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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FRONTIER BOYS ON THE COAST; OR, IN THE PIRATE'S POWER \*\*\*

**FRONTIER BOYS  
ON THE COAST**  
**OR**  
***IN THE PIRATE'S POWER***  
**BY**  
**CAPT. WYN ROOSEVELT**



**"THEY WERE NOW GOING UP  
THE FACE OF THE CLIFF."—P.  
204. Frontier Boys on the Coast.**



NEW YORK  
HURST & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS

**THE FRONTIER BOYS**

**By CAPT. WYN ROOSEVELT**

This series tells the adventures of Jim, Joe, and Tom Darlington, first in their camp wagon as they follow the trail to the great West in the early days. They are real American boys, resourceful, humