch the jump and encourage the little one. A third time it made an abortive effort to spring, and looked round pitifully, whereupon Moses gave vent to an uncontrollable snort of suppressed laughter.

“Vat you mean by zat?” growled the professor angrily.

The growl and snort together revealed the intruders, and all the monkeys, except pink-face, crowding the trees above the spot where they stood, gazed down upon them with expressions in which unparalleled indignation and inconceivable surprise struggled for the mastery.

Then, with a wild shriek, the whole troop fled into the forest.

This was too much for poor, half-petrified pink-face with the twisted tail. Seeing that its comrades were gone in earnest, it became desperate, flung itself frantically into the air with an agonising squeak, missed its mark, went crashing through the slender branches and fell to the ground.

Fortunately these branches broke its fall so that it arose unhurt, bounded into a bush, still squeaking with alarm, and made after its friends.

“Why did you not shoot it, professor?” asked Nigel, laughing as much at Verkimier’s grave expression as at the little monkey’s behaviour.

“Vy did I not shot it?” echoed the professor. “I vould as soon shot a baby. Zee pluck of zat leetle creature is admirable. It vould be a horrible shame to take his life. No! I do love to see ploock vezer in man or beast! He could not shoomp zat. He *knew* he could not shoomp it, but he *tried* to shoomp it. He vould not be beat, an’ I would not kill him—zough I vant ’im very mooch for a specimen.”

It seemed as if the professor was to be specially rewarded for his self-denial on this occasion, for while he was yet speaking, a soft “hush!” from Van der Kemp caused the whole party to halt in dead silence and look at the hermit inquiringly.

“You are in luck, professor,” he murmured, in a soft, low voice—very different from that hissing whisper which so many people seem to imagine is an inaudible utterance. “I see a splendid Argus pheasant over there making himself agreeable to his wife!”

“Vare? oh! vare?” exclaimed the enthusiast with blazing eyes, for although he had already seen and procured specimens of this most beautiful creature, he had not yet seen it engage in the strange love-dance—if we may so call it—which is peculiar to the bird.

“You’ll never get near enough to see it if you hiss like a serpent,” said the hermit. “Get out your binoculars, follow me, and hold your tongue, all of you—that will be the safest plan. Tread lightly.”

It was a sight to behold the professor crouching almost double in order to render himself less conspicuous, with his hat pushed back, and the blue glasses giving him the appearance of a great-eyed seal. He carried his butterfly-net in one hand, and the unfailing rifle in the other.

Fortunately the hermit’s sharp and practised eye had enabled him to distinguish the birds in the distance before their advance had alarmed them, so that they were able to reach a mound topped with low bushes over which they could easily watch the birds.

“Zat is very koorious an’ most interesting,” murmured the professor after a short silence.

He was right. There were two Argus pheasants, a male and female—the male alone being decorated superbly. The Argus belongs to the same family as the peacock, but is not so gaudy in colouring, and therefore, perhaps, somewhat more pleasing. Its tail is formed chiefly by an enormous elongation of the two tail quills, and of the secondary wing feathers, no two of which are exactly the same, and the closer they are examined the greater is seen to be the extreme beauty of their markings, and the rich varied harmony of their colouring.

When a male Argus wishes to show off his magnificence to his spouse—or when she asks him to show it off we know not which—he makes a circle in the forest some ten or twelve feet in diameter, which he clears of every leaf, twig, and branch. On the margin of this circus there is invariably a projecting branch, or overarching root a few feet above the ground, on which the female takes her place to watch the exhibition. This consists of the male strutting about, pluming his feathers, and generally displaying his gorgeous beauty.

“Vat ineffable vanity!” exclaimed the professor, after gazing for some time in silence.

His own folly in thus speaking was instantly proved by the two birds bringing the exhibition to an abrupt close and hastily taking wing.

Not long after seeing this they came to a small but deep and rapid river, which for a time checked their progress, for there was no ford, and the porters who carried Verkimier’s packages seemed to know nothing about a bridge, either natural or artificial. After wandering for an hour or so along its banks, however, they found a giant tree which had fallen across the stream, and formed a natural bridge.

On the other side of the stream the ground was more rugged and the forest so dense that they had to walk in a sort of twilight—only a glimpse of blue sky being visible here and there through the tree-tops. In some places, however, there occurred bright little openings which swarmed with species of metallic tiger-beetles and sand-bees, and where sulphur, swallow-tailed, and other butterflies sported their brief life away over the damp ground by the water’s edge.

The native forest path which they followed was little better than a tunnel cut through a grove of low rattan-palms, the delicate but exceedingly tough tendrils of which hung down in all directions. These were fringed with sharp hooks which caught their clothing and tore it, or held on unrelentingly, so that the only way of escape was to step quietly back and unhook themselves. This of itself would have rendered their progress slow as well as painful, but other things tended to increase the delay. At one place they came to a tree about seven feet in diameter which lay across the path and had to be scrambled over, and this was done with great difficulty. At another, a gigantic mud-bath—the wallowing hole of a herd of elephants—obstructed the way, and a yell from one of the porters told that in attempting to cross it he had fallen in up to the waist. A comrade in trying to pull him out also fell in and sank up to the armpits. But they got over it—as resolute men always do—somehow!

“Zis is horrible!” exclaimed the professor, panting from his exertions, and making a wild plunge with his insect-net at some living creature. “Hah! zee brute! I have ’im.”

The man of science was flat on his stomach as he spoke, with arm outstretched and the net pressed close to the ground, while a smile of triumph beamed through the mud and scratches on his face.

“What have you got?” asked Nigel, doing his best to restrain a laugh.

“A splendid *Ornit’optera* a day-flying moss,” said Verkimier as he cautiously rose, “vich mimics zee *Trepsichrois mulciber*. Ant zis very morning I caught von *Leptocircus virescens*, vich derives protection from mimicking zee habits ant appearance of a dragon-fly.”

“What rubbish dat purfesser do talk!” remarked Moses in an undertone to the hermit as they moved on again.

“Not such rubbish as it sounds to you, Moses. These are the scientific names of the creatures, and you know as well as he does that many creatures think they find it advantageous to pretend to be what they are not. Man himself is not quite free from this characteristic. Indeed, you have a little of it yourself,” said the hermit with one of his twinkling glances. “When you are almost terrified out of your wits don’t you pretend that there’s nothing the matter with you?”

“Nebber, massa, nebber!” answered the negro with remonstrative gravity. “When I’s nigh out ob my wits, so’s my innards feels like nuffin’ but warmish water, I gits whitey-grey in de chops, so I’s told, an’ blue in de lips, an’ I *pretends* nuffin’—I don’t care *who* sees it!”

The track for some distance beyond this point became worse and worse. Then the nature of the ground changed somewhat—became more hilly, and the path, if such it could be styled, more rugged in some places, more swampy in others, while, to add to their discomfort, rain began to fall, and night set in dark and dismal without any sign of the village of which they were in search. By that time the porters who carried Verkimier’s boxes seemed so tired that the hermit thought it advisable to encamp, but the ground was so wet and the leeches were so numerous that they begged him to go on, assuring him that the village could not be far distant. In another half-hour the darkness became intense, so that a man could scarcely see his fellow, even when within two paces of him. Ominous mutterings and rumblings like distant thunder also were heard, which appeared to indicate an approaching storm. In these circumstances encamping became unavoidable, and the order was given to make a huge fire to scare away the tigers, which were known to be numerous, and the elephants whose fresh tracks had been crossed and followed during the greater part of the day. The track of a rhinoceros and a tapir had also been seen, but no danger was to be anticipated from those creatures.

“Shall we have a stormy night, think you?” asked Nigel, as he assisted in striking a light.

“It may be so,” replied the hermit, flinging down one after another of his wet matches, which failed to kindle. “What

we hear may be distant thunder, but I doubt it. The sounds seem to me more like the mutterings of a volcano. Some new crater may have burst forth in the Sumatran ranges. This thick darkness inclines me to think so—especially after the new activity of volcanic action we have seen so recently at Krakatoa. Let me try your matches, Nigel, perhaps they have escaped—mine are useless."

But Nigel's matches were as wet as those of the hermit. So were those of the professor. Luckily Moses carried the old-fashioned flint and steel, with which, and a small piece of tinder, spark was at last kindled, but as they were about to apply it to a handful of dry bamboo scrapings, an extra spurt of rain extinguished it. For an hour and more they made ineffectual attempts to strike a light. Even the cessation of the rain was of no avail.

"Vat must ve do *now*?" asked the professor in tones that suggested a woe-begone countenance, though there was no light by which to distinguish.

"Grin and bear it," said Nigel, in a voice suggestive of a slight expansion of the mouth—though no one could see it.

"Dere's nuffin' else left to do," said Moses, in a tone which betrayed such a very wide expansion that Nigel laughed outright.

"Hah! you may laugh, my yoong frond, bot if zee tigers find us out or zee elephants trample on us, your laughter vill be turned to veeping. Vat is zat? Is not zat vonderful?"

The question and exclamation were prompted by the sudden appearance of faint mysterious lights among the bushes. That the professor viewed them as unfriendly lights was clear from the click of his rifle-locks which followed.

"It is only phosphoric light," explained Van der Kemp. "I have often seen it thus in electric states of the atmosphere. It will probably increase—meanwhile we must seat ourselves on our boxes and do the best we can till daylight. Are you there, boys?"

This question, addressed to the bearers in their native tongue, was not answered, and it was found, on a *feeling* examination, that, in spite of leeches, tigers, elephants, and the whole animal creation, the exhausted porters had flung themselves on the wet ground and gone to sleep while their leaders were discussing the situation.

Dismal though the condition of the party was, the appearances in the forest soon changed the professor's woe into eager delight, for the phosphorescence became more and more pronounced, until every tree-stem blinked with a palish green light, and it trickled like moonlight over the ground, bringing out thick dumpy mushrooms like domes of light. Glowing caterpillars and centipedes crawled about, leaving a trail of light behind them, and fireflies, darting to and fro, peopled the air and gave additional animation to the scene.

In the midst of the darkness, thus made singularly visible, the white travellers sat dozing and nodding on their luggage, while the cries of metallic-toned horned frogs and other nocturnal sounds peculiar to that weird forest formed their appropriate lullaby.

But Moses neither dozed nor nodded. With a pertinacity peculiarly his own he continued to play a running accompaniment to the lullaby with his flint and steel, until his perseverance was rewarded with a spark which caught on a dry portion of the tinder and continued to burn. By that time the phosphoric lights had faded, and his spark was the only one which gleamed through intense darkness.

How he cherished that spark! He wrapped it in swaddling clothes of dry bamboo scrapings with as much care as if it had been the essence of his life. He blew upon it tenderly as though to fan its delicate brow with the soft zephyrs of a father's affection. Again he blew more vigorously, and his enormous pouting lips came dimly into view. Another blow and his flat nose and fat cheeks emerged from darkness. Still another—with growing confidence—and his huge eyes were revealed glowing with hope. At last the handful of combustible burst into a flame, and was thrust into a prepared nest of twigs. This, communicating with a heap of logs, kindled a sudden blaze which scattered darkness out of being, and converted thirty yards of the primeval forest into a chamber of glorious light, round which the human beings crowded with joy enhanced by the unexpectedness of the event, and before which the wild things of the wilderness fled away.

When daylight came at last, they found that the village for which they had been searching was only two miles beyond the spot where they had encamped.

Here, being thoroughly exhausted, it was resolved that they should spend that day and night, and, we need scarcely add, they spent a considerable portion of both in sleep—at least such parts of both as were not devoted to food. And here the professor distinguished himself in a way that raised him greatly in the estimation of his companions and caused the natives of the place to regard him as something of a demi-god. Of course we do not vouch for the truth of the details of the incident, for no one save himself was there to see, and although we entertained the utmost regard for himself, we were not sufficiently acquainted with his moral character to answer for his strict truthfulness. As to the main event, there was no denying that. The thing happened thus:—

Towards the afternoon of that same day the travellers began to wake up, stretch themselves, and think about supper. In the course of conversation it transpired that a tiger had been prowling about the village for some days, and had hitherto successfully eluded all attempts to trap or spear it. They had tethered a goat several times near a small pond and watched the spot from safe positions among the trees, with spears, bows and arrows, and blow-pipes ready, but when they watched, the tiger did not come, and when they failed to watch, the tiger did come and carried off the goat. Thus they had been baffled.

"Mine frond," said the professor to the hermit on hearing this. "I vill shot zat tiger! I am resolved. Vill you ask zee chief to show me zee place ant zen tell his people, on pain of def, not to go near it all night, for if zey do I vill certainly

shot zem—by accident of course!”

The hermit did as he was bid, but advised his sanguine friend against exposing himself recklessly. The chief willingly fell in with his wishes.

“Won’t you tell us what you intend to do, professor?” asked Nigel, “and let us help you.”

“No, I vill do it all by mineself—or die! I vill vant a shofel or a spade of some sort.”

The chief provided the required implement, conducted his visitor a little before sunset to the spot, just outside the village, and left him there armed with his rifle, a revolver, and a long knife or kriss, besides the spade.

When alone, the bold man put off his glasses, made a careful inspection of the ground, came to a conclusion—founded on scientific data no doubt—as to the probable spot whence the tiger would issue from the jungle when about to seize the goat, and, just opposite that spot, on the face of a slope about ten yards from the goat, he dug a hole deep enough to contain his own person. The soil was sandy easy to dig, and quite dry. It was growing dusk when the professor crept into this rifle-pit, drew his weapons and the spade in after him, and closed the mouth of the pit with moist earth, leaving only a very small eye-hole through which he could see the goat standing innocently by the brink of the pool.

“Now,” said he, as he lay resting on his elbows with the rifle laid ready to hand and the revolver beside it; “now, I know not vezer you can smell or not, but I have buried mineself in eart’, vich is a non-conductor of smell. Ve shall see!”

It soon became very dark, for there was no moon, yet not so dark but that the form of the goat could be seen distinctly reflected in the pond. Naturally the professor’s mind reverted to the occasion when Nigel had watched in the branches of a tree for another tiger. The conditions were different, and so, he thought, was the man!

“Mine yoong frond,” he said mentally, “is brav’, oondoubtedly, but his nerves have not been braced by experience like mine. It is vell, for zere is more dancher here zan in a tree. It matters not. I am resolf to shot zat tigre—or die!”

In this resolute and heroic frame of mind he commenced his vigil.

It is curious to note how frequently the calculations of men fail them—even those of scientific men! The tiger came indeed to the spot, but he came in precisely the opposite direction from that which the watcher expected, so that while Verkimier was staring over the goat’s head at an opening in the jungle beyond the pond, the tiger was advancing stealthily and slowly through the bushes exactly behind the hole in which he lay.

Suddenly the professor became aware of *something*! He saw nothing consciously, he heard nothing, but there stole over him, somehow, the feeling of a dread presence!

Was he asleep? Was it nightmare? No, it was night-tiger! He knew it, somehow; he *felt* it—but he could not see it.

To face death is easy enough—according to some people—but to face nothing at all is at all times trying. Verkimier felt it to be so at that moment. But he was a true hero and conquered himself.

“Come now,” he said mentally, “don’t be an ass! Don’t lose your shance by voomanly fears. Keep kviet.”

Another moment and there was a very slight sound right over his head. He glanced upwards—as far as the little hole would permit—and there, not a foot from him, was a tawny yellow throat! with a tremendous paw moving slowly forward—so slowly that it might have suggested the imperceptible movement of the hour-hand of a watch, or of a glacier. There was indeed motion, but it was not perceptible.

The professor’s perceptions were quick. He did not require to think. He knew that to use the rifle at such close quarters was absolutely impossible. He knew that the slightest motion would betray him. He could see that as yet he was undiscovered, for the animal’s nose was straight for the goat, and he concluded that either his having buried himself was a safeguard against being smelt, or that the tiger had a cold in its head. He thought for one moment of bursting up with a yell that would scare the monster out of his seven senses—if he had seven—but dismissed the thought as cowardly, for it would be sacrificing success to safety. He knew not what to do, and the cold perspiration consequent upon indecision at a supreme moment broke out all over him. Suddenly he thought of the revolver!

Like lightning he seized it, pointed it straight up and fired. The bullet—a large army revolver one—entered the throat of the animal, pierced the root of the tongue, crashed through the palate obliquely, and entered the brain. The tiger threw one indescribable somersault and fell—fell so promptly that it blocked the mouth of the pit, all the covering earth of which had been blown away by the shot, and Verkimier could feel the hairy side of the creature, and hear the beating of its heart as it gasped its life away. But in his cramped position he could not push it aside. Well aware of the tenacity of life in tigers, he thought that if the creature revived it would certainly grasp him even in its dying agonies, for the weight of its body and its struggles were already crushing in the upper part of the hole.

To put an end to its sufferings and his own danger, he pointed the revolver at its side and again fired. The crash in the confined hole was tremendous—so awful that the professor thought the weapon must have burst. The struggles of the tiger became more violent than ever, and its weight more oppressive as the earth crumbled away. Again the cold perspiration broke out all over the man, and he became unconscious.

It must not be supposed that the professor’s friends were unwatchful. Although they had promised not to disturb him in his operations, they had held themselves in readiness with rifle, revolver, and spear, and the instant the first shot was heard, they ran down to the scene of action. Before reaching it the second shot quickened their pace as they ran down to the pond—a number of natives yelling and waving torches at their heels.

“Here he is,” cried Moses, who was first on the scene, “dead as mutton!”

“What! the professor?” cried Nigel in alarm.

“No; de tiger.”

“Where’s Verkimier?” asked the hermit as he came up.

“I dun know, massa,” said Moses, looking round him vacantly.

“Search well, men, and be quick, he may have been injured,” cried Van der Kemp, seizing a torch and setting the example.

“Let me out!” came at that moment from what appeared to be the bowels of the earth, causing every one to stand aghast gazing in wonder around and on each other.

“Zounds! vy don’t you let me *out*?” shouted the voice again.

There was an indication of a tendency to flight on the part of the natives, but Nigel’s asking “Where *are* you?” had the effect of inducing them to delay for the answer.

“Here—oonder zee tigre! Kweek, I am suffocat!”

Instantly Van der Kemp seized the animal by the tail, and, with a force worthy of Hercules, heaved it aside as if it had been a dead cat, revealing the man of science underneath—alive and well, but dishevelled, scratched, and soiled—also, as deaf as a door-post.

Chapter Twenty Two.

A Python discovered and a Geyser interviewed.

“It never rains but it pours” is a well-known proverb which finds frequent illustration in the experience of almost every one. At all events Verkimier had reason to believe in the truth of it at that time, for adventures came down on him, as it were, in a sort of deluge, more or less astounding, insomuch that his enthusiastic spirit, bathing, if we may say so, in an ocean of scientific delight, pronounced Sumatra to be the very paradise of the student of nature.

We have not room in this volume to follow him in the details of his wonderful experiences, but we must mention one adventure which he had on the very day after the tiger-incident, because it very nearly had the effect of separating him from his travelling companions.

Being deaf, as we have said—owing to the explosion of his revolver in the hole—but not necessarily dumb, the professor, after one or two futile attempts to hear and converse, deemed it wise to go to bed and spend the few conscious minutes that might precede sleep in watching Van der Kemp, who kindly undertook to skin his tiger for him. Soon the self-satisfied man fell into a sweet infantine slumber, and dreamed of tigers, in which state he gave vent to sundry grunts, gasps, and half-suppressed cries, to the immense delight of Moses, who sat watching him, indulging in a running commentary suggestive of the recent event, and giving utterance now and then to a few imitative growls by way of enhancing the effect of the dreams!

“Look! look! Massa Nadgel, he’s twitchin’ all ober. De tiger’s comin’ to him now.”

“Looks like it, Moses.”

“Yes—an’, see, he grip de ’volver—no, too soon, or de tiger’s hoed away, for he’s stopped twitchin’!—dare; de tiger comes agin!”

A gasp and clenching of the right hand seemed to warrant this assumption. Then a yell rang through the hut; Moses displayed all, and more than all his teeth, and the professor, springing up on one elbow, glared fearfully.

“I’n’t it awrful?” inquired Moses in a low tone. The professor awoke mentally, recognised the situation, smiled an imbecile smile, and sank back again on his pillow with a sigh of relief.

After that, when the skinning of the tiger was completed, the dreams appeared to leave him, and all his comrades joined him in the land of Nod. He was first to awake when daylight entered their hut the following morning, and, feeling in a fresh, quiescent state of mind after the excitement of the preceding night, he lay on his back, his eyes fixed contentedly on the grand tiger-skin which hung on the opposite wall.

By degrees his eyes grew wearied of that object, and he allowed them to travel languidly upwards and along the roof until they rested on the spot directly over his head, where they became fixed, and, at the same time, opened out to a glare, compared to which all his previous glaring was as nothing—for there, in the thatch, looking down upon him, was the angular head of a huge python. The snake was rolled up in a tight coil, and had evidently spent the night within a yard of the professor’s head! Being unable to make out what sort of snake it was, and fearing that it might be a poisonous one, he crept quietly from his couch, keeping his eyes fixed on the reptile as he did so. One result of this mode of action was that he did not see where he was going, and inadvertently thrust one finger into Moses’ right eye, and another into his open mouth. The negro naturally shut his mouth with a snap, while the professor opened his with a roar, and in another moment every man was on his feet blinking inquiringly.

“Look! zee snake!” cried the professor, when Moses released him.

“We must get him out of that,” remarked Van der Kemp, as he quietly made a noose with a piece of rattan, and fastened it to the end of a long pole. With the latter he poked the creature up, and, when it had uncoiled sufficiently, he slipped the noose deftly over its head.

“Clear out, friends,” he said, looking round.

All obeyed with uncommon promptitude except the professor, who valiantly stood his ground. Van der Kemp pulled the python violently down to the floor, where it commenced a tremendous scuffle among the chairs and posts. The hermit kept its head off with the pole, and sought to catch its tail, but failed twice. Seeing this the professor caught the tail as it whipped against his legs, and springing down the steps so violently that he snapped the cord by which the hermit held it, and drew the creature straight out—a thick monster full twelve feet long, and capable of swallowing a dog or a child.

“Out of zee way!” shouted the professor, making a wild effort to swing the python against a tree, but the tail slipped from his grasp, the professor fell, and the snake went crashing against a log, under which it took refuge.

Nigel, who was nearest to it, sprang forward, fortunately caught its tail, and, swinging it and himself round with such force that it could not coil up at all, dashed it against a tree. Before it could recover from the shock, Moses had caught up a hatchet and cut its head off with one blow. The tail wriggled for a few seconds, and the head gaped once or twice, as if in mild surprise at so sudden a finale.

“Zat is strainch—very strainch,” slowly remarked the professor, as, still seated on the ground, he solemnly noted these facts.

“Not so *very* strange, after all,” said Van der Kemp; “I’ve seen the head of many a bigger snake cut off at one blow.”

“Mine frond, you mistake me. It is zee vorking of physical law in zee spiritual vorld zat perplexes me. Moses has cut zee brute in two—physical fact, substance can be divided. Zee two parts are still alife, zerfore, zee life—zee spirit—has also been divided!”

“It is indeed very strange,” said Nigel, with a laugh. “Stranger still that you may cut a worm into several parts, and the life remains in each, but, strangest of all, that you should sit on the ground, professor, instead of rising up, while you philosophise. You are not hurt, I hope—are you?”

“I razer zink I am,” returned the philosopher with a faint smile; “mine onkle, I zink, is spraint.”

This was indeed true, and it seemed as if the poor man’s wanderings were to be, for a time at least, brought to an abrupt close. Fortunately it was found that a pony could be procured at that village, and, as they had entered the borders of the mountainous regions, and the roads were more open and passable than heretofore, it was resolved that the professor should ride until his ankle recovered.

We must now pass over a considerable portion of time and space, and convey the reader, by a forced march, to the crater of an active volcano. By that time Verkimier’s ankle had recovered and the pony had been dismissed. The heavy luggage, with the porters, had been left in the low grounds, for the mountain they had scaled was over 10,000 feet above the sea-level. Only one native from the plain below accompanied them as guide, and three of their porters whose inquiring minds tempted them to make the ascent.

At about 10,000 feet the party reached what the natives called the dempo or edge of the volcano, whence they looked down into the sawah or ancient crater, which was a level space composed of brown soil surrounded by cliffs, and lying like the bottom of a cup 200 feet below them. It had a sulphurous odour, and was dotted here and there with clumps of heath and rhododendrons. In the centre of this was a cone which formed the true—or modern—crater. On scrambling up to the lip of the cone and looking down some 300 feet of precipitous rock they beheld what seemed to be a pure white lake set in a central basin of 200 feet in diameter. The surface of this lakelet smoked, and although it reflected every passing cloud as if it were a mirror, it was in reality a basin of hot mud, the surface of which was about thirty feet below its rim.

“You will soon see a change come over it,” said the hermit, as the party gazed in silent admiration at the weird scene.

He had scarcely spoken, when the middle of the lake became intensely black and scored with dark streaks. This, though not quite obvious at first from the point where they stood, was caused by the slow formation of a great chasm in the centre of the seething lake of mud. The lake was sinking into its own throat. The blackness increased. Then a dull sullen roar was heard, and next moment the entire lake upheaved, not violently, but in a slow, majestic manner some hundreds of feet into the air, whence it fell back into its basin with an awful roar which reverberated and echoed from the rocky walls of the caldron like the singing of an angry sea. An immense volume of steam—the motive power which had blown up the lake—was at the same time liberated and dissipated in the air.

The wave-circles died away on the margin of the lake, and the placid, cloud-reflecting surface was restored until the geyser had gathered fresh force for another upheaval.

“Amazing!” exclaimed Nigel, who had gazed with feelings of awe at this curious exhibition of the tremendous internal forces with which the Creator has endowed the earth.

“Vonderful!” exclaimed the professor, whose astonishment was such, that his eyebrows rose high above the rim of his huge blue binoculars.

Moses, to whom such an exhibition of the powers of nature was familiar, was, we are sorry to say, not much impressed, if impressed at all! Indeed he scarcely noticed it, but watched, with intense teeth-and-gum disclosing satisfaction, the faces of two of the native porters who had never seen anything of the kind before, and whose terrified expressions suggested the probability of a precipitate flight when their trembling limbs became fit to resume duty.

“Will it come again soon?” asked Nigel, turning to Van der Kemp.

“Every fifteen or twenty minutes it goes through that process all day and every day,” replied the hermit.

“But, if I may joodge from zee stones ant scoriae around,” said the professor, “zee volcano is not always so peaceful as it is joost now.”

“You are right. About once in every three years, and sometimes oftener, the crops of coffee, bananas, rice, etcetera, in this region are quite destroyed by sulphur-rain, which covers everything for miles around the crater.”

“Hah! it vould be too hote a place zis for us, if zat vas to happin joost now,” remarked Verkimier with a smile.

“It cannot be far off the time now, I should think,” said Van der Kemp.

All this talk Moses translated, and embellished, to the native porters with the solemn sincerity of a true and thorough-paced hypocrite. He had scarcely finished, and was watching with immense delight the changeful aspect of their whitey-green faces, when another volcanic fit came on, and the deep-toned roar of the coming explosion was heard. It was so awesome that the countenance even of Van der Kemp became graver than usual. As for the two native porters, they gazed and trembled. Nigel and the professor also gazed with lively expectation. Moses—we grieve to record it—hugged himself internally, and gloated over the two porters.

Another moment and there came a mighty roar. Up went the mud-lake hundreds of feet into the air; out came the steam with the sound of a thousand trombones, and away went the two porters, head over heels, down the outer slope of the cone and across the sawah as if the spirit of evil were after them.

There was no cause, however, for alarm. The mud-lake, falling back into its native cup, resumed its placid aspect and awaited its next upheaval with as much tranquillity as if it had never known disturbance in the past, and were indifferent about the future.

That evening our travellers encamped in close proximity to the crater, supped on fowls roasted in an open crevice whence issued steam and sulphurous smells, and slept with the geyser’s intermittent roar sounding in their ears and re-echoing in their dreams.

Chapter Twenty Three.

Tells of Volcanic Fires and a Strange Return “Home.”

This tremendous introduction to volcanic fires was but the prelude to a period of eruptive action which has not been paralleled in the world’s history.

For a short time after this, indeed, the genial nature of the weather tended to banish from the minds of our travellers all thoughts of violence either in terrestrial or human affairs, and as the professor devoted himself chiefly to the comparatively mild occupation of catching and transfixing butterflies and beetles during the march southward, there seemed to be nothing in the wide universe above or below save peace and tranquillity—except, perhaps, in the minds of beetles and butterflies!

Throughout all this period, nevertheless, there were ominous growlings, grumblings, and tremors—faint but frequent—which indicated a condition of mother earth that could not have been called easy.

“Some of the volcanoes of Java must be at work, I think,” said Nigel one night, as the party sat in a small isolated wood-cutter’s hut discussing a supper of rice and fowls with his friends, which they were washing down with home-grown coffee.

“It may be so,” said Van der Kemp in a dubious tone; “but the sounds, though faint, seem to me a good deal nearer. I can’t help thinking that the craters which have so recently opened up in Krakatoa are still active, and that it may be necessary for me to shift my quarters, for my cave is little more, I suspect, than the throat of an ancient volcano.”

“Hah! say you so, mine frond? Zen I vould advise you to make no delay,” said the professor, critically examining a well-picked drumstick. “You see, it is not pleasant to be blown up eizer by the terrestrial eruptions of zee vorld or zee celestial explosions of your vife.—A leetle more rice, Moses if you please. Zanks.”

“Now, mine fronds,” he continued, after having disposed of a supper which it might have taxed a volcano’s throat to swallow, “it is viz great sorrow zat I must part from you here.”

“Part! Why?” asked the hermit in surprise.

“Vy, because I find zis contrie is heaven upon eart’. Zat is, of course, only in a scientific point of view. Zee voods are svarming, zee air is teeming, ant zee vaters are vallo’ing vit life. I cannot tear myself avay. But ve shall meet again—at Telok Betong, or Krakatoa, or Anjer, or Batavia.”

It was found that the man of science was also a man of decision. Nothing would persuade him to go a step further. The wood-cutter's hut suited him, so did the wood-cutter himself, and so, as he said, did the region around him. With much regret, therefore, and an earnest invitation from the hermit to visit his cave, and range the almost unexplored woods of his island, the travellers parted from him; and our three adventurers, dismissing all attendants and hiring three ponies, continued their journey to the southern shores of Sumatra.

As they advanced it soon became evident that the scene of volcanic activity was not so far distant as the island of Java, for the air was frequently darkened by the falling of volcanic dust which covered the land with a greyish powder. As, however, at least sixteen volcanoes have been registered in the island of Sumatra, and there are probably many others, it was impossible to decide where the scene of eruption was, that caused those signs.

One afternoon the travellers witnessed a catastrophe which induced them to forego all idea of spending more time in examining the country. They had arrived at a village where they found a traveller who appeared to be going about without any special object in view. He spoke English, but with a foreign accent. Nigel naturally felt a desire to become sociable with him, but he was very taciturn and evidently wished to avoid intercourse with chance acquaintances. Hearing that there were curious hot-water and mud springs not far off, the stranger expressed a desire to visit them. Nigel also felt anxious to see them, and as one guide was sufficient for the party the stranger joined the party and they went together.

The spot they were led to was evidently a mere crust of earth covering fierce subterranean fires. In the centre of it a small pond of mud was boiling and bubbling furiously, and round this, on the indurated clay, were smaller wells and craters full of boiling mud. The ground near them was obviously unsafe, for it bent under pressure like thin ice, and at some of the cracks and fissures the sulphurous vapour was so hot that the hand could not be held to it without being scalded.

Nigel and the stranger walked close behind the native guide, both, apparently, being anxious to get as near as possible to the central pond. But the guide stopped suddenly, and, looking back, said to Van der Kemp that it was not safe to approach nearer.

Nigel at once stopped, and, looking at the stranger, was struck by the wild, incomprehensible expression of his face as he continued to advance.

"Stop! stop, sir!" cried the hermit on observing this, but the man paid no attention to the warning.

Another instant and the crust on which he stood gave way and he sank into a horrible gulf from which issued a gust of sulphurous vapour and steam. The horror which almost overwhelmed Nigel did not prevent him bounding forward to the rescue. Well was it for him at that time that a cooler head than his own was near. The strong hand of the hermit seized his collar on the instant, and he was dragged backward out of danger, while an appalling shriek from the stranger as he disappeared told that the attempt to succour him would have been too late.

A terrible event of this kind has usually the effect of totally changing, at least for a time, the feelings of those who witness it, so as to almost incapacitate them from appreciating ordinary events or things. For some days after witnessing the sudden and awful fate of this unknown man, Nigel travelled as if in a dream, taking little notice of, or interest in, anything, and replying to questions in mere monosyllables. His companions seemed to be similarly affected, for they spoke very little. Even the volatile spirit of Moses appeared to be subdued, and it was not till they had reached nearly the end of their journey that their usual flow of spirits returned.

Arriving one night at a village not very far from the southern shores of Sumatra they learned that the hermit's presentiments were justified, and that the volcano which was causing so much disturbance in the islands of the archipelago was, indeed, the long extinct one of Krakatoa.

"I've heard a good deal about it from one of the chief men here," said the hermit as he returned to his friends that night about supper-time. "He tells me that it has been more or less in moderate eruption ever since we left the island, but adds that nobody takes much notice of it, as they don't expect it to increase much in violence. I don't agree with them in that," he added gravely.

"Why not?" asked Nigel.

"Partly because of the length of time that has elapsed since its last eruption in 1680; partly from the fact that that eruption—judging from appearances—must have been a very tremendous one, and partly because my knowledge of volcanic action leads me to expect it; but I could not easily explain the reason for my conclusions on the latter point. I have just been to the brow of a ridge not far off whence I have seen the glow in the sky of the Krakatoa fires. They do not, however, appear to be very fierce at the present moment."

As he spoke there was felt by the travellers a blow, as if of an explosion under the house in which they sat. It was a strong vertical bump which nearly tossed them all off their chairs. Van der Kemp and his man, after an exclamation or two, continued supper like men who were used to such interruptions, merely remarking that it was an earthquake. But Nigel, to whom it was not quite so familiar, stood up for a few seconds with a look of anxious uncertainty, as if undecided as to the path of duty and prudence in the circumstances. Moses relieved him.

"Sot down, Massa Nadgel," said that sable worthy, as he stuffed his mouth full of rice; "it's easier to sot dan to stand w'en its eart'quakin'."

Nigel sat down with a tendency to laugh, for at that moment he chanced to glance at the rafters above, where he saw a small anxious-faced monkey gazing down at him.

He was commenting on this creature when another prolonged shock of earthquake came. It was not a bump like the

previous one, but a severe vibration which only served to shake the men in their chairs, but it shook the small monkey off the rafter, and the miserable little thing fell with a shriek and a flop into the rice-dish!

“Git out o’ dat—you scoundril!” exclaimed Moses, but the order was needless, for the monkey bounced out of it like india-rubber and sought to hide its confusion in the thatch, while Moses helped himself to some more of the rice, which, he said, was none the worse for being monkeyfied!

At last our travellers found themselves in the town of Telok Betong, where, being within forty-five miles of Krakatoa, the hermit could both see and hear that his island-home was in violent agitation; tremendous explosions occurring frequently, while dense masses of smoke were ascending from its craters.

“I’m happy to find,” said the hermit, soon after their arrival in the town, “that the peak of Rakata, on the southern part of the island where my cave lies, is still quiet and has shown no sign of breaking out. And now I shall go and see after my canoe.”

“Do you think it safe to venture to visit your cave?” asked Nigel.

“Well, not absolutely safe,” returned the hermit with a peculiar smile, “but, of course, if you think it unwise to run the risk of—”

“I asked a simple question, Van der Kemp, without any thought of myself,” interrupted the youth, as he flushed deeply.

“Forgive me, Nigel,” returned the hermit quickly and gravely, “it is but my duty to point out that we cannot go there without running *some* risk.”

“And it is *my* duty to point out,” retorted his hurt friend, “that when any man, worthy of the name, agrees to follow another, he agrees to accept all risks.”

To this the hermit vouchsafed no further reply than a slight smile and nod of intelligence. Thereafter he went off alone to inquire about his canoe, which, it will be remembered, his friend, the captain of the steamer, had promised to leave for him at this place.

Telok Betong, which was one of the severest sufferers by the eruption of 1883, is a small town at the head of Lampong Bay, opposite to the island of Krakatoa, from which it is between forty and fifty miles distant. It is built on a narrow strip of land at the base of a steep mountain, but little above the sea, and is the chief town of the Lampong Residency, which forms the most southerly province of Sumatra. At the time we write of, the only European residents of the place were connected with Government. The rest of the population was composed of a heterogeneous mass of natives mingled with a number of Chinese, a few Arabs, and a large fluctuating population of traders from Borneo, Celebes, New Guinea, Siam, and the other innumerable isles of the archipelago. These were more or less connected with prahus laden with the rich and varied merchandise of the eastern seas. As each man in the town had been permitted to build his house according to his own fancy, picturesque irregularity was the agreeable result. It may be added that, as each man spoke his own language in his own tones, Babel and noise were the consequence.

In a small hut by the waterside the hermit found the friend—a Malay—to whom his canoe had been consigned, and, in a long low shed close by, he found the canoe itself, with the faithful Spinkie in charge.

“Don’t go near the canoe till you’ve made friends with the monkey,” said the Malay in his own tongue, as he was about to put the key in the door.

“Why not?” asked the hermit.

“Because it is the savagest brute I ever came across,” said the man. “It won’t let a soul come near the canoe. I would have killed it long ago if the captain of the steamer had not told me you wished it to be taken great care of. There, look out! The vixen is not tied up.”

He flung open the shed-door and revealed Spinkie seated in his old place, much deteriorated in appearance and scowling malevolently.

The instant the poor creature heard its master’s voice and saw his form—for his features must have been invisible against the strong light—the scowl vanished from its little visage. With a shriek of joy it sprang like an acrobat from a spring-board and plunged into the hermit’s bosom—to the alarm of the Malay, who thought this was a furious attack.

We need not say that Van der Kemp received his faithful little servant kindly, and it was quite touching to observe the monkey’s intense affection for him. It could not indeed wag its tail like a dog, but it put its arms round its master’s neck with a wondrously human air, and rubbed its little head in his beard and whiskers, drawing itself back now and then, putting its black paws on his cheeks, turning his face round to the light and opening its round eyes wide—as well as its round little mouth—as if to make sure of his identity—then plunging into the whiskers again, and sometimes, when unable to contain its joy, finding a safety-valve in a little shriek.

When the meeting and greeting were over, Van der Kemp explained that he would require his canoe by daybreak the following morning, ordered a few provisions to be got ready, and turned to leave.

“You must get down, Spinkie, and watch the canoe for one night more,” said the hermit, quietly.

But Spinkie did not seem to perceive the necessity, for he clung closer to his master with a remonstrative, croak.

“Get down, Spinkie,” said the hermit firmly, “and watch the canoe.”

The poor beast had apparently learned that Medo-persic law was not more unchangeable than Van der Kemp's commands! At all events it crept down his arm and leg, waddled slowly over the floor of the shed with bent back and wrinkled brow, like a man of ninety, and took up its old position on the deck, the very personification of superannuated woe.

The hermit patted its head gently, however, thus relieving its feelings, and probably introducing hope into its little heart before leaving. Then he returned to his friends and bade them prepare for immediate departure.

It was the night of the 24th of August, and as the eruptions of the volcano appeared to be getting more and more violent, Van der Kemp's anxiety to reach his cave became visibly greater.

"I have been told," said the hermit to Nigel, as they went down with Moses to the place where the canoe had been left, "the history of Krakatoa since we left. A friend informs me that a short time after our departure the eruptions subsided a little, and the people here had ceased to pay much attention to them, but about the middle of June the volcanic activity became more violent, and on the 19th, in particular, it was observed that the vapour-column and the force of the explosions were decidedly on the increase."

"At Katimbang, from which place the island can be seen, it was noticed that a second column of vapour was ascending from the centre of the island, and that the appearance of Perboewatan had entirely changed, its conspicuous summit having apparently been blown away. In July there were some explosions of exceptional violence, and I have now no doubt that it was these we heard in the interior of this island when we were travelling hither, quite lately. On the 11th of this month, I believe, the island was visited in a boat by a government officer, but he did not land, owing to the heavy masses of vapour and dust driven about by the wind, which also prevented him from making a careful examination, but he could see that the forests of nearly the whole island have been destroyed—only a few trunks of blighted trees being left standing above the thick covering of pumice and dust. He reported that the dust near the shore was found to be twenty inches thick."

"If so," said Nigel, "I fear that the island will be no longer fit to inhabit."

"I know not," returned the hermit sadly, in a musing tone. "The officer reported that there is no sign of eruption at Rakata, so that my house is yet safe, for no showers of pumice, however deep, can injure the cave."

Nigel was on the point of asking his friend why he was so anxious to revisit the island at such a time, but, recollecting his recent tiff on that subject, refrained. Afterwards, however, when Van der Kemp was settling accounts with the Malay, he put the question to Moses.

"I can't help wondering," he said, "that Van der Kemp should be so anxious to get back to his cave just now. If he were going in a big boat to save some of his goods and chattels I could understand it, but the canoe, you know, could carry little more than her ordinary lading."

"Well, Massa Nadgel," said Moses, "it's my opinion dat he wants to go back 'cause he's got an uncommon affekshnit heart."

"How? Surely you don't mean that his love of the mere place is so strong that—"

"No, no, Massa Nadgel—'snot dat. But he was awrful fond ob his wife an' darter, an' I know he's got a photogruff ob 'em bof togidder, an' I t'ink he'd sooner lose his head dan lose dat, for I've seed him look at 'em for hours, an' kiss 'em sometimes w'en he t'ought I was asleep."

The return of the hermit here abruptly stopped the conversation. The canoe was carried down and put into the water, watched with profound interest by hundreds of natives and traders, who were all more or less acquainted with the hermit of Rakata.

It was still daylight when they paddled out into Lampong Bay, but the volumes of dust which rose from Krakatoa—although nearly fifty miles off—did much to produce an unusually early twilight.

"Goin' to be bery dark, massa," remarked Moses as they glided past the shipping. "Shall I light de lamp?"

"Do, Moses, but we shan't need it, for as we get nearer home the volcanic fires will light us on our way."

"De volcanic dust is a-goin' to powder us on our way too, massa. Keep your hands out o' the way, Spinkie," said the negro as he fixed a small oil-lamp to the mast, and resumed his paddle.

"After we get out a bit the wind will help us," said the hermit.

"Yes, massa, if he don't blow too strong," returned Moses, as a squall came rushing down the mountains and swept over the bay, ruffling its now dark waters into foaming wavelets.

Altogether, what with the increasing darkness and the hissing squall, and the night-voyage before them, and the fires of Krakatoa which were now clearly visible on the horizon, Nigel Roy felt a more eerie sensation in his breast than he ever remembered to have experienced in all his previous life, but he scorned to admit the fact—even to himself, and said, mentally, that it was rather romantic than otherwise!

Just then there burst upon their ears the yell of a steam-whistle, and a few moments later a steamer bore straight down on them, astern.

"Steamer ahoy!" shouted Van der Kemp. "Will ye throw us a rope?"

“Ay! ay!—ease ’er!—stop ’er! where are ’ee bound for?” demanded an unmistakably English voice.

“Krakatoa!” replied the hermit. “Where are you?”

“Anjer, on the Java coast. Do ’ee want to be smothered, roasted, and blown up?” asked the captain, looking down on the canoe as it ranged alongside the dark hull.

“No, we want to get home.”

“Home! Well, you’re queer fellows in a queer eggshell for such waters. Every man to his taste. Look out for the rope!”

“All right, cappen,” cried Moses as he caught the coil.

Next moment the steamer went ahead, and the canoe ploughed over the Sunda Straits at the rate of thirteen miles an hour, with her sharp prow high out of the water, and the stern correspondingly low. The voyage, which would have otherwise cost our three travellers a long laborious night and part of next day, was by this means so greatly shortened that when daybreak arrived they were not more than thirteen miles to the east of Krakatoa. Nearer than this the steamboat could not take them without going out of her course, but as Van der Kemp and Nigel gratefully acknowledged, it was quite near enough.

“Well, I should just think it was rather too near!” said the captain with a grin.

And, truly, he was justified in making the remark, for the explosions from the volcano had by that time become not only very frequent, but tremendously loud, while the dense cloud which hung above it and spread far and wide over the sky covered the sea with a kind of twilight that struggled successfully against the full advent of day. Lightning too was playing among the rolling black masses of smoke, and the roaring explosions every now and then seemed to shake the very heavens.

Casting off the tow-rope, they turned the bow of their canoe to the island. As a stiffish breeze was blowing, they set the sails, close-reefed, and steered for the southern shore at that part which lay under the shadow of Rakata.

Chapter Twenty Four.

An Awful Night and Terrible Morning.

It was a matter of some satisfaction to find on drawing near to the shore that the peak of Rakata was still intact, and that, although most other parts of the island which could be seen were blighted by fire and covered deeply with pumice-dust, much of the forest in the immediate neighbourhood of the cave was still undestroyed though considerably damaged.

“D’you think our old harbour will be available, Moses?” asked Van der Kemp as they came close to the first headland.

“Pr’aps. Bes’ go an’ see,” was the negro’s practical reply.

“Evidently Rakata is not yet active,” said Nigel, looking up at the grey dust-covered crags as the canoe glided swiftly through the dark water.

“That is more than can be said for the other craters,” returned the hermit. “It seems to me that not only all the old ones are at work, but a number of new ones must have been opened.”

The constant roaring and explosions that filled their ears and the rain of fine ashes bore testimony to the truth of this, though the solid and towering mass of Rakata rose between them and the part of Krakatoa which was in eruption, preventing their seeing anything that was passing except the dense masses of smoke, steam, and dust which rose many miles into the heavens, obstructing the light of day, but forming cloud-masses from which the lurid flames of the volcano were reflected downward.

On reaching the little bay or harbour it was found much as they had left it, save that the rocks and bushes around were thickly covered with dust, and their boat was gone.

“Strange! at such a time one would scarcely have expected thieves to come here,” said the hermit, looking slowly round.

“No t’ief bin here, massa,” said Moses, looking over the side of the canoe. “I see de boat!”

He pointed downwards as he spoke, and on looking over the side they saw the wreck of the boat at the bottom, in about ten feet of water, and crushed beneath a ponderous mass of lava, which must have been ejected from the volcano and afterwards descended upon the boat.

The destruction of the boat rendered it impossible to remove any of the property of the hermit, and Nigel now saw, from his indifference, that this could not have been the cause of his friend’s anxiety and determination to reach his island-home in spite of the danger that such a course entailed. That there was considerable danger soon became very obvious, for, having passed to some extent at this point beyond the shelter of the cliffs of Rakata, and come partly into view of the other parts of the island, the real extent of the volcanic violence burst upon Nigel and Moses as a new revelation. The awful sublimity of the scene at first almost paralysed them, and they failed to note that not only did a constant rain of pumice-dust fall upon them, but that there was also a pretty regular dropping of small stones into the water around them. Their attention was sharply aroused to this fact by the fall of a lump of semi-

molten rock, about the size of a cannon-shot, a short distance off, which was immediately followed by not less than a cubic yard of lava which fell close to the canoe and deluged them with spray.

“We must go,” said the hermit quietly. “No need to expose ourselves here, though the watching of the tremendous forces that our Creator has at command does possess a wonderful kind of fascination. It seems to me the more we see of His power as exerted on our little earth, the more do we realise the paltriness of our conception of the stupendous Might that upholds the Universe.”

While he was speaking, Van der Kemp guided the canoe into its little haven, and in a few minutes he and Moses had carried it into the shelter of the cave out of which Nigel had first seen it emerge. Then the lading was carried up, after which they turned into the track which led to the hermit’s home.

The whole operation may be said to have been performed under fire, for small masses of rock kept pattering continually on the dust-covered ground around them, causing cloudlets, like smoke, to spring up wherever they struck. Nigel and Moses could not resist glancing upward now and then as they moved quickly to and fro, and they experienced a shrinking sensation when a stone fell very near them, but each scorned to exhibit the smallest trace of anxiety, or to suggest that the sooner they got from under fire the better! As for Van der Kemp, he moved about deliberately as if there was nothing unusual going on, and with an absent look on his grave face as though the outbursts of smoke, and fire, and lava, which turned the face of day into lurid night, and caused the cliffs to reverberate with unwonted thunders, had no effect whatever on his mind.

A short walk, however, along the track, which was more than ankle-deep in dust, brought them under the sheltering sides of Rakata, up which they soon scrambled to the mouth of their cave.

Here all was found as they had left it, save that the entrance was knee-deep in pumice-dust.

And now a new and very strange sensation was felt by each of them, for the loud reports and crackling sounds which had assailed their ears outside were reduced by the thick walls of the cave to a continuous dull groan, as it were, like the soft but thunderous bass notes of a stupendous organ. To these sounds were added others which seemed to be peculiar to the cave itself. They appeared to rise from crevices in the floor, and were no doubt due to the action of those pent-up subterranean fires which were imprisoned directly, though it may be very far down, under their feet. Every now and then there came a sudden increase of the united sounds as if the “swell” of the great organ had been opened, and such out-gushing was always accompanied with more or less of indescribable shocks followed by prolonged tremors of the entire mountain.

If the three friends had been outside to observe what was taking place, they would have seen that these symptoms were simultaneous with occasional and extremely violent outbursts from the crater of Perboewatan and his compeers. Indeed they guessed as much, and two of them at least were not a little thankful that, awesome as their position was, they had the thick mountain between them and the fiery showers outside.

Of all this the hermit took no notice, but, hastening into the inner cavern, opened a small box, and took therefrom a bundle of papers and a little object which, at a first glance, Nigel supposed to be a book, but which turned out to be a photograph case. These the hermit put carefully into the breast-pocket of his coat and then turned to his companions with a sigh as if of relief.

“I think there is no danger of anything occurring at this part of the island,” he remarked, looking round the cave, “for there is no sign of smoke and no sulphurous smell issuing from any of the crevices in walls or floor. This, I think, shows that there is no direct communication with Rakata and the active volcano—at least not at present.”

“Do you then think there is a possibility of an outbreak at some future period?” asked Nigel.

“Who can tell? People here, who don’t study the nature of volcanoes much, though surrounded by them, will expect things ere long to resume their normal condition. I can never forget the fact that the greater part of Krakatoa stands, as you know, exactly above the spot where the two great lines of volcanic action cross, and right over the mouth of the immense crater to which Perboewatan and all the other craters serve as mere chimneys or safety-valves. We cannot tell whether a great eruption similar to that of 1680 may not be in store for us. The only reason that I can see for the quiescence of this peak of Rakata is, as I said to you once before, that it stands not so much above the old crater as above and on the safe side of its lip.”

“I t’ink, massa, if I may ventur’ to speak,” said Moses, “dat de sooner we git off his lip de better lest we tumble into his mout’.”

“You may be right, Moses, and I have no objection to quit,” returned the hermit, “now that I have secured the photograph and papers. At the same time I fear the rain of stones and lava is growing worse. It might be safer to stay till there is a lull in the violence of the eruption, and then make a dash for it. What say you, Nigel?”

“I say that you know best, Van der Kemp. I’m ready to abide by your decision, whatever it be.”

“Well, then, we will go out and have a look at the state of matters.”

The view from the entrance was not calculated to tempt them to forsake the shelter of the cave, however uncertain that might be. The latest explosions had enshrouded the island in such a cloud of smoke and dust, that nothing whatever was visible beyond a few yards in front, and even that space was only seen by the faint rays of the lamp issuing from the outer cave. This lamp-light was sufficient, however, to show that within the semi-circle of a few yards there was a continuous rain of grey ashes and dust mingled with occasional stones of various sizes—some larger than a man’s fist.

“To go out in that would be simply to court death,” said Nigel, whose voice was almost drowned by the noise of the explosions and fall of material.

As it was manifest that nothing could be done at the moment except to wait patiently, they returned to the cave, where they lighted the oil-stove, and Moses—who had taken the precaution to carry up some provisions in a bag from the canoe—proceeded to prepare a meal.

“Stummicks must be attended to,” he murmured to himself as he moved about the cave-kitchen and shook his head gravely. “Collapses in dat region is wuss, a long way, dan ’splosion of the eart’!”

Meanwhile, Nigel and the hermit went to examine the passage leading to the observatory. The eruption had evidently done nothing to it, for, having passed upwards without difficulty, they finally emerged upon the narrow ledge.

The scene that burst upon their astonished gaze here was awful in the extreme. It will be remembered that while the hermit’s cave was on the southern side of Krakatoa, facing Java, the stair and passage leading to the observatory completely penetrated the peak of Rakata, so that when standing on the ledge they faced northward and were thus in full view of all the craters between them and Perboewatan. These were in full blast at the time, and, being so near, the heat, as well as the dust, molten lava, and other missiles, instantly drove them back under the protection of the passage from which they had emerged.

Here they found a small aperture which appeared to have been recently formed—probably by a blow from a mass of falling rock—through which they were able to obtain a glimpse of the pandemonium that lay seething below them. They could not see much, however, owing to the smoke which filled the air. The noise of the almost continuous explosions was so loud, that it was impossible to converse save by placing the mouth to the ear and shouting. Fortunately soon after their ascent the wind shifted and blew smoke, fire, and dust away to the northward, enabling them to get out on the ledge, where for a time they remained in comparative safety.

“Look! look at your mirrors!” exclaimed Nigel suddenly, as his wandering gaze happened to turn to the hermit’s sun-guides.

And he might well exclaim, for not only was the glass of these ingenious machines shivered and melted, but their iron frameworks were twisted up into fantastic shapes.

“Lightning has been at work here,” said Van der Kemp.

It did not at the moment occur to either of them that the position on which they stood was peculiarly liable to attack by the subtle and dangerous fluid which was darting and zigzagging everywhere among the rolling clouds of smoke and steam.

A louder report than usual here drew their attention again to the tremendous scene that was going on in front of them. The extreme summit of Perboewatan had been blown into a thousand fragments, which were hurtling upwards and crackling loudly as the smaller masses were impelled against each other in their skyward progress. This crackling has been described by those who heard it from neighbouring shores as a “strange rustling sound.” To our hermit and his friend, who were, so to speak, in the very midst of it, the sound rather resembled the continuous musketry of a battle-field, while the louder explosions might be compared to the booming of artillery, though they necessarily lose by the comparison, for no invention of man ever produced sounds equal to those which thundered at that time from the womb of Krakatoa.

Immediately after this, a fountain of molten lava at white heat welled up in the great throat that had been so violently widened, and, overflowing the edges of the crater, rolled down its sides in fiery rivers. All the other craters in the island became active at the same moment and a number of new ones burst forth. Indeed it seemed to those who watched them that if these had not opened up to give vent to the suppressed forces the whole island must have been blown away. As it was, the sudden generation of so much excessive heat set fire to what remained of trees and everything combustible, so that the island appeared to be one vast seething conflagration, and darkness was for a time banished by a red glare that seemed to Nigel far more intense than that of noonday.

It is indeed the partiality, (if we may say so), of conflagration-light which gives to it the character of impressive power with which we are all so familiar—the intense lights being here cut sharply off by equally intense shadows, and then grading into dull reds and duller greys. The sun, on the other hand, bathes everything in its genial glow so completely that all nature is permeated with it, and there are no intense contrasts, no absolutely black and striking shadows, except in caverns and holes, to form startling contrasts.

“These safety-valves,” said the hermit, referring to the new craters, “have, under God, been the means of saving us from destruction.”

“It would seem so,” said Nigel, who was too overwhelmed by the sight to say much.

Even as he spoke the scene changed as if by magic, for from the cone of Perboewatan there issued a spout of liquid fire, followed by a roar so tremendous that the awe-struck men shrank within themselves, feeling as though that time had really come when the earth is to melt with fervent heat! The entire lake of glowing lava was shot into the air, and lost in the clouds above, while mingled smoke and steam went bellowing after it, and dust fell so thickly that it seemed as if sufficient to extinguish the raging fires. Whether it did so or not is uncertain. It may have been that the new pall of black vapour only obscured them. At all events, after the outburst the darkness of night fell suddenly on all around.

Just then the wind again changed, and the whole mass of vapour, smoke, and ashes came sweeping like the very besom of destruction towards the giddy ledge on which the observers stood. Nigel was so entranced that it is

probable he might have been caught in the horrible tempest and lost, had not his cooler companion grasped his arm and dragged him violently into the passage—where they were safe, though half suffocated by the heat and sulphurous vapours that followed them.

At the same time the thunderous roaring became so loud that conversation was impossible. Van der Kemp therefore took his friend's hand and led him down to the cave, where the sounds were so greatly subdued as to seem almost a calm by contrast.

"We are no doubt in great danger," said the hermit, gravely, as he sat down in the outer cave, "but there is no possibility of taking action to-night. Here we are, whether wisely or unwisely, and here we must remain—at least till there is a lull in the eruption. 'God is our refuge.' He ought to be so at *all* times, but there are occasions when this great, and, I would add, glorious fact is pressed upon our understandings with unusual power. Such a time is this. Come—we will see what His word says to us just now."

To Nigel's surprise, and, he afterwards confessed, to his comfort and satisfaction, the hermit called the negro from his work, and, taking down the large Bible from its shelf, read part of the 46th Psalm, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

He stopped reading at the verse where it is written, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Then, going down on his knees,—without even the familiar formula, "Let us pray"—he uttered a brief but earnest prayer for guidance and deliverance "in the name of Jesus."

Rising, he quietly put the Bible away, and, with the calmness of a thoroughly practical man, who looks upon religion and ordinary matters as parts of one grand whole, ordered Moses to serve the supper.

Thus they spent part of that memorable night of 26th August 1883 in earnest social intercourse, conversing chiefly and naturally about the character, causes, and philosophy of volcanoes, while Perboewatan and his brethren played a rumbling, illustrative accompaniment to their discourse. The situation was a peculiar one. Even the negro was alive to that fact.

"Ain't it koorious," he remarked solemnly in a moment of confidence after swallowing the last bite of his supper. "Ain't it koorious, Massa Nadgel, dat we're a sottin' here comf'rably enjoyin' our wittles ober de mout' ob a v'licano as is quite fit to blow us all to bits an' hois' us into de bery middle ob next week—if not farder?"

"It is strange indeed, Moses," said Nigel, who however added no commentary, feeling indisposed to pursue the subject.

Seeing this, Moses turned to his master.

"Massa," he said. "You don' want nuffin' more to-night, I s'pose?"

"No, Moses, nothing."

"An' is you *quite* easy in your mind?"

"Quite," replied the hermit with his peculiar little smile.

"Den it would be wuss dan stoopid for me to be oneasy, so I'll bid ye bof good-night, an' turn in."

In this truly trustful as well as philosophical state of mind, the negro retired to his familiar couch in the inner cave, and went to sleep.

Nigel and the hermit sat up for some time longer.

"Van der Kemp," said the former, after a pause, "I—I trust you won't think me actuated by impertinent curiosity if I venture to ask you about—the—photograph that I think you—"

"My young friend!" interrupted the hermit, taking the case in question from his breast-pocket; "I should rather apologise to you for having appeared to make any mystery of it—and yet," he added, pausing as he was about to open the case, "I have not shown it to a living soul since the day that— Well, well,—why should I hesitate? It is all I have left of my dead wife and child."

He placed the case in the hands of Nigel, who almost sprang from his seat with excitement as he beheld the countenance of a little child of apparently three or four years of age, who so exactly resembled Kathy Holbein—allowing of course for the difference of age—that he had now no doubt whatever as to her being the hermit's lost daughter. He was on the point of uttering her name, when uncertainty as to the effect the sudden disclosure might have upon the father checked him.

"You seem surprised, my friend," said Van der Kemp gently.

"Most beautiful!" said Nigel, gazing intently at the portrait. "That dear child's face seems so familiar to me that I could almost fancy I had seen it."

He looked earnestly into his friend's face as he spoke, but the hermit was quite unmoved, and there was not a shadow of change in the sad low tone of his voice as he said—

“Yes, she was indeed beautiful, like her mother. As to your fancy about having seen it—mankind is formed in groups and types. We see many faces that resemble others.”

The absent look that was so common to the solitary man here overspread his massive features, and Nigel felt crushed, as it were, back into himself. Thus, without having disclosed his belief, he retired to rest in a very anxious state of mind, while the hermit watched.

“Don’t take off your clothes,” he said. “If the sounds outside lead me to think things are quieting down, I will rouse you and we shall start at once.”

It was very early on the morning of the 27th when Van der Kemp roused our hero.

“Are things quieter?” asked Nigel as he rose.

“Yes, a little, but not much—nevertheless we must venture to leave.”

“Is it daylight yet?”

“No. There will be no daylight to-day!” with which prophecy the hermit left him and went to rouse Moses.

“Massa,” said the faithful negro. “Isn’t you a-goin’ to take nuffin’ wid you? None ob de books or t’ings!”

“No—nothing except the old Bible. All the rest I leave behind. The canoe could not carry much. Besides, we may have little time. Get ready; quick! and follow me.”

Moses required no spur. The three men left the cave together. It was so intensely dark that the road could not be distinguished, but the hermit and his man were so familiar with it that they could have followed it blindfold.

On reaching the cave at the harbour, some light was obtained from the fitful outbursts of the volcano, which enabled them to launch the canoe and push off in safety. Then, without saying a word to each other, they coasted along the shore of the island, and, finally, leaving its dangers behind them, made for the island of Java—poor Spinkie sitting in his accustomed place and looking uncommonly subdued!

Scarcely had they pushed off into Sunda Straits when the volcano burst out afresh. They had happily seized on the only quiet hour that the day offered, and had succeeded, by the aid of the sails, in getting several miles from the island without receiving serious injury, although showers of stones and masses of rock of all sizes were falling into the sea around them.

Van der Kemp was so far right in his prophecy that there would be no daylight that day. By that time there should have been light, as it was nearly seven o’clock on the memorable morning of the 27th of August. But now, although the travellers were some miles distant from Krakatoa, the gloom was so impervious that Nigel, from his place in the centre of the canoe, could not see the form of poor Spinkie—which sat clinging to the mast only two feet in front of him—save when a blaze from Perboewatan or one of the other craters lighted up island and ocean with a vivid glare.

At this time the sea began to run very high and the wind increased to a gale, so that the sails of the canoe, small though they were, had to be reduced.

“Lower the foresail, Nigel,” shouted the hermit. “I will close-reef it. Do you the same to the mainsail.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” was the prompt reply.

Moses and Nigel kept the little craft straight to the wind while the foresail was being reefed, Van der Kemp and the former performing the same duty while Nigel reefed the mainsail.

Suddenly there came a brief but total cessation of the gale, though not of the tumultuous heaving of the waters. During that short interval there burst upon the world a crash and a roar so tremendous that for a few moments the voyagers were almost stunned!

It is no figure of speech to say that the *world* heard the crash. Hundreds, ay, thousands of miles did the sound of that mighty upheaval pass over land and sea to startle, more or less, the nations of the earth.

The effect of a stupendous shock on the nervous system is curiously various in different individuals. The three men who were so near to the volcano at that moment involuntarily looked round and saw by the lurid blaze that an enormous mass of Krakatoa, rent from top to bottom, was falling headlong into the sea; while the entire heavens were alive with flame, lightning, steam, smoke, and the upward-shooting fragments of the hideous wreck!

The hermit calmly rested his paddle on the deck and gazed around in silent wonder. Nigel, not less smitten with awe, held his paddle with an iron grasp, every muscle quivering with tension in readiness for instant action when the need for action should appear. Moses, on the other hand, turning round from the sight with glaring eyes, resumed paddling with unreasoning ferocity, and gave vent at once to his feelings and his opinion in the sharp exclamation—“Blown to bits!”

Chapter Twenty Five.

Adventures of the “Sunshine” and an Unexpected Reunion.

We must request the reader to turn back now for a brief period to a very different scene.

A considerable time before the tremendous catastrophe described in the last chapter—which we claim to have recorded without the slightest exaggeration, inasmuch as exaggeration were impossible—Captain David Roy, of the good brig *Sunshine*, received the letter which his son wrote to him while in the jungles of Sumatra.

The captain was seated in the back office of a Batavian merchant at the time, smoking a long clay pipe—on the principle, no doubt, that moderate poisoning is conducive to moderate health!

As he perused the letter, the captain's eyes slowly opened; so did his mouth, and the clay pipe, falling to the floor, was reduced to little pieces. But the captain evidently cared nothing for that. He gave forth a prolonged whistle, got up, smote upon his thigh, and exclaimed with deep-toned emphasis—

"The rascal!"

Then he sat down again and re-perused the letter, with a variety of expression on his face that might have recalled the typical April day, minus the tears.

"The rascal!" he repeated, as he finished the second reading of the letter and thrust it into his pocket. "I knew there was somethin' i' the wind wi' that little girl! The memory o' my own young days when I boarded and captured the poetess is strong upon me yet. I saw it in the rascal's eye the very first time they met—an' he thinks I'm as blind as a bat, I'll be bound, with his poetical reef-point-pattering sharpness. But it's a strange discovery he has made and must be looked into. The young dog! He gives me orders as if he were the owner."

Jumping up, Captain Roy hurried out into the street. In passing the outer office he left a message with one of the clerks for his friend the merchant.

"Tell him," he said, "that I'll attend to that little business about the bill when I come back. I'm going to sail for the Keeling Islands this afternoon."

"The Keeling Islands?" exclaimed the clerk in surprise.

"Yes—I've got business to do there. I'll be back, all bein' well, in a week—more or less."

The clerk's eyebrows remained in a raised position for a few moments, until he remembered that Captain Roy, being owner of his ship and cargo, was entitled to do what he pleased with his own and himself. Then they descended, and he went on with his work, amusing himself with the thought that the most curious beings in the world were seafaring men.

"Mr Moor," said the captain somewhat excitedly, as he reached the deck of his vessel, "are all the men aboard?"

"All except Jim Sloper, sir."

"Then send and hunt up Jim Sloper at once, for we sail this afternoon for the Keeling Islands."

"Very well, sir."

Mr Moor was a phlegmatic man; a self-contained and a reticent man. If Captain Roy had told him to get ready to sail to the moon that afternoon, he would probably have said "Very well, sir," in the same tone and with the same expression.

"May I ask, sir, what sort of cargo you expect there?" said Mr Moor; for to his practical mind some re-arrangement of the cargo already on board might be necessary for the reception of that to be picked up at Keeling.

"The cargo we'll take on board will be a girl," said the captain.

"A what, sir?"

"A girl."

"Very well, sir."

This ended the business part of the conversation. Thereafter they went into details so highly nautical that we shrink from recording them. An amateur detective, in the form of a shipmate, having captured Jim Sloper, the *Sunshine* finally cleared out of the port of Batavia that evening, shortly before its namesake took his departure from that part of the southern hemisphere.

Favouring gales carried the brig swiftly through Sunda Straits and out into the Indian Ocean. Two days and a half brought her to the desired haven. On the way, Captain Roy took note of the condition of Krakatoa, which at that time was quietly working up its subterranean forces with a view to the final catastrophe; opening a safety-valve now and then to prevent, as it were, premature explosion.

"My son's friend, the hermit of Rakata," said the captain to his second mate, "will find his cave too hot to hold him, I think, when he returns."

"Looks like it, sir," said Mr Moor, glancing up at the vast clouds which were at that time spreading like a black pall over the re-awakened volcano. "Do you expect 'em back soon, sir?"

"Yes—time's about up now. I shouldn't wonder if they reach Batavia before us."

Arrived at the Keeling Islands, Captain Roy was received, as usual, with acclamations of joy, but he found that he was

by no means as well fitted to act the part of a diplomatist as he was to sail a ship. It was, in truth, a somewhat delicate mission on which his son had sent him, for he could not assert definitely that the hermit actually was Kathleen Holbein's father, and her self-constituted parents did not relish the idea of letting slip, on a mere chance, one whom they loved as a daughter.

"Why not bring this man who claims to be her father *here*?" asked the perplexed Holbein.

"Because—because, p'raps he won't come," answered the puzzled mariner, who did not like to say that he was simply and strictly obeying his son's orders. "Besides," he continued, "the man does not claim to be anything at all. So far as I understand it, my boy has not spoken to him on the subject, for fear, I suppose, of raisin' hopes that ain't to be realised."

"He is right in that," said Mrs Holbein, "and we must be just as careful not to raise false hopes in dear little Kathy. As your son says, it may be a mistake after all. We must not open our lips to her about it."

"Right you are, madam," returned the captain. "Mum's the word; and we've only got to say she's goin' to visit one of your old friends in Anjer—which'll be quite true, you know, for the landlady o' the chief hotel there is a great friend o' yours, and we'll take Kathy to her straight. Besides, the trip will do her health a power o' good, though I'm free to confess it don't need no good to be done to it, bein' A1 at the present time. Now, just you agree to give the girl a holiday, an' I'll pledge myself to bring her back safe and sound—with her father, if he's *him*; without him if he isn't."

With such persuasive words Captain Roy at length overcame the Holbein objections. With the girl herself he had less difficulty, his chief anxiety being, as he himself said, "to give her reasons for wishin' her to go without tellin' lies."

"Wouldn't you like a trip in my brig to Anjer, my dear girl?" He had almost said daughter, but thought it best not to be too precipitate.

"Oh! I should like it *so* much," said Kathleen, clasping her little hands and raising her large eyes to the captain's face.

"*Dear* child!" said the captain to himself. Then aloud, "Well, I'll take you."

"But I—I fear that father and mother would not like me to go—perhaps."

"No fear o' them, my girl," returned the captain, putting his huge rough hand on her pretty little head as if in an act of solemn appropriation, for, unlike too many fathers, this exemplary man considered only the sweetness, goodness, and personal worth of the girl, caring not a straw for other matters, and being strongly of opinion that a man should marry young if he possess the spirit of a man or the means to support a wife. As he was particularly fond of Kathleen, and felt quite sure that his son had deeper reasons than he chose to express for his course of action, he entertained a strong hope, not to say conviction, that she would also become fond of Nigel, and that all things would thus work together for a smooth course to this case of true love.

It will be seen from all this that Captain David Roy was a sanguine man. Whether his hopes were well grounded or not remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, having, as Mr Moor said, shipped the cargo, the *Sunshine* set sail once more for Sunda Straits in a measure of outward gloom that formed a powerful contrast to the sunny hopes within her commander's bosom, for Krakatoa was at that time progressing rapidly towards the consummation of its designs, as partly described in the last chapter.

Short though that voyage was, it embraced a period of action so thrilling that ever afterwards it seemed a large slice of life's little day to those who went through it.

We have said that the culminating incidents of the drama began on the night of the 26th. Before that time, however, the cloud-pall was fast spreading over land and sea, and the rain of pumice and ashes had begun to descend.

The wind being contrary, it was several days before the brig reached the immediate neighbourhood of Krakatoa, and by that time the volcano had begun to enter upon the stage which is styled by vulcanologists "paroxysmal," the explosions being extremely violent as well as frequent.

"It is very awful," said Kathleen in a low voice, as she clasped the captain's arm and leaned her slight figure on it. "I have often heard the thunder of distant volcanoes, but never been so near as to hear such terrible sounds."

"Don't be frightened, my ducky," said the captain in a soothing tone, for he felt from the appearance of things that there was indeed some ground for alarm. "Volcanoes always look worse when you're near them."

"I not frightened," she replied. "Only I got strange, solemn feelings. Besides, no danger can come till God allows."

"That's right, lass. Mrs Holbein has been a true mother if she taught you that."

"No, she did not taught me that. My father taught me that."

"What! Old Holbein?"

"No—my father, who is dead," she said in a low voice.

"Oh! I see. My poor child, I should have understood you. Forgive me."

As the captain spoke, a tremendous outburst on Krakatoa turned their minds to other subjects. They were by that

time drawing near to the island, and the thunders of the eruption seemed to shake not only the heavens but even the great ocean itself. Though the hour was not much past noon the darkness soon became so dense that it was difficult to perceive objects a few yards distant, and, as pieces of stone the size of walnuts, or even larger, began to fall on the deck, the captain sent Kathleen below.

“There’s no saying where or when a big stone may fall, my girl,” he said, “and it’s not the habit of Englishmen to let women come under fire, so you’ll be safer below. Besides, you’ll be able to see something of what’s goin’ on out o’ the cabin windows.”

With the obedience that was natural to her, Kathleen went down at once, and the captain made everything as snug as possible, battening down the hatches and shortening sail so as to be ready for whatever might befall.

“I don’t like the look o’ things, Mr Moor,” said the captain when the second mate came on deck to take his watch.

“No more do I, sir,” answered Mr Moor calmly.

The aspect of things was indeed very changeable. Sometimes, as we have said, all nature seemed to be steeped in thick darkness, at other times the fires of the volcano blazed upward, spreading a red glare on the rolling clouds and over the heaving sea. Lightning also played its part as well as thunder, but the latter was scarcely distinguishable from the volcano’s roar. Three days before Sunday the 26th of August, Captain Roy—as well as the crews of several other vessels that were in Sunda Straits at the time—had observed a marked though gradual increase in the violence of the eruption. On that day, as we read in the *Report of the Krakatoa Committee of the Royal Society*, about 1 p.m. the detonations caused by the explosive action attained such violence as to be heard at Batavia, about 100 English miles away. At 2 p.m. of the same day, Captain Thompson of the *Medea*, when about 76 miles east-north-east of the island, saw a black mass rising like clouds of smoke to a height which has been estimated at no less than 17 miles! And the detonations were at that time taking place at intervals of ten minutes. But, terrible though these explosions must have been, they were but as the whisperings of the volcano. An hour later they had increased so much as to be heard at Bandong and other places 150 miles away, and at 5 p.m. they had become so tremendous as to be heard over the whole island of Java, the eastern portion of which is about 650 miles from Krakatoa.

And the sounds thus heard were not merely like distant thunder. In Batavia—although, as we have said, 100 miles off—they were so violent during the whole of that terrible Sunday night as to prevent the people from sleeping. They were compared to the “discharge of artillery close at hand,” and caused a rattling of doors, windows, pictures, and chandeliers.

Captain Watson of the *Charles Bal*, who chanced to be only 10 miles south of the volcano, also compared the sounds to discharges of artillery, but this only shows the feebleness of ordinary language in attempting to describe such extraordinary sounds, for if they were comparable to close artillery at Batavia, the same comparison is inappropriate at only ten miles’ distance. He also mentions the crackling noise, probably due to the impact of fragments in the atmosphere, which were noticed by the hermit and Nigel while standing stunned and almost stupefied on the giddy ledge of Rakata that same Sunday.

About five in the evening of that day, the brig *Sunshine* drew still nearer to the island, but the commotion at the time became so intense, and the intermittent darkness so profound, that Captain Roy was afraid to continue the voyage and shortened sail. Not only was there a heavy rolling sea, but the water was seething, as if about to boil.

“Heave the lead, Mr Moor,” said the captain, who stood beside the wheel.

“Yes, sir,” answered the imperturbable second mate, who thereupon gave the necessary order, and when the depth was ascertained, the report was “Ten fathoms, sand, with a hot bottom.”

“A hot bottom! what do you mean?”

“The lead’s ’ot, sir,” replied the sailor.

This was true, as the captain found when he applied his hand to it.

“I do believe the world’s going on fire,” he muttered; “but it’s a comfort to know that it can’t very well blaze up as long as the sea lasts!”

Just then a rain of pumice in large pieces, and quite warm, began to fall upon the deck. As most people know, pumice is extremely light, so that no absolute injury was done to any one, though such rain was excessively trying. Soon, however, a change took place. The dense vapours and dust-clouds which had rendered it so excessively dark were entirely lighted up from time to time by fierce flashes of lightning which rent as well as painted them in all directions. At one time this great mass of clouds presented the appearance of an immense pine-tree with the stem and branches formed of volcanic lightning.

Captain Roy, fearing that these tremendous sights and sounds would terrify the poor girl in the cabin, was about to look in and reassure her, when the words “Oh! how splendid!” came through the slightly opened door. He peeped in and saw Kathleen on her knees on the stern locker, with her hands clasped, gazing out of one of the stern windows.

“Hm! she’s all right,” he muttered, softly re-closing the door and returning on deck. “If she thinks it’s splendid, she don’t need no comfortin’! It’s quite clear that she don’t know what danger means—and why should she? Humph! there go some more splendid sights for her,” he added, as what appeared to be chains of fire ascended from the volcano to the sky.

Just then a soft rain began to fall. It was warm, and, on examination at the binnacle-lamp, turned out to be mud.

Slight at first, it soon poured down in such quantities that in ten minutes it lay six inches thick on the deck, and the crew had to set to work with shovels to heave it overboard. At this time there was seen a continual roll of balls of white fire down the sides of the peak of Rakata, caused, doubtless, by the ejection of white-hot fragments of lava. Then showers of masses like iron cinders fell on the brig, and from that time onward till four o'clock of the morning of the 27th, explosions of indescribable grandeur continually took place, as if the mountains were in a continuous roar of terrestrial agony—the sky being at one moment of inky blackness, the next in a blaze of light, while hot, choking, and sulphurous smells almost stifled the voyagers.

At this point the captain again became anxious about Kathleen and went below. He found her in the same place and attitude—still fascinated!

"My child," he said, taking her hand, "you must lie down and rest."

"Oh! no. Do let me stay up," she begged, entreatingly.

"But you must be tired—sleepy."

"Sleepy! who could sleep with such wonders going on around? Pray *don't* tell me to go to bed!"

It was evident that poor Kathy had the duty of obedience to authority still strong upon her. Perhaps the memory of the Holbein nursery had not yet been wiped out.

"Well, well," said the captain with a pathetic smile, "you are as safe—comfortable, I mean—here as in your berth or anywhere else."

As there was a lull in the violence of the eruption just then, the captain left Kathleen in the cabin and went on deck. It was not known at that time what caused this lull, but as it preceded the first of the four grand explosions which effectually eviscerated—emptied—the ancient crater of Krakatoa, we will give, briefly, the explanation of it as conjectured by the men of science.

Lying as it did so close to the sea-level, the Krakatoa volcano, having blown away all its cones, and vents, and safety-valves—from Perboewatan southward, except the peak of Rakata—let the sea rush in upon its infernal fires. This result, ordinary people think, produced a gush of steam which caused the grand terminal explosions. Vulcanologists think otherwise, and with reason—which is more than can be said of ordinary people, who little know the power of the forces at work below the crust of our earth! The steam thus produced, although on so stupendous a scale, was free to expand and therefore went upwards, no doubt in a sufficiently effective gust and cloud. But nothing worthy of being named a blow-up was there.

The effect of the in-rushing water was to cool the upper surface of the boiling lava and convert it into a thick hard solid crust at the mouth of the great vent. In this condition the volcano resembled a boiler with all points of egress closed and the safety-valve shut down! Oceans of molten lava creating expansive gases below; no outlet possible underneath, and the neck of the bottle corked with tons of solid rock! One of two things must happen in such circumstances: the cork must go or the bottle must burst! Both events happened on that terrible night. All night long the corks were going, and at last—Krakatoa burst!

In the hurly-burly of confusion, smoke, and noise, no eye could note the precise moment when the island was shattered, but there were on the morning of the 27th four supreme explosions, which rang loud and high above the horrible average din. These occurred—according to the careful investigations made, at the instance of the Dutch Indian Government, by the eminent geologist, Mr R.D.M. Verbeek—at the hours of 5:30, 6:44, 10:02, and 10:52 in the morning. Of these the third, about 10, was by far the worst for violence and for the widespread devastation which it produced.

At each of these explosions a tremendous sea-wave was created by the volcano, which swept like a watery ring from Krakatoa as a centre to the surrounding shores. It was at the second of these explosions—that of 6:44—that the fall of the mighty cliff took place which was seen by the hermit and his friends as they fled from the island, and, on the crest of the resulting wave, were carried along they scarce knew whither.

As the previous wave—that of 5:30—had given the brig a tremendous heave upwards, the captain, on hearing the second, ran down below for a moment to tell Kathleen there would soon be another wave, but that she need fear no danger.

"The brig is deep and has a good hold o' the water," he said, "so the wave is sure to slip under her without damage. I wish I could hope it would do as little damage when it reaches the shore."

As he spoke a strange and violent crash was heard overhead, quite different from volcanic explosions, like the falling of some heavy body on the deck.

"One o' the yards down!" muttered the captain as he ran to the cabin door. "Hallo, what's that, Mr Moor?"

"Canoe just come aboard, sir."

"A canoe?"

"Yes, sir. Crew, three men and a monkey. All insensible—hallo!"

The "hallo!" with which the second mate finished his remark was so unlike his wonted tone, and so full of genuine surprise, that the captain ran forward with unusual haste, and found a canoe smashed to pieces against the foremast, and the mate held a lantern close to the face of one of the men while the crew were examining the others.

A single glance told the captain that the mud-bespattered figure that lay before him as if dead was none other than his own son! The great wave had caught the frail craft on its crest, and, sweeping it along with lightning speed for a short distance, had hurled it on the deck of the *Sunshine* with such violence as to completely stun the whole crew. Even Spinkie lay in a melancholy little heap in the lee scuppers.

You think this a far-fetched coincidence, good reader! Well, all we can say is that we could tell you of another—a double-coincidence, which was far more extraordinary than this one, but as it has nothing to do with our tale we refrain from inflicting it on you.

Chapter Twenty Six.

A Climax.

Three of those who had tumbled thus unceremoniously on the deck of the *Sunshine* were soon sufficiently recovered to sit up and look around in dazed astonishment—namely Nigel, Moses, and the monkey—but the hermit still lay prone where he had been cast, with a pretty severe wound on his head, from which blood was flowing freely.

“Nigel, my boy!”

“Father!” exclaimed the youth. “Where am I? What has happened?”

“Don’t excite yourself, lad,” said the mariner, stooping and whispering into his son’s ear. “We’ve got *her* aboard!”

No treatment could have been more effectual in bringing Nigel to his senses than this whisper.

“Is—is—Van der Kemp safe?” he asked anxiously.

“All right—only stunned, I think. That’s him they’re just goin’ to carry below. Put ’im in my bunk, Mr Moor.”

“Ay ay, sir.”

Nigel sprang up. “Stay, father,” he said in a low voice. “*She* must not see him for the first time like this.”

“All right, boy. I understand. You leave that to me. My bunk has bin shifted for’id—more amidships—an’ Kathy’s well aft. They shan’t be let run foul of each other. You go an’ rest on the main hatch till we get him down. Why, here’s a nigger! Where did you pick him? oh! I remember. You’re the man we met, I suppose, wi’ the hermit on Krakatoa that day o’ the excursion from Batavia.”

“Yes, das me. But we’ll meet on Krakatoa no more, for dat place am blown to bits.”

“I’m pretty well convinced o’ that by this time, my man. Not hurt much, I hope?”

“No, sar—not more ’n I can stan’. But I’s ’fraid dat poor Spinkie’s a’most used up—hallo! what you gwine to do with massa?” demanded the negro, whose wandering faculties had only in part returned.

“He’s gone below. All right. Now, you go and lie down beside my son on the hatch. I’ll—see to Van der Kemp.”

But Captain David Roy’s intentions, like those of many men of greater note, were frustrated by the hermit himself, who recovered consciousness just as the four men who carried him reached the foot of the companion-ladder close to the cabin door. Owing to the deeper than midnight darkness that prevailed a lamp was burning in the cabin—dimly, as if, infected by the universal chaos, it were unwilling to enlighten the surrounding gloom.

On recovering consciousness Van der Kemp was, not unnaturally, under the impression that he had fallen into the hands of foes. With one effectual convulsion of his powerful limbs he scattered his bearers right and left, and turning—like all honest men—to the light, he sprang into the cabin, wrenched a chair from its fastenings, and, facing round, stood at bay.

Kathleen, seeing this blood-stained giant in such violent action, naturally fled to her cabin and shut the door.

As no worse enemy than Captain Roy presented himself at the cabin door, unarmed, and with an anxious look on his rugged face, the hermit set down the chair, and feeling giddy sank down on it with a groan.

“I fear you are badly hurt, sir. Let me tie a handkerchief round your wounded head,” said the captain soothingly.

“Thanks, thanks. Your voice is not unfamiliar to me,” returned the hermit with a sigh, as he submitted to the operation. “I thought I had fallen somehow into the hands of pirates. Surely an accident must have happened. How did I get here? Where are my comrades—Nigel and the negro?”

“My son Nigel is all right, sir, and so is your man Moses. Make your mind easy—an’ pray don’t speak while I’m working at you. I’ll explain it all in good time. Stay, I’ll be with you in a moment.”

The captain—fearing that Kathleen might come out from curiosity to see what was going on, and remembering his son’s injunction—went to the girl’s berth with the intention of ordering her to keep close until he should give her leave to come out. Opening the door softly and looking in, he was startled, almost horrified, to see Kathleen standing motionless like a statue, with both hands pressed tightly over her heart. The colour had fled from her beautiful face; her long hair was flung back; her large lustrous eyes were wide open and her lips slightly parted, as if her whole being had been concentrated in eager expectancy.

“What’s wrong, my girl?” asked the captain anxiously. “You’ve no cause for fear. I just looked in to—.”

“That voice!” exclaimed Kathleen, with something of awe in her tones—“Oh! I’ve heard it so often in my dreams.”

“Hush! shush! my girl,” said the captain in a low tone, looking anxiously round at the wounded man. But his precautions were unavailing,—Van der Kemp had also heard a voice which he thought had long been silent in death. The girl’s expression was almost repeated in his face. Before the well-meaning mariner could decide what to do, Kathleen brushed lightly past him, and stood in the cabin gazing as if spell-bound at the hermit.

“Winnie!” he whispered, as if scarcely daring to utter the name.

“Father!”

She extended both hands towards him as she spoke. Then, with a piercing shriek, she staggered backward, and would have fallen had not the captain caught her and let her gently down.

Van der Kemp vaulted the table, fell on his knees beside her, and, raising her light form, clasped her to his heart, just as Nigel and Moses, alarmed by the scream, sprang into the cabin.

“Come, come; away wi’ you—you stoopid grampusses!” cried the captain, pushing the intruders out of the cabin, following them, and closing the door behind him. “This is no place for bunglers like you an’ me. We might have known that natur’ would have her way, an’ didn’t need no help from the like o’ us. Let’s on deck. There’s enough work there to look after that’s better suited to us.”

Truly there was enough—and more than enough—to claim the most anxious attention of all who were on board of the *Sunshine* that morning, for hot mud was still falling in showers on the deck, and the thunders of the great volcano were still shaking heaven, earth, and sea.

To clear the decks and sails of mud occupied every one for some time so earnestly that they failed to notice at first that the hermit had come on deck, found a shovel, and was working away like the rest of them. The frequent and prolonged blazes of intense light that ever and anon banished the darkness showed that on his face there sat an expression of calm, settled, triumphant joy, which was strangely mingled with a look of quiet humility.

“I thank God for this,” said Nigel, going forward when he observed him and grasping his hand.

“You knew it?” exclaimed the hermit in surprise.

“Yes. I knew it—indeed, helped to bring you together, but did not dare to tell you till I was quite sure. I had hoped to have you meet in very different circumstances.”

“‘It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,’” returned the hermit reverently. “God bless you, Nigel. If you have even aimed at bringing this about, I owe you *more* than my life.”

“You must have lost a good deal of blood, Van der Kemp. Are you much hurt?” asked Nigel, as he observed the bandage round his friend’s head.

“Somewhat. Not much, I hope—but joy, as well as blood, gives strength, Nigel.”

A report from a man who had just been ordered to take soundings induced the captain at this time to lay-to.

“It seems to me,” he said to Nigel and the hermit who stood close beside him, “that we are getting too near shore. But in cases o’ this kind the bottom o’ the sea itself can’t be depended on.”

“What part of the shore are we near, d’you think, father?”

“Stand by to let go the anchor!” roared the captain, instead of answering the question.

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied the second mate, whose cool, sing-song, business-like tone at such a moment actually tended to inspire a measure of confidence in those around him.

Another moment, and the rattling chain caused a tremor through the vessel, which ceased when the anchor touched bottom, and they rode head to wind.

Coruscations of bluish light seemed to play about the masts, and balls of electric fire tipped the yards, throwing for a short time a ghastly sheen over the ship and crew, for the profound darkness had again settled down, owing, no doubt, to another choking of the Krakatoa vent.

Before the light referred to went out, Moses was struck violently on the chest by, something soft, which caused him to stagger.

It was Spinkie! In the midst of the unusual horrors that surrounded him, while clinging to the unfamiliar mizzen shrouds on which in desperation the poor monkey had found a temporary refuge, the electric fire showed him the dark figure of his old familiar friend standing not far off. With a shriek of not quite hopeless despair, and an inconceivable bound, Spinkie launched himself into space. His early training in the forest stood him in good stead at that crisis! As already said he hit the mark fairly, and clung to Moses with a tenacity that was born of mingled love and desperation. Finding that nothing short of cruelty would unfix his little friend, Moses stuffed him inside the breast of his cotton shirt. In this haven of rest the monkey heaved a sigh of profound contentment, folded his hands on his bosom, and meekly went to sleep.

Two of the excessively violent paroxysms of the volcano, above referred to, had by that time taken place, but the third, and worst—that which occurred about 10 a.m.—was yet in store for them, though they knew it not, and a lull in the roar, accompanied by thicker darkness than ever, was its precursor. There was not, however, any lull in the violence of the wind.

“I don’t like these lulls,” said Captain Roy to the hermit, as they stood close to the binnacle, in the feeble light of its lamp. “What is that striking against our sides, Mr Moor?”

“Looks like floating pumice, sir,” answered the second mate, “and I think I see palm-trees amongst it.”

“Ay, I thought so, we must be close to land,” said the captain. “We can’t be far from Anjer, and I fear the big waves that have already passed us have done some damage. Lower a lantern over the side,—no, fetch an empty tar-barrel and let’s have a flare. That will enable us to see things better.”

While the barrel was being fastened to a spar so as to be thrust well out beyond the side of the brig, Van der Kemp descended the companion and opened the cabin door.

“Come up now, Winnie, darling.”

“Yes, father,” was the reply, as the poor girl, who had been anxiously awaiting the summons, glided out and clasped her father’s arm with both hands. “Are things quieting down?”

“They are, a little. It may be temporary, but—Our Father directs it all.”

“True, father. I’m *so* glad of that!”

“Mind the step, we shall have more light on deck. There is a friend there who has just told me he met you on the Cocos-Keeling Island, Nigel Roy;—you start, Winnie?”

“Y–yes, father. I am *so* surprised, for it is *his* father who sails this ship! And I cannot imagine how he or you came on board.”

“Well, I was going to say that I believe it is partly through Nigel that you and I have been brought together, but there is mystery about it that I don’t yet understand; much has to be explained, and this assuredly is not the time or place. Here, Nigel, is your old Keeling friend.”

“Ay—friend! humph!” said old Roy softly to himself.

“My dear—child!” said young Roy, paternally, to the girl as he grasped her hand. “I cannot tell you how thankful I am that this has been brought about, and—and that *I* have had some little hand in it.”

“There’s more than pumice floating about in the sea, sir,” said Mr Moor, coming aft at the moment and speaking to the captain in a low tone. “You’d better send the young lady below—or get some one to take up her attention just now.”

“Here, Nigel. Sit down under the lee of the companion, an’ tell Kathy how this all came about,” said the captain, promptly, as if issuing nautical orders. “I want you here, Van der Kemp.”

So saying, the captain, followed by the hermit, went with the second mate to the place where the flaming tar-barrel was casting a lurid glare upon the troubled sea.

Chapter Twenty Seven.

“Blown to Bits.”

The sight that met their eyes was well calculated to shock and sadden men of much less tender feeling than Van der Kemp and Captain Roy.

The water had assumed an appearance of inky blackness, and large masses of pumice were floating past, among which were numerous dead bodies of men, women, and children, intermingled with riven trees, fences, and other wreckage from the land, showing that the two great waves which had already passed under the vessel had caused terrible devastation on some parts of the shore. To add to the horror of the scene large sea-snakes were seen swimming wildly about, as if seeking to escape from the novel dangers that surrounded them.

The sailors looked on in awe-stricken silence for some time.

“P’raps some of ’em may be alive yet!” whispered one. “Couldn’t we lower a boat?”

“Impossible in such a sea,” said the captain, who overheard the remark. “Besides, no life could exist there.”

“Captain Roy,” said Van der Kemp earnestly, “let me advise you to get your foresail ready to hoist at a moment’s notice, and let them stand by to cut the cable.”

“Why so? There seems no need at present for such strong measures.”

“You don’t understand volcanoes as I do,” returned the hermit. “This lull will only last until the imprisoned fires overcome the block in the crater, and the longer it lasts the worse will be the explosion. From my knowledge of the

coast I feel sure that we are close to the town of Anjer. If another wave like the last comes while we are here, it will not slip under your brig like the last one. It will tear her from her anchor and hurl us all to destruction. You have but one chance; that is, to cut the cable and run in on the top of it—a poor chance at the best, but if God wills, we shall escape."

"If we are indeed as near shore as you think," said the captain, "I know what you say must be true, for in shoal water such a wave will surely carry all before it. But are you certain there will be another explosion?"

"No man can be sure of that. If the last explosion emptied the crater there will be no more. If it did not, another explosion is certain. All I advise is that you should be ready for whatever is coming, and ready to take your only chance."

"Right you are, sir. Send men to be ready to cut the cable, Mr Moor. And stand by the topsail halyards."

"Ay, ay, sir."

During the anxious minutes that followed, the hermit rejoined Winnie and Nigel on the quarterdeck, and conversed with the latter in a low voice, while he drew the former to his side with his strong arm. Captain Roy himself grasped the wheel and the men stood at their various stations ready for action.

"Let no man act without orders, whatever happens," said the captain in a deep powerful voice which was heard over the whole ship, for the lull that we have mentioned extended in some degree to the gale as well as to the volcano. Every one felt that some catastrophe was pending.

"Winnie, darling," said the hermit tenderly, as he bent down to see the sweet face that had been restored to him. "I greatly fear that there is soon to be another explosion, and it may be His will that we shall perish, but comfort yourself with the certainty that no hair of your dear head can fall without His permission—and in any event He will not fail us."

"I know it, father. I have no fear—at least, only a little!"

"Nigel," said the hermit, "stick close to us if you can. It may be that, if anything should befall me, your strong arm may succour Winnie; mine has lost somewhat of its vigour," he whispered.

"Trust me—nothing but death shall sunder us," said the anxious youth in a burst of enthusiasm.

It seemed as if death were indeed to be the immediate portion of all on board the *Sunshine*, for a few minutes later there came a crash, followed by a spout of smoke, fire, steam, and molten lava, compared to which all that had gone before seemed insignificant!

The crash was indescribable! As we have said elsewhere, the sound of it was heard many hundreds of miles from the seat of the volcano, and its effects were seen and felt right round the world.

The numerous vents which had previously been noticed on Krakatoa must at that moment have been blown into one, and the original crater of the old volcano—said to have been about six miles in diameter—must have resumed its destructive work. All the eye-witnesses who were near the spot at the time, and sufficiently calm to take note of the terrific events of that morning, are agreed as to the splendour of the electrical phenomena displayed during this paroxysmal outburst. One who, at the time, was forty miles distant speaks of the great vapour-cloud looking "like an immense wall or blood-red curtain with edges of all shades of yellow, and bursts of forked lightning at times rushing like large serpents through the air." Another says that "Krakatoa appeared to be alight with flickering flames rising behind a dense black cloud." A third recorded that "the lightning struck the mainmast conductor five or six times," and that "the mud-rain which covered the decks was phosphorescent, while the rigging presented the appearance of Saint Elmo's fire."

It may be remarked here, in passing, that giant steam-jets rushing through the orifices of the earth's crust constitute an enormous hydro-electric engine; and the friction of ejected materials striking against each other in ascending and descending also generates electricity, which accounts to some extent for the electrical condition of the atmosphere.

In these final and stupendous outbursts the volcano was expending its remaining force in breaking up and ejecting the solid lava which constituted its framework, and not in merely vomiting forth the lava-froth, or pumice, which had characterised the earlier stages of the eruption. In point of fact—as was afterwards clearly ascertained by careful soundings and estimates, taking the average height of the missing portion at 700 feet above water, and the depth at 300 feet below it—two-thirds of the island were blown entirely off the face of the earth. The mass had covered an area of nearly six miles, and is estimated as being equal to one and one-eighth cubic miles of solid matter which, as Moses expressed it, was blown to bits!

If this had been all, it would have been enough to claim the attention and excite the wonder of the intelligent world—but this was not nearly all, as we shall see, for saddest of all the incidents connected with the eruption is the fact that upwards of thirty-six thousand human beings lost their lives. The manner in which that terrible loss occurred shall be shown by the future adventures of the *Sunshine*.

Chapter Twenty Eight.

The Fate of the "Sunshine."

Stunned at first, for a few minutes, by the extreme violence of the explosion, no one on board the *Sunshine* spoke,

though each man stood at his post ready to act.

“Strange,” said the captain at last. “There seems to be no big wave this time.”

“That only shows that we are not as near the island as we thought. But it won’t be long of— See! There it comes,” said the hermit. “Now, Winnie, cling to my arm and put your trust in God.”

Nigel, who had secured a life-buoy, moved close to the girl’s side, and looking anxiously out ahead saw a faint line of foam in the thick darkness which had succeeded the explosion. Already the distant roar of the billow was heard, proving that it had begun to break.

“The wind comes with it,” said Van der Kemp.

“Stand by!” cried the captain, gazing intently over the side.

Next moment came the sharp order to hoist the foretopsail and jib, soon followed by “Cut the cable!”

There was breeze enough to swing the vessel quickly round. In a few seconds her stern was presented to the coming wave, and her bow cleft the water as she rushed upon what every one now knew was her doom.

To escape the great wave was no part of the captain’s plan. To have reached the shore before the wave would have been fatal to all. Their only hope lay in the possibility of riding in on the top of it, and the great danger was that they should be unable to rise to it stern first when it came up, or that they should turn broadside on and be rolled over.

They had not long to wait. The size of the wave, before it came near enough to be seen, was indicated by its solemn, deep-toned, ever-increasing roar. The captain stood at the wheel himself, guiding the brig and glancing back from time to time uneasily.

Suddenly the volcano gave vent to its fourth and final explosion. It was not so violent as its predecessors had been, though more so than any that had occurred on the day before, and the light of it showed them the full terrors of their situation, for it revealed the mountains of Java—apparently quite close in front, though in reality at a considerable distance—with a line of breakers beating white on the shore. But astern of them was the most appalling sight, for there, rushing on with awful speed and a sort of hissing roar, came the monstrous wave, emerging, as it were, out of thick darkness, like a mighty wall of water with a foaming white crest, not much less—according to an average of the most reliable estimates—than 100 feet high.

Well might the seamen blanch, for never before in all their varied experience had they seen the like of that.

On it came with the unwavering force of Fate. To the eye of Captain Roy it appeared that up its huge towering side no vessel made by mortal man could climb. But the captain had too often stared death in the face to be unmanned by the prospect now. Steadily he steered the vessel straight on, and in a quiet voice said—

“Lay hold of something firm—every man!”

The warning was well timed. In the amazement, if not fear, caused by the unwonted sight, some had neglected the needful precaution.

As the billow came on, the bubbling, leaping, and seething of its crest was apparent both to eye and ear. Then the roar became tremendous.

“Darling Winnie,” said Nigel at that moment. “I will die for you or with you!”

The poor girl heard, but no sign of appreciation moved her pale face as she gazed up at the approaching chaos of waters.

Next moment the brig seemed to stand on its bows. Van der Kemp had placed his daughter against the mast, and, throwing his long arms round both, held on. Nigel, close to them, had grasped a handful of ropes, and every one else was holding on for life. Another moment and the brig rose as if it were being tossed up to the heavens. Immediately thereafter it resumed its natural position in a perfect wilderness of foam. They were on the summit of the great wave, which was so large that its crest seemed like a broad, rounded mass of tumbling snow with blackness before and behind, while the roar of the tumult was deafening. The brig rushed onward at a speed which she had never before equalled even in the fiercest gale—tossed hither and thither by the leaping foam, yet always kept going straight onward by the expert steering of her captain.

“Come aft—all of you!” he shouted, when it was evident that the vessel was being borne surely forward on the wave’s crest. “The masts will go for certain when we strike.”

The danger of being entangled in the falling spars and cordage was so obvious that every one except the hermit and Nigel obeyed.

“Here, Nigel,” gasped the former. “I—I’ve—lost blood—faint!—”

Our hero at once saw that Van der Kemp, fainting from previous loss of blood, coupled with exertion, was unable to do anything but hold on. Indeed, he failed even in that, and would have fallen to the deck had Nigel not caught him by the arm.

“Can you run aft, Winnie?” said Nigel anxiously.

“Yes!” said the girl, at once understanding the situation and darting to the wheel, of which and of Captain Roy she laid firm hold, while Nigel lifted the hermit in his arms and staggered to the same spot. Winnie knelt beside him immediately, and, forgetting for the moment all the horrors around her, busied herself in replacing the bandage which had been loosened from his head.

“Oh! Mr Roy, save him!—save him!” cried the poor child, appealing in an agony to Nigel, for she felt instinctively that when the crash came her father would be utterly helpless even to save himself.

Nigel had barely time to answer when a wild shout from the crew caused him to start up and look round. A flare from the volcano had cast a red light over the bewildering scene, and revealed the fact that the brig was no longer above the ocean’s bed, but was passing in its wild career right through, or rather *over*, the demolished town of Anjer. A few of the houses that had been left standing by the previous waves were being swept—hurled—away by this one, but the mass of rolling, rushing, spouting water was so deep, that the vessel had as yet struck nothing save the tops of some palm-trees which bent their heads like straws before the flood.

Even in the midst of the amazement, alarm, and anxiety caused by the situation, Nigel could not help wondering that in this final and complete destruction of the town no sign of struggling human beings should be visible. He forgot at the moment, what was terribly proved afterwards, that the first waves had swallowed up men, women, and children by hundreds, and that the few who survived had fled to the hills, leaving nothing for the larger wave to do but complete the work of devastation on inanimate objects. Ere the situation had been well realised the volcanic fires went down again, and left the world, for over a hundred surrounding miles, in opaque darkness. Only the humble flicker of the binnacle-light, like a trusty sentinel on duty, continued to shed its feeble rays on a few feet of the deck, and showed that the compass at least was still faithful to the pole!

Then another volcanic outburst revealed the fact that the wave which carried them was thundering on in the direction of a considerable cliff or precipice—not indeed quite straight towards it, but sufficiently so to render escape doubtful.

At the same time a swarm of terror-stricken people were seen flying towards this cliff and clambering up its steep sides. They were probably some of the more courageous of the inhabitants who had summoned courage to return to their homes after the passage of the second wave. Their shrieks and cries could be heard above even the roaring of the water and the detonations of the volcano.

“God spare us!” exclaimed poor Winnie, whose trembling form was now partially supported by Nigel.

As she spoke darkness again obscured everything, and they could do naught but listen to the terrible sounds—and pray.

On—on went the *Sunshine*, in the midst of wreck and ruin, on this strange voyage over land and water, until a check was felt. It was not a crash as had been anticipated, and as might have naturally been expected, neither was it an abrupt stoppage. There was first a hissing, scraping sound against the vessel’s sides, then a steady checking—we might almost say a hindrance to progress—not violent, yet so very decided that the rigging could not bear the strain. One and another of the backstays parted, the foretopsail burst with a cannon-like report, after which a terrible rending sound, followed by an indescribable crash, told that both masts had gone by the board.

Then all was comparatively still—comparatively we say, for water still hissed and leaped beneath them like a rushing river, though it no longer roared, and the wind blew in unfamiliar strains and laden with unwonted odours.

At that moment another outburst of Krakatoa revealed the fact that the great wave had borne the brig inland for upwards of a mile, and left her imbedded in a thick grove of cocoa-nut palms!

Chapter Twenty Nine.

Tells Chiefly of the Wonderful Effects of this Eruption on the World at Large.

The great explosions of that morning had done more damage and had achieved results more astounding than lies in the power of language adequately to describe, or of history to parallel.

Let us take a glance at this subject in passing.

An inhabitant of Anjer—owner of a hotel, a ship-chandler’s store, two houses, and a dozen boats—went down to the beach about six on the morning of that fateful 27th of August. He had naturally been impressed by the night of the 26th, though, accustomed as he was to volcanic eruptions, he felt no apprehensions as to the safety of the town. He went to look to the moorings of his boats, leaving his family of seven behind him. While engaged in this work he observed a wave of immense size approaching. He leaped into one of his boats, which was caught up by the wave and swept inland, carrying its owner there in safety. But this was the wave that sealed the doom of the town and most of its inhabitants, including the hotel-keeper’s family and all that he possessed.

This is one only out of thousands of cases of bereavement and destruction.

A lighthouse-keeper was seated in his solitary watch-tower, speculating, doubtless, on the probable continuance of such a violent outbreak, while his family and mates—accustomed to sleep in the midst of elemental war—were resting peacefully in the rooms below, when one of the mighty waves suddenly appeared, thundered past, and swept the lighthouse with all its inhabitants away.

This shows but one of the many disasters to lighthouses in Sunda Straits.

A Dutch man-of-war—the *Berouw*—was lying at anchor in Lampong Bay, fifty miles from Krakatoa. The great wave came, tore it from its anchorage, and carried it—like the vessel of our friend David Roy—nearly two miles inland! Masses of coral of immense size and weight were carried four miles inland by the same wave. The river at Anjer was choked up; the conduit which used to carry water into the place was destroyed, and the town itself was laid in ruins.

But these are only a few of the incidents of the great catastrophe. Who can conceive, much less tell of, those terrible details of sudden death and disaster to thousands of human beings, resulting from an eruption which destroyed towns like Telok Betong, Anjer, Tyringin, etcetera, besides numerous villages and hamlets on the shores of Java and Sumatra, and caused the destruction of more than 36,000 souls?

But it is to results of a very different kind, and on a much more extended scale, that we must turn if we would properly estimate the magnitude, the wide-spreading and far-reaching influences, and the extraordinary character, of the Krakatoa outburst of 1883.

In the first place, it is a fact, testified to by some of the best-known men of science, that the shock of the explosion extended *appreciably* right round the world, and seventeen miles, (some say even higher!) up into the heavens.

Mr Verbeek, in his treatise on this subject, estimates that a cubic mile of Krakatoa was propelled in the form of the finest dust into the higher regions of the atmosphere—probably about thirty miles! The dust thus sent into the sky was of “ultra-microscopic fineness,” and it travelled round and round the world in a westerly direction, producing those extraordinary sunsets and gorgeous effects and afterglows which became visible in the British Isles in the month of November following the eruption; and the mighty waves which caused such destruction in the vicinity of Sunda Straits travelled—not once, but at least—six times round the globe, as was proved by trustworthy and independent observations of tide-gauges and barometers made and recorded at the same time in nearly all lands—including our own.

Other volcanoes, it is said by those who have a right to speak in regard to such matters, have ejected more “stuff,” but not one has equalled Krakatoa in the intensity of its explosions, the appalling results of the sea-waves, the wonderful effects in the sky, and the almost miraculous nature of the sounds.

Seated on a log under a palm-tree in Batavia, on that momentous morning of the 27th, was a sailor who had been left behind sick by Captain Roy when he went on his rather Quixotic trip to the Keeling Islands. He was a somewhat delicate son of the sea. Want of self-restraint was his complaint—leading to a surfeit of fruit and other things, which terminated in a severe fit of indigestion and indisposition to life in general. He was smoking—that being a sovereign and infallible cure for indigestion and all other ills that flesh is heir to, as every one knows!

“I say, old man,” he inquired, with that cheerful tone and air which usually accompanies incapacity for food. “Do it always rain ashes here?”

The old man whom he addressed was a veteran Malay seaman.

“No,” replied the Malay, “sometimes it rain mud—hot mud.”

“Do it? Oh! well—anything for variety, I s’pose,” returned the sailor, with a growl which had reference to internal disarrangements.

“Is it often as dark as this in the daytime, an’ is the sun usually green?” he asked carelessly, more for the sake of distracting the mind from other matters than for the desire of knowledge.

“Sometime it’s more darker,” replied the old man. “I’ve seed it so dark that you couldn’t see how awful dark it was.”

As he spoke, a sound that has been described by ear-witnesses as “deafening,” smote upon their tympanums, the log on which they sat quivered, the earth seemed to tremble, and several dishes in a neighbouring hut were thrown down and broken.

“I say, old man, suthin’ busted there,” remarked the sailor, taking the pipe from his mouth and quietly ramming its contents down with the end of his blunt forefinger.

The Malay looked grave.

“The gasometer?” suggested the sailor.

“No, that *never* busts.”

“A noo mountain come into action, p’raps, an blow’d its top *off*?”

“Shouldn’t wonder if that’s it—close at hand too. We’s used to that here. But them’s bigger cracks than or’nar’.”

The old Malay was right as to the cause, but wrong as to distance. Instead of being a volcano “close at hand,” it was Krakatoa eviscerating itself a hundred miles off, and the sound of its last grand effort “extended over 50 degrees, equal to about 3000 miles.”

On that day all the gas lights were extinguished in Batavia, and the pictures rattled on the walls as though from the action of an earthquake. But there was no earthquake. It was the air-wave from Krakatoa, and the noise produced by the air-waves that followed was described as “deafening.”

The effect of the sounds of the explosions on the Straits Settlements generally was not only striking but to some extent amusing. At Carimon, in Java—355 miles distant from Krakatoa—it was supposed that a vessel in distress was

firing guns, and several native boats were sent off to render assistance, but no distressed vessel was to be found! At Acheen, in Sumatra—1073 miles distant—they supposed that a fort was being attacked and the troops were turned out under arms. At Singapore—522 miles off—they fancied that the detonations came from a vessel in distress and two steamers were despatched to search for it. And here the effect on the telephone, extending to Ishore, was remarkable. On raising the tubes a perfect roar as of a waterfall was heard. By shouting at the top of his voice, the clerk at one end could make the clerk at the other end hear, but he could not render a word intelligible. At Perak—770 miles off—the sounds were thought to be distant salvos of artillery, and Commander the Honourable F Vereker, R.N., of H.M.S. *Magpie*, when 1227 miles distant, (in latitude 5 degrees 52 minutes North, longitude 118 degrees 22 minutes East), states that the detonations of Krakatoa were distinctly heard by those on board his ship, and by the inhabitants of the coast as far as Banguey Island, on August 27th. He adds that they resembled distant heavy cannonading. In a letter from Saint Lucia Bay—1116 miles distant—it was stated that the eruption was plainly heard all over Borneo. A government steamer was sent out from the Island of Timor—1351 miles off—to ascertain the cause of the disturbance! In South Australia also, at places 2250 miles away, explosions were heard on the 26th and 27th which “awakened” people, and were thought worthy of being recorded and reported. From Tavoy, in Burmah—1478 miles away—the report came— “All day on August 27th unusual sounds were heard, resembling the boom of guns. Thinking there might be a wreck or a ship in distress, the Tavoy Superintendent sent out the police launch, but they ‘could see nothing.’” And so on, far and near, similar records were made, the most distant spot where the sounds were reported to have been heard being Rodriguez, in the Pacific, nearly 3000 miles distant!

One peculiar feature of the records is that some ships in the immediate neighbourhood of Krakatoa did not experience the shock in proportionate severity. Probably this was owing to their being so near that a great part of the concussion and sound flew over them—somewhat in the same way that the pieces of a bomb-shell fly over men who, being too near to escape by running, escape by flinging themselves flat on the ground.

Each air-wave which conveyed these sounds, commencing at Krakatoa as a centre, spread out in an ever-increasing circle till it reached a distance of 180 degrees from its origin and encircled the earth at its widest part, after which it continued to advance in a contracting form until it reached the antipodes of the volcano; whence it was reflected or reproduced and travelled back again to Krakatoa. Here it was turned right-about-face and again despatched on its long journey. In this way it oscillated backward and forward not fewer than six times before traces of it were lost. We say “traces,” because these remarkable facts were ascertained, tracked, and corroborated by independent barometric observation in all parts of the earth.

For instance, the passage of the great air-wave from Krakatoa to its antipodes, and from its antipodes back to Krakatoa, was registered six times by the automatic barometer at Greenwich. The instrument at Kew Observatory confirmed the records of Greenwich, and so did the barometers of other places in the kingdom. Everywhere in Europe also this fact was corroborated, and in some places even a seventh oscillation was recorded. The Greenwich record shows that the air-waves took about thirty-six hours to travel from pole to pole, thus proving that they travelled at about the rate of ordinary sound-waves, which, roughly speaking, travel at the rate of between six and seven hundred miles an hour.

The height of the sea-waves that devastated the neighbouring shores, being variously estimated at from 50 to 135 feet, is sufficiently accounted for by the intervention of islands and headlands, etcetera, which, of course, tended to diminish the force, height, and volume of waves in varying degrees.

These, like the air-waves, were also registered—by self-acting tide-gauges and by personal observation—all over the world, and the observations *coincided as to date with the great eruptions of the 26th and 27th of August*. The influence of the sea-waves was observed and noted in the Java sea—which is shallow and where there are innumerable obstructions—as far as 450 miles, but to the west they swept over the deep waters of the Indian Ocean on to Cape Horn, and even, it is said, to the English Channel.

The unusual disturbance of ocean in various places was sufficiently striking. At Galle, in Ceylon, where the usual rise and fall of the tide is 2 feet, the master-attendant reports that on the afternoon of the 27th four remarkable waves were noticed in the port. The last of these was preceded by an unusual recession of the sea to such an extent that small boats at their anchorage were left aground—a thing that had never been seen before. The period of recession was only one-and-a-half minutes; then the water paused, as it were, for a brief space, and, beginning to rise, reached the level of the highest high-water mark in less than two minutes, thus marking a difference of 8 feet 10 inches instead of the ordinary 2 feet.

At one place there was an ebb and flood tide, of unusual extent, within half-an-hour. At another, a belt of land, including a burying-ground, was washed away, so that, according to the observer, “it appeared as if the dead had sought shelter with the living in a neighbouring cocoa-nut garden!” Elsewhere the tides were seen to advance and recede ten or twelve times—in one case even twenty times—on the 27th. At Trincomalee the sea receded three times and returned with singular force, at one period leaving part of the shore suddenly bare, with fish struggling in the mud. The utilitarian tendency of mankind was at once made manifest by some fishermen who, seizing the opportunity, dashed into the struggling mass and began to reap the accidental harvest, when—alas for the poor fishermen!—the sea rushed in again and drove them all away.

In the Mauritius, however, the fishers were more fortunate, for when their beach was exposed in a similar manner, they succeeded in capturing a good many fish before the water returned.

Even sharks were disturbed in their sinister and slimy habits of life by this outburst of Krakatoa—and no wonder, when it is recorded that in some places “the sea looked like water boiling heavily in a pot,” and that “the boats which were afloat were swinging in all directions.” At one place several of these monsters were flung out of their native home into pools, where they were left struggling till their enemy man terminated their career.

Everywhere those great waves produced phenomena which were so striking as to attract the attention of all classes

of people, to ensure record in most parts of the world, and to call for the earnest investigation of the scientific men of many lands—and the conclusion to which such men have almost universally come is, that the strange vagaries of the sea all over the earth, the mysterious sounds heard in so many widely distant places, and the wonderful effects in the skies of every quarter of the globe, were all due to the eruption of the Krakatoa volcano in 1883.

With reference to these last—the sky-effects—a few words may not be out of place here.

The superfine "ultra-microscopic" dust, which was blown by the volcano in quantities so enormous to such unusual heights, was, after dropping its heavier particles back to earth, caught by the breezes which always blow in the higher regions from east to west, and carried by them for many months round and round the world. The dust was thickly and not widely spread at first, but as time went on it gradually extended itself on either side, becoming visible to more and more of earth's inhabitants, and at the same time becoming necessarily less dense.

Through this medium the sun's rays had to penetrate. In so far as the dust-particles were opaque they would obscure these rays; where they were transparent or polished they would refract and reflect them. That the material of which those dust-particles was composed was very various has been ascertained, proved, and recorded by the Krakatoa Committee. The attempt to expound this matter would probably overtax the endurance of the average reader, yet it may interest all to know that this dust-cloud travelled westward within the tropics at the rate of about double the speed of an express train—say 120 miles an hour; crossed the Indian Ocean and Africa in three days, the Atlantic in two, America in two, and, in short, put a girdle round the world in thirteen days. Moreover, the cloud of dust was so big that it took two or three days to pass any given point. During its second circumnavigation it was considerably spread and thinned, and the third time still more so, having expanded enough to include Europe and the greater part of North America. It had thinned away altogether and disappeared in the spring of 1884.

Who has not seen—at least read or heard of—the gorgeous skies of the autumn of 1883? Not only in Britain, but in all parts of the world, these same skies were seen, admired, and commented on as marvellous. And so they were. One of the chief peculiarities about them, besides their splendour, was the fact that they consisted chiefly of "afterglows"—that is, an increase of light and splendour *after* the setting of the sun, when, in an ordinary state of things, the grey shadows of evening would have descended on the world. Greenish-blue suns; pink clouds; bright yellow, orange, and crimson afterglows; gorgeous, magnificent, blood-red skies—the commentators seemed unable to find language adequately to describe them. Listen to a German observer's remarks on the subject:—

"The display of November 29th was the grandest and most manifold. I give a description as exactly as possible, for its overwhelming magnificence still presents itself to me as if it had been yesterday. When the sun had set about a quarter of an hour there was not much afterglow, but I had observed a remarkably yellow bow in the south, about 10 degrees above the horizon. In about ten minutes more this arc rose pretty quickly, extended itself all over the east and up to and beyond the zenith. The sailors declared, 'Sir, that is the Northern Lights.' I thought I had never seen Northern Lights in greater splendour. After five minutes more the light had faded, though not vanished, in the east and south, and the finest purple-red rose up in the south-west; one could imagine one's-self in Fairyland."

All this, and a great deal more, was caused by the dust of Krakatoa!

"But how—how—why?" exclaims an impatient and puzzled reader.

"Ay—there's the rub." Rubbing, by the way, may have had something to do with it. At all events we are safe to say that whatever there was of electricity in the matter resulted from friction.

Here is what the men of science say—as far as we can gather and condense.

The fine dust blown out of Krakatoa was found, under the microscope, to consist of excessively thin, transparent plates or irregular specks of pumice—which inconceivably minute fragments were caused by enormous steam pressure in the interior and the sudden expansion of the masses blown out into the atmosphere. Of this glassy dust, that which was blown into the regions beyond the clouds must have been much finer even than that which was examined. These glass fragments were said by Dr Flügel to contain either innumerable air-bubbles or minute needle-like crystals, or both. Small though these vesicles were when ejected from the volcano, they would become still smaller by bursting when they suddenly reached a much lower pressure of atmosphere at a great height. Some of them, however, owing to tenacity of material and other causes, might have failed to burst and would remain floating in the upper air as perfect microscopic glass balloons. Thus the dust was a mass of particles of every conceivable shape, and so fine that no watches, boxes, or instruments were tight enough to exclude from their interior even that portion of the dust which was heavy enough to remain on earth!

Now, to the unscientific reader it is useless to say more than that the innumerable and varied positions of these glassy particles, some transparent, others semi-transparent or opaque, reflecting the sun's rays in different directions, with a complex modification of colour and effect resulting from the blueness of the sky, the condition of the atmosphere, and many other causes—all combined to produce the remarkable appearances of light and colour which aroused the admiration and wonder of the world in 1883.

The more one thinks of these things, and the deeper one dives into the mysteries of nature, the more profoundly is one impressed at once with a humbling sense of the limited amount of one's knowledge, and an awe-inspiring appreciation of the illimitable fields suggested by that comprehensive expression: "The Wonderful Works of God."

Chapter Thirty.

Coming Events, etcetera—Wonderful Changes among the Islands.

Some days after the wreck of the *Sunshine*, as described in a previous chapter, Captain Roy and his son stood on the coast of Java not far from the ruins of Anjer. A vessel was anchored in the offing, and a little boat lay on the shore.

All sign of elemental strife had passed, though a cloud of smoke hanging over the remains of Krakatoa told that the terrible giant below was not dead but only sleeping—to awake, perchance, after a nap of another 200 years.

“Well, father,” said our hero with a modest look, “it may be, as you suggest, that Winnie Van der Kemp does not care for me more than for a fathom of salt water—”

“I did not say salt water, lad, I said bilge—a fathom o’ *bilge* water,” interrupted the captain, who, although secretly rejoiced at the fact of his son having fallen over head and ears in love with the pretty little Cocos-Keeling islander, deemed it his duty, nevertheless, as a sternly upright parent, to make quite sure that the love was mutual as well as deep before giving his consent to anything like courtship.

“It matters not; salt or bilge water makes little difference,” returned the son with a smile. “But all I can say is that I care for Winnie so much that her love is to me of as much importance as sunshine to the world—and we have had some experience lately of what the want of *that* means.”

“Nonsense, Nigel,” returned the captain severely. “You’re workin’ yourself into them up-in-the-clouds, reef-point-patterin’ regions again—which, by the way, should be pretty well choked wi’ Krakatoa dust by this time. Come down out o’ that if ye want to hold or’nary intercourse wi’ your old father. She’s far too young yet, my boy. You must just do as many a young fellow has done before you, attend to your dooties and forget her.”

“Forget her!” returned the youth, with that amused, quiet expression which wise men sometimes assume when listening to foolish suggestions. “I could almost as easily forget my mother!”

“A very proper sentiment, Nigel, very—especially the ‘almost’ part of it.”

“Besides,” continued the son, “she is not so *very* young—and that difficulty remedies itself every hour. Moreover, I too am young. I can wait.”

“The selfishness of youth is only equalled by its presumption,” said the captain. “How d’ee know *she* will wait?”

“I don’t know, father, but I *hope* she will—I—*think* she will.”

“Nigel,” said the captain, in a tone and with a look that were meant to imply intense solemnity, “have you ever spoken to her about love?”

“No, father.”

“Has she ever spoken to *you*?”

“No—at least—not with her lips.”

“Come, boy, you’re humbuggin’ your old father. Her tongue couldn’t well do it without the lips lendin’ a hand.”

“Well then—with neither,” returned the son. “She spoke with her eyes—not intentionally, of course, for the eyes, unlike the lips, refuse to be under control.”

“Hm! I see—reef-point-patterin’ poetics again! An’ what did she say with her eyes!”

“Really, father, you press me too hard; it is difficult to translate eye-language, but if you’ll only let memory have free play and revert to that time, nigh quarter of a century ago, when you first met with a certain *real* poetess, perhaps—”

“Ah! you dog! you have me there. But how dare you, sir, venture to think of marryin’ on nothin’?”

“I don’t think of doing so. Am I not a first mate with a handsome salary?”

“No, lad, you’re not. You’re nothin’ better than a seaman out o’ work, with your late ship wrecked in a cocoa-nut grove!”

“That’s true,” returned Nigel with a laugh. “But is not the cargo of the said ship safe in Batavia? Has not its owner a good bank account in England? Won’t another ship be wanted, and another first mate, and would the owner dare to pass over his own son, who is such a competent seaman—according to your own showing? Come, father, I turn the tables on you and ask you to aid rather than resist me in this matter.”

“Well, I will, my boy, I will,” said the captain heartily, as he laid his hand on his son’s shoulder. “But, seriously, you must haul off this little craft and clap a stopper on your tongue—ay, and on your eyes too—till three points are considered an’ made quite clear. First, you must find out whether the hermit would be agreeable. Second, you must look the matter straight in the face and make quite sure that you mean it. For better or for worse. No undoin’ *that* knot, Nigel, once it’s fairly tied! And, third, you must make quite sure that Winnie is sure of her own mind, an’ that—that—”

“We’re all sure all round, father. Quite right. I agree with you. ‘All fair an’ aboveboard’ should be the sailing orders of every man in such matters, especially of every seaman. But, will you explain how I am to make sure of Winnie’s state of mind without asking her about it?”

“Well, I don’t exactly see my way,” replied the captain slowly. “What d’ee say to my soundin’ her on the subject?”

“Couldn’t think of it! You may be first-rate at deep-sea soundings, father, but you couldn’t sound the depths of a young girl’s heart. I must reserve that for myself, however long it may be delayed.”

“So be it, lad. The only embargo that I lay upon you is—haul off, and mind you don’t let your figurehead go by the board. Meanwhile, here comes the boat. Now, Nigel, none o’ your courtin’ till everything is settled and the wind fair—dead aft my lad, and blowin’ stiff. You and the hermit are goin’ off to Krakatoa to-day, I suppose?”

“Yes. I am just now waiting for him and Moses,” returned Nigel.

“Is Winnie going?”

“Don’t know. I hope so.”

“Humph! Well, if we have a fair wind I shall soon be in Batavia,” said the captain, descending to business matters, “and I expect without trouble to dispose of the cargo that we landed there, as *well* as that part o’ the return cargo which I had bought before I left for Keeling—at a loss, no doubt, but that don’t matter much. Then I’ll come back here by the first craft that offers—arter which. Ay!—Ay! shove her in here. Plenty o’ water.”

The last remark was made to the seaman who steered the boat sent from the vessel in the offing.

A short time thereafter Captain Roy was sailing away for Batavia, while his son, with Van der Kemp, Moses, Winnie, and Spinkie, was making for Krakatoa in a native boat.

The hermit, in spite of his injuries, had recovered his wonted appearance, if not his wonted vigour. Winnie seemed to have suddenly developed into a mature woman under her recent experiences, though she had lost none of her girlish grace and attractiveness. As for Moses—time and tide seemed to have no effect whatever on his ebony frame, and still less, if possible, on his indomitable spirit.

“Now you keep still,” he said in solemn tones and with warning looks to Spinkie. “If you keep fidgitin’ about you’ll capsize de boat. You hear?”

Spinkie veiled his real affection for the negro under a look of supreme indifference, while Winnie went off into a sudden giggle at the idea of such a small creature capsizing the boat.

Mindful of his father’s warning, Nigel did his best to “haul off” and to prevent his “figurehead” from going “by the board.” But he found it uncommonly hard work, for Winnie looked so innocent, so pretty, so unconscious, so sympathetic with everybody and everything, so very young, yet so wondrously wise and womanly, that he felt an irresistible desire to prostrate himself at her feet in abject slavery.

“Dear little thing,” said Winnie, putting her hand on Spinkie’s little head and smoothing him down from eyes to tail.

Spinkie looked as if half inclined to withdraw his allegiance from Moses and bestow it on Winnie, but evidently changed his mind after a moment’s reflection.

“O that I were a monkey!” thought Nigel, paraphrasing Shakespeare, “that I might—” but it is not fair to our hero to reveal him in his weaker moments!

There was something exasperating, too, in being obliged, owing to the size of the boat, to sit so close to Winnie without having a right to touch her hand! Who has not experienced this, and felt himself to be a very hero of self-denial in the circumstances?

“Mos’ awrful hot!” remarked Moses, wiping his forehead with the sleeve of his shirt.

“*You* hot!” said Nigel in surprise. “I thought nothing on earth could be too hot for you.”

“Dat’s your ignerance,” returned Moses calmly. “Us niggers, you see, ought to suffer more fro’ heat dan you whites.”

“How so?”

“Why, don’t your flossiphers say dat black am better dan white for ’tractin’ heat, an’ ain’t our skins black? I wish we’d bin’ born white as chalk. I say, Massa Nadgel, seems to me dat dere’s not much left ob Krakatoa.”

They had approached near enough to the island by that time to perceive that wonderful changes had indeed taken place, and Van der Kemp, who had been for some time silently absorbed in contemplation, at last turned to his daughter and said—

“I had feared at first, Winnie, that my old home had been blown entirely away, but I see now that the Peak of Rakata still stands, so perhaps I may yet show you the cave in which I have spent so many years.”

“But why did you go to live in such a strange place, dear father?” asked the girl, laying her hand lovingly on the hermit’s arm.

Van der Kemp did not reply at once. He gazed in his child’s face with an increase of that absent air and far-away look which Nigel, ever since he met him, had observed as one of his characteristics. At this time an anxious thought crossed him,—that perhaps the blows which his friend had received on his head when he was thrown on the deck of the *Sunshine* might have injured his brain.

“It is not easy to answer your question, dear one,” he said after a time, laying his strong hand on the girl’s head, and smoothing her luxuriant hair which hung in the untrammelled freedom of nature over her shoulders. “I have felt

sometimes, during the last few days, as if I were awaking out of a long long dream, or recovering from a severe illness in which delirium had played a prominent part. Even now, though I see and touch you, I sometimes tremble lest I should really awake and find that it is all a dream. I have so often—so *very* often—dreamed something like it in years gone by, but never so vividly as now! I cannot doubt—it is sin to doubt—that my prayers have been at last answered. God is good and wise. He knows what is best and does not fail in bringing the best to pass. Yet I have doubted Him—again and again."

Van der Kemp paused here and drew his hand across his brow as if to clear away sad memories of the past, while Winnie drew closer to him and looked up tenderly in his face.

"When your mother died, dear one," he resumed, "it seemed to me as if the sun had left the heavens, and when *you* were snatched from me, it was as though my soul had fled and nought but animal life remained. I lived as if in a terrible dream. I cannot recall exactly what I did or where I went for a long, long time. I know I wandered through the archipelago looking for you, because I did not believe at first that you were dead. It was at this time I took up my abode in the cave of Rakata, and fell in with my good faithful friend Moses."

"Your sarvint, massa," interrupted the negro humbly. "I's proud to be call your frind, but I's only your sarvint, massa."

"Truly you have been my faithful servant, Moses," said Van der Kemp, "but not the less have you been my trusted friend. He nursed me through a long and severe illness, Winnie. How long, I am not quite sure. After a time I nearly lost hope. Then there came a very dark period, when I was forced to believe that you must be dead. Yet, strange to say, even during this dark time I did not cease to pray and to wander about in search of you. I suppose it was the force of habit, for hope seemed to have died. Then, at last, Nigel found you. God used him as His instrument. And now, praise to His name, we are reunited—for ever!"

"Darling father!" were the only words that Winnie could utter as she laid her head on the hermit's shoulder and wept for joy.

Two ideas, which had not occurred to him before, struck Nigel with great force at that moment. The one was that whatever or wherever his future household should be established, if Winnie was to be its chief ornament, her father must of necessity become a member of it. The other idea was that he was destined to possess a negro servant with a consequent and unavoidable monkey attendant! How strange the links of which the chain of human destiny is formed, and how wonderful the powers of thought by which that chain is occasionally forecast! How to convey all these possessions to England and get them comfortably settled there was a problem which he did not care to tackle just then.

"See, Winnie," said Van der Kemp, pointing with interest to a mark on the side of Rakata, "yonder is the mouth of my cave. I never saw it so clearly before because of the trees and bushes, but everything seems now to have been burnt up."

"Das so, massa, an' what hasn't bin bu'nt up has bin blow'd up!" remarked the negro.

"Looks very like it, Moses, unless that is a haze which enshrouds the rest of the island," rejoined the other, shading his eyes with his hands.

It was no haze, however; for they found, on drawing nearer, that the greater part of Krakatoa had, as we have already said, actually disappeared from the face of the earth.

When the boat finally rounded the point which hid the northern part of the island from view, a sight was presented which it is not often given to human eyes to look upon. The whole mountain named the Peak of Rakata, (2623 feet high), had been split from top to bottom, and about one-half of it, with all that part of the island lying to the northward, had been blown away, leaving a wall or almost sheer precipice which presented a grand section of the volcano.

Pushing their boat into a creek at the base of this precipice, the party landed and tried to reach a position from which a commanding view might be obtained. This was not an easy matter, for there was not a spot for a foot to rest on which was not covered deeply with pumice-dust and ashes. By dint of perseverance, however, they gained a ledge whence the surrounding district could be observed, and then it was clearly seen how widespread and stupendous the effects of the explosion had been.

Where the greater part of the richly wooded island had formerly flourished, the ocean now rippled in the sunshine, and of the smaller islands around it *Lang* Island had been considerably increased in bulk as well as in height. *Verleden* Island had been enlarged to more than three times its former size and also much increased in height. The island named *Polish Hat* had disappeared altogether, and two entirely new islets—afterwards named *Steers* and *Calmeyer* Islands—had arisen to the northward.

"Now, friends," said Van der Kemp, after they had noted and commented on the vast and wonderful changes that had taken place, "we will pull round to our cave and see what has happened there."

Descending to the boat they rowed round the southern shores of Rakata until they reached the little harbour where the boat and canoe had formerly been kept.

Chapter Thirty One.

Ends with a Struggle between Inclination and Duty.

“Cave’s blowed away too!” was the first remark of Moses as they rowed into the little port.

A shock of disappointment was experienced by Winnie, for she fancied that the negro had referred to her father’s old home, but he only meant the lower cave in which the canoe had formerly been kept. She was soon relieved as to this point, however, but, when a landing was effected, difficulties that seemed to her almost insurmountable presented themselves, for the ground was covered knee-deep with pumice-dust, and the road to the upper cave was blocked by rugged masses of lava and ashes, all heaped up in indescribable confusion.

On careful investigation, however, it was found that after passing a certain point the footpath was almost unencumbered by volcanic débris. This was owing to the protection afforded to it by the cone of Rakata, and the almost overhanging nature of some of the cliffs on that side of the mountain; still the track was bad enough, and in places so rugged, that Winnie, vigorous and agile though she was, found it both difficult and fatiguing to advance. Seeing this, her father proposed to carry her, but she laughingly declined the proposal.

Whereupon Nigel offered to lend her a hand over the rougher places, but this she also declined.

Then Moses, stepping forward, asserted his rights.

“It’s *my* business,” he said, “to carry t’ings when dey’s got to be carried. M’r’over, as I’s bin obleeged to leabe Spinkie in charge ob de boat, I feels okard widout somet’ing to carry, an’ you ain’t much heavier dan Spinkie, Miss Winnie—so, come along.”

He stooped with the intention of grasping Winnie as if she were a little child, but with a light laugh the girl sprang away and left Moses behind.

“’S’my opinion,” said Moses, looking after her with a grin, “dat if de purfesser was here he’d net her in mistook for a bufferfly. Dar!—she’s down!” he shouted, springing forward, but Nigel was before him.

Winnie had tripped and fallen.

“Are you hurt, dear—child?” asked Nigel, raising her gently.

“Oh no! only a little shaken,” answered Winnie, with a little laugh that was half hysterical. “I am strong enough to go on presently.”

“Nay, my child, you *must* suffer yourself to be carried at this part,” said Van der Kemp. “Take her up, Nigel, you are stronger than I am *now*. I would not have asked you to do it before my accident!”

Our hero did not need a second bidding. Grasping Winnie in his strong arms he raised her as if she had been a feather, and strode away at a pace so rapid that he soon left Van der Kemp and Moses far behind.

“Put me down, now,” said Winnie, after a little while, in a low voice. “I’m quite recovered now and can walk.”

“Nay, Winnie, you are mistaken. The path is very rough yet, and the dust gets deeper as we ascend. *Do* give me the pleasure of helping you a little longer.”

Whatever Winnie may have felt or thought she said nothing, and Nigel, taking silence for consent, bore her swiftly onward and upward,—with an “Excelsior” spirit that would have thrown the Alpine youth with the banner and the strange device considerably into the shade,—until he placed her at the yawning black mouth of the hermit’s cave.

But what a change was there! The trees and flowering shrubs and ferns were all gone, lava, pumice, and ashes lay thick on everything around, and only a few blackened and twisted stumps of the larger trees remained to tell that an umbrageous forest had once flourished there. The whole scene might be fittingly described in the two words—grey desolation.

“That is the entrance to your father’s old home,” said Nigel, as he set his fair burden down and pointed to the entrance.

“What a dreadful place!” said Winnie, peering into the black depths of the cavern.

“It was not dreadful when I first saw it, Winnie, with rich verdure everywhere; and inside you will find it surprisingly comfortable. But we must not enter until your father arrives to do the honours of the place himself.”

They had not to wait long. First Moses arrived, and, shrewdly suspecting from the appearance of the young couple that they were engaged in conversation that would not brook interruption, or, perhaps, judging from what might be his own wishes in similar circumstances, he turned his back suddenly on them, and, stooping down, addressed himself to an imaginary creature of the animal kingdom.

“What a bootiful bufferfly you is, to be sure! up on sitch a place too, wid nuffin’ to eat ’cept Krakatoa dust. I wonder what your moder would say if she know’d you was here. You should be ashamed ob yourself!”

“Hallo! Moses, what are you talking to over there?”

“Nuffin’, Massa Nadgel. I was on’y habin’ a brief conv’sation wid a member ob de insect wurld in commemoration ob de purfesser. Leastwise, if it warn’t a insect it must hab bin suffin’ else. Won’t you go in, Miss Winnie?”

“No, I’d rather wait for father,” returned the girl, looking a little flushed, for some strange and totally unfamiliar ideas had recently floated into her brain and caused some incomprehensible flutterings of the heart to which hitherto she

had been a stranger.

Mindful of his father's injunctions, however, Nigel had been particularly careful to avoid increasing these flutterings.

In a few minutes the hermit came up.

"Ah! Winnie," he said, "there has been dire devastation here. Perhaps inside things may look better. Come, take my hand and don't be afraid. The floor is level and your eyes will soon get accustomed to the dim light."

"I's afeared, massa," remarked Moses, as they entered the cavern, "dat your sun-lights won't be wu'th much now."

"You are right, lad. Go on before us and light the lamps if they are not broken."

It was found, as they had expected, that the only light which penetrated the cavern was that which entered by the cave's mouth, which of course was very feeble.

Presently, to Winnie's surprise, Moses was seen issuing from the kitchen with a petroleum lamp in one hand, the brilliant light of which not only glittered on his expressive black visage but sent a ruddy glare all over the cavern.

Van der Kemp seemed to watch his daughter intently as she gazed in a bewildered way around. There was a puzzled look as well as mere surprise in her pretty face.

"Father," she said earnestly, "you have spoken more than once of living as if in a dream. Perhaps you will wonder when I tell you that I experience something of that sort now. Strange though this place seems, I have an unaccountable feeling that it is not absolutely new to me—that I have seen it before."

"I do not wonder, dear one," he replied, "for the drawings that surround this chamber were the handiwork of your dear mother, and they decorated the walls of your own nursery when you were a little child at your mother's knee. For over ten long years they have surrounded me and kept your faces fresh in my memory—though, truth to tell, it needed no such reminders to do that. Come, let us examine them."

It was pleasant to see the earnest face of Winnie as she half-recognised and strove to recall the memories of early childhood in that singular cavern. It was also a sight worth seeing—the countenance of Nigel, as well as that of the hermit, while they watched and admired her eager, puzzled play of feature, and it was the most amazing sight of all to see the all but superhuman joy of Moses as he held the lamp and listened to facts regarding the past of his beloved master which were quite new to him—for the hermit spoke as openly about his past domestic affairs as if he and Winnie had been quite alone.

"He either forgets that we are present, or counts us as part of his family," thought Nigel with a feeling of satisfaction.

"What a dear comoonicative man!" thought Moses, with unconcealed pleasure.

"Come now, let us ascend to the observatory," said the hermit, when all the things in the library had been examined. "There has been damage done there, I know; besides, there is a locket there which belonged to your mother. I left it by mistake one day when I went up to arrange the mirrors, and in the hurry of leaving forgot to return for it. Indeed, one of my main objects in re-visiting my old home was to fetch that locket away. It contains a lock of hair and one of those miniatures which men used to paint before photography drove such work off the field."

Winnie was nothing loth to follow, for she had reached a romantic period of life, and it seemed to her that to be led through mysterious caves and dark galleries in the very heart of a still active volcano by her own father—the hermit of Rakata—was the very embodiment of romance itself.

But a disappointment awaited them, for they had not proceeded halfway through the dark passage when it was found that a large mass of rock had fallen from the roof and almost blocked it up.

"There is a space big enough for us to creep through at the right-hand corner above, I think," said Nigel, taking the lantern from Moses and examining the spot.

"Jump up, Moses, and try it," said the hermit. "If your bulky shoulders get through, we can all manage it."

The negro was about to obey the order when Nigel let the lantern fall and the shock extinguished it.

"Oh! Massa Nadgel; das a pritty business!"

"Never mind," said Van der Kemp. "I've got matches, I think, in my—no, I haven't. Have you, Moses?"

"No, massa, I forgit to remember him."

"No matter, run back—you know the road well enough to follow it in the dark. We will wait here till you return. Be smart, now!"

Moses started off at once and for some moments the sound of clattering along the passage was heard.

"I will try to clamber through in the dark. Look after Winnie, Nigel—and don't leave the spot where you stand, dear one, for there are cracks and holes about that might sprain your little ankles."

"Very well, father."

"All right. I've got through, Nigel; I'll feel my way on for a little bit. Remain where you are."

“Winnie,” said Nigel when they were alone, “doesn’t it feel awesome and strange to be standing here in such intense darkness?”

“It does—I don’t quite like it.”

“Whereabouts are you?” said Nigel.

He carefully stretched out his hand to feel, as he spoke, and laid a finger on her brow.

“Oh! take care of my eyes!” exclaimed Winnie with a little laugh.

“I wish you would turn your eyes towards me for I’m convinced they would give some light—to *me* at least. Here, do let me hold your hand. It will make you feel more confident.”

To one who is at all familiar with the human frame, the way from the brow to the hand is comparatively simple. Nigel soon possessed himself of the coveted article. Like other things of great value the possession turned the poor youth’s head! He forgot his father’s warnings for the moment, forgot the hermit and Moses and Spinkie, and the thick darkness—forgot almost everything in the light of that touch!

“Winnie!” he exclaimed in a tone that quite alarmed her; “I—I—” He hesitated. The solemn embargo of his father recurred to him.

“What is it! Is there danger?” exclaimed the poor girl, clasping his hand tighter and drawing nearer to him.

This was too much! Nigel felt himself to be contemptible. He was taking unfair advantage of her.

“Winnie,” he began again, in a voice of forced calmness, “there is no danger whatever. I’m an ass—a dolt—that’s all! The fact is, I made my father a sort of half promise that I would not ask your opinion on a certain subject until—until I found out exactly what you thought about it. Now the thing is ridiculous—impossible—for how can I know your opinion on any subject until I have asked you?”

“Quite true,” returned Winnie simply, “so you better ask me.”

“Ha! *ha*!” laughed Nigel, in a sort of desperate amusement, “I—I—Yes, I *will* ask you, Winnie! But first I must explain —”

“Hallo! Nigel!” came at that moment from the other side of the obstruction, “are you there—all right?”

“Yes, yes—I’m here—not all right exactly, but I’ll be all right *some day*, you may depend upon that!” shouted the youth, in a tone of indignant exasperation.

“What said you?” asked Van der Kemp, putting his head through the hole.

“Hi! I’s a-comin’, look out, dar!” hallooed Moses in the opposite direction.

“Just so,” said Nigel, resuming his quiet tone and demeanour, “we’ll be all right when the light comes. Here, give us your hand, Van der Kemp.”

The hermit accepted the proffered aid and leaped down amongst his friends just as Moses arrived with the lantern.

“It’s of no use going further,” he said. “The passage is completely blocked up—so we must go round to where the mountain has been split off and try to clamber up. There will be daylight enough yet if we are quick. Come.”

Chapter Thirty Two.

The Last.

Descending to the boat they rowed round to the face of the great cliff which had been so suddenly laid bare when the Peak of Rakata was cleft from its summit to its foundations in the sea. It was a wonderful sight—a magnificent section, affording a marvellous view of the internal mechanism of a volcano.

But there was no time to spend in contemplation of this extraordinary sight, for evening approached and the hermit’s purpose had to be accomplished.

High up near the top of the mighty cliff could be seen a small hole in the rock, which was all that remained of the observatory.

“It will be impossible, I fear, to reach that spot,” said Nigel; “there does not appear to be foothold for a goat.”

“I will reach it,” said the hermit in a low voice, as he scanned the precipice carefully.

“So will I,” said the negro.

“No, Moses, I go alone. You will remain in the boat and watch. If I fall, you can pick me up.”

“Pick you up!” echoed Moses. “If you tumbles a t’ousand feet into de water how much t’ink you will be lef’ to pick up?”

It was useless to attempt to dissuade Van der Kemp. Being well aware of this, they all held their peace while he landed on a spur of the riven cliff.

The first part of the ascent was easy enough, the ground having been irregularly broken, so that the climber disappeared behind masses of rock at times, while he kept as much as possible to the western edge of the mountain where the cleavage had occurred; but as he ascended he was forced to come out upon narrow ledges that had been left here and there on the face of the cliff, where he seemed, to those who were watching far below, like a mere black spot on the face of a gigantic wall. Still upward he went, slowly but steadily, till he reached a spot nearly level with the observatory. Here he had to go out on the sheer precipice, where his footholds were invisible from below.

Winnie sat in the boat with blanched face and tightly clasped hands, panting with anxiety as she gazed upwards.

“It looks much more dangerous from here than it is in reality,” said Nigel to her in a reassuring tone.

“Das true, Massa Nadgel, das bery true,” interposed Moses, endeavouring to comfort himself as well as the others by the intense earnestness of his manner. “De only danger, Miss Winnie, lies in your fadder losin’ his head at sitch a t’riffic height, an’ dar’s no fear at all ob dat, for Massa neber loses his head—pooh! you might as well talk ob him losin’ his heart. Look! look! he git close to de hole now—he put his foot—yes—next step—dar! he’ve done it!”

With the perspiration of anxiety streaming down his face the negro relieved his feelings by a wild prolonged cheer. Nigel obtained the same relief by means of a deep long-drawn sigh, but Winnie did not move; she seemed to realise her father’s danger better than her companions, and remembered that the descent would be much more difficult than the ascent. They were not kept long in suspense. In a few minutes the hermit reappeared and began to retrace his steps—slowly but steadily—and the watchers breathed more freely.

Moses was right; there was in reality little danger in the climb, for the ledges which appeared to them like mere threads, and the footholds that were almost invisible, were in reality from a foot to three feet wide. The only danger lay in the hermit’s head being unable to stand the trial, but, as Moses had remarked, there was no fear of that.

The watchers were therefore beginning to feel somewhat relieved from the tension of their anxiety, when a huge mass of rock was seen to slip from the face of the cliff and descend with the thunderous roar of an avalanche. The incident gave those in the boat a shock, for the landslip occurred not far from the spot which Van der Kemp had reached, but as he still stood there in apparent safety there seemed no cause for alarm till it was observed that the climber remained quite still for a long time and seemed to have no intention of moving.

“God help him!” cried Nigel in sudden alarm, “the ledge has been carried away and he cannot advance! Stay by the boat, Moses, I will run to help him!”

“No, Massa Nadgel,” returned the negro, “I go to die wid ’im. Boat kin look arter itself.”

He sprang on shore as he spoke, and dashed up the mountain-side like a hunted hare.

Our hero looked at Winnie for an instant in hesitation.

“Go!” said the poor girl. “You know I can manage a boat—quick!”

Another moment and Nigel was following in the track of the negro. They gained the broken ledge together, and then found that the space between the point which they had reached and the spot on which the hermit stood was a smooth face of perpendicular rock—an absolutely impassable gulf!

Van der Kemp was standing with his back flat against the precipice and his feet resting on a little piece of projecting rock not more than three inches wide. This was all that lay between him and the hideous depth below, for Nigel found on carefully drawing nearer that the avalanche had been more extensive than was apparent from below, and that the ledge beyond the hermit had been also carried away—thus cutting off his retreat as well as his advance.

“I can make no effort to help myself,” said Van der Kemp in a low but calm voice, when our hero’s foot rested on the last projecting point that he could gain, and found that with the utmost reach of his arm he could not get within six inches of his friend’s outstretched hand. Besides, Nigel himself stood on so narrow a ledge, and against so steep a cliff, that he could not have acted with his wonted power even if the hand could have been grasped. Moses stood immediately behind Nigel, where the ledge was broader and where a shallow recess in the rock enabled him to stand with comparative ease. The poor fellow seemed to realise the situation more fully than his companion, for despair was written on every feature of his expressive face.

“What is to be done?” said Nigel, looking back.

“De boat-rope,” suggested the negro.

“Useless,” said Van der Kemp, in a voice as calm and steady as if he were in perfect safety, though the unusual pallor of his grave countenance showed that he was fully alive to the terrible situation. “I am resting on little more than my heels, and the strain is almost too much for me even now. I could not hold on till you went to the boat and returned. No, it seems to be God’s will—and,” added he humbly, “His will be done.”

“O God, send us help!” cried Nigel in an agony of feeling that he could not master.

“If I had better foothold I might spring towards you and catch hold of you,” said the hermit, “but I cannot spring off my heels. Besides, I doubt if you could bear my weight.”

“Try, try!” cried Nigel, eagerly extending his hand. “Don’t fear for my strength—I’ve got plenty of it, thank God! and

see, I have my right arm wedged into a crevice so firmly that nothing could haul it out."

But Van der Kemp shook his head. "I cannot even make the attempt," he said. "The slightest move would plunge me down. Dear boy! I know that you and your father and Moses will care for my Winnie, and—"

"Massa!" gasped Moses, who while the hermit was speaking had been working his body with mysterious and violent energy; "massa! couldn't you *fall* dis way, an' Nadgel could kitch your hand, an' I's got my leg shoved into a hole as nuffin' 'll haul it out ob. Dere's a holler place here. If Nadgel swings you into dat, an' I only once grab you by de hair—you're safe!"

"It might be done—tried at least," said the hermit, looking anxiously at his young friend.

"Try it!" cried Nigel, "I won't fail you."

It is not possible for any except those who have gone through a somewhat similar ordeal to understand fully the test of cool courage which Van der Kemp had to undergo on that occasion.

Shutting his eyes for a moment in silent prayer, he deliberately worked with his shoulders upon the cliff against which he leaned until he felt himself to be on the point of falling towards his friend, and the two outstretched hands almost touched.

"Now, are you ready?" he asked.

"Ready," replied Nigel, while Moses wound both his powerful arms round his comrade's waist and held on.

Another moment and the hands clasped, Nigel uttered an irrepressible shout as the hermit swung off, and, coming round with great violence to the spot where the negro had fixed himself, just succeeded in catching the edge of the cliff with his free hand.

"Let go, Nigel," he shouted;—"safe!"

The poor youth was only too glad to obey, for the tremendous pull had wrenched his arm out of the crevice in which he had fixed it, and for a moment he swayed helplessly over the awful abyss.

"Don't let me go, Moses!" he yelled, as he made a frantic but futile effort to regain his hold,—for he felt that the negro had loosened one of his arms though the other was still round him like a hoop of iron.

"No fear, Nadgel," said Moses, "I's got you tight—only don' wriggle. Now, massa, up you come."

Moses had grasped his master's hair with a grip that well-nigh scalped him, and he held on until the hermit had got a secure hold of the ledge with both hands. Then he let the hair go, for he knew that to an athlete like his master the raising himself by his arms on to the ledge would be the work of a few seconds. Van der Kemp was thus able to assist in rescuing Nigel from his position of danger.

But the expressions of heartfelt thankfulness for this deliverance which naturally broke from them were abruptly checked when it was found that Moses could by no means extract his leg out of the hole into which he had thrust it, and that he was suffering great pain.

After some time, and a good deal of violent wrenching, during which our sable hero mingled a few groans in strange fashion with his congratulations, he was got free, and then it was found that the strain had been too much for even his powerful bones and sinews, for the leg was broken.

"My poor fellow!" murmured Van der Kemp, as he went down on his knees to examine the limb.

"Don' care a buttin for dat, massa. You're safe, an' Nadgel's safe—an' it only cost a broken leg! Pooh! das nuffin'!" said Moses, unable to repress a few tears in the excess of his joy and pain!

With considerable difficulty they carried the poor negro down to the boat, where they found Winnie, as might be supposed, in a half-fainting condition from the strain of prolonged anxiety and terror to which she had been subjected; but the necessity of attending to the case of the injured Moses was an antidote which speedily restored her.

Do you think, good reader, that Nigel and Winnie had much difficulty in coming to an understanding after that, or that the hermit was disposed to throw any obstacles in the way of true love? If you do, let us assure you that you are mistaken. Surely this is information enough for any intelligent reader.

Still, it may be interesting to add, difficulties did not all at once disappear. The perplexities that had already assailed Nigel more than once assailed him again—perplexities about a negro man-servant, and a household monkey, and a hermit father-in-law, and a small income—to say nothing of a disconsolate mother-poetess in England and a father roving on the high seas! How to overcome these difficulties gave him much thought and trouble; but they were overcome at last. That which seemed impossible to man proved to be child's-play in the hands of woman. Winnie solved the difficulty by suggesting that they should all return to the Cocos-Keeling Islands and dwell together there for evermore!

Let us drop in on them, good reader, at a later period, have a look at them, and bid them all good-bye.

On a green knoll by the margin of the lagoon stands a beautiful cottage with a garden around it, and a pleasure-boat

resting on the white coral sand in front. From the windows of that cottage there is a most magnificent view of the lagoon with its numerous islets and its picturesque palm-trees. Within that cottage dwell Nigel and Winnie, and a brown-eyed, brown-haired, fair-skinned baby girl who is “the most extraordinary angel that ever was born.” It has a nurse of its own, but is chiefly waited on and attended to by an antique poetess, who dwells in another cottage, a stone’s-cast off, on the same green knoll. There she inspires an ancient mariner with poetical sentiments—not your up-in-the-clouds, reef-point-pattering nonsense, observe but the real genuine article, superior to “that other fellow’s,” you know—when not actively engaged with the baby.

The first cottage is named Rakata, in honour of our hermit, who is one of its inhabitants. The second is named Krakatoa by its eccentric owner, Captain Roy.

It must not be imagined, however, that our friends have settled down there to spend their lives in idleness. By no means. This probably would not be permitted by the “King of the Cocos Islands” even if they wished to do so. But they do not wish that. There is no such condition as idleness in the lives of good men and women.

Nigel has taken to general superintendence of the flourishing community in the midst of which he has cast his lot. He may be almost regarded as the prime minister of the islands, in addition to which he has started an extensive boat-building business and a considerable trade in cocoa-nuts, etcetera, with the numerous islands of the Java Sea; also a saw-mill, and a forge, and a Sunday-school—in which last the pretty, humble-minded Winnie lends most efficient aid. Indeed it is said that she is the chief manager as well as the life and soul of that business, though Nigel gets all the credit.

Captain Roy sometimes sails his son’s vessels, and sometimes looks after the secular education of the Sunday-school children—the said education being conducted on the principle of unlimited story-telling with illimitable play of fancy. But his occupations are irregular—undertaken by fits and starts, and never to be counted on. His evenings he usually devotes to poetry and pipes—for the captain is obstinate, and sticks—like most of us—to his failings as well as his fancies.

There is a certain eccentric individual with an enthusiastic temperament and blue binoculars who pays frequent and prolonged visits to the Keeling Islands. It need scarcely be said that his name is Verkimier. There is no accounting for the tastes of human beings. Notwithstanding all his escapes and experiences, that indomitable man of science still ranges, like a mad philosopher, far and wide over the archipelago in pursuit of “bootterflies ant ozer specimens of zee insect vorld.” It is observed, however, even by the most obtuse among his friends, that whereas in former times the professor’s flights were centrifugal they have now become centripetal—the Keeling Islands being the great centre towards which he flies. Verkimier is, and probably will always be, a subject of wonder and of profound speculation to the youthful inhabitants of the islands. They don’t understand him and he does not understand them. If they were insects he would take deep and intelligent interest in them. As they are merely human beings, he regards them with that peculiar kind of interest with which men regard the unknown and unknowable. He is by no means indifferent to them. He is too kindly for that. He studies them deeply, though hopelessly, and when he enters the Sunday-school with his binoculars—which he often does, to listen—a degree of awe settles down on the little ones which it is impossible to evoke by the most solemn appeals to their spiritual natures.

Nigel and Winnie have a gardener, and that gardener is black—as black as the Ace of Spades or the King of Ashantee. He dwells in a corner of the Rakata Cottage, but is addicted to spending much of his spare time in the Krakatoa one. He is as strong and powerful as ever, but limps slightly on his right leg—his “game” leg, as he styles it. He is, of course, an *immense* favourite with the young people—not less than with the old. He has been known to say, with a solemnity that might tickle the humorous and horrify the timid, that he wouldn’t “hab dat game leg made straight agin! no, not for a hundred t’ousand pounds. ’Cause why?—it was an eber-present visible reminder dat once upon a time he had de libes ob massa and Nadgel in his arms a-hangin’ on to his game leg, an’ dat, t’rough Gracious Goodness, he sabe dem bof!”

Ha! You may smile at Moses if you will, but he can return the smile with kindly interest, for he is actuated by that grand principle which will sooner or later transform even the scoffers of earth, and which is embodied in the words—“Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Even the lower animals testify to this fact when the dog licks the hand that smites it and accords instant forgiveness on the slightest encouragement. Does not Spinkie prove it also, when, issuing at call, from its own pagoda in the sunniest corner of the Rakata garden, it forsakes cocoa-nuts, sugar-cane, fruits, and other delights, to lay its little head in joyful consecration on the black bosom of its benignant friend?

And what of Moses’ opinion of the new home? It may be shortly expressed in his own words—

“It’s heaben upon eart’, an’ de most happiest time as eber occurred to me was dat time when Sunda Straits went into cumbusti’n an’ Krakatoa was Blown to Bits.”

The End.

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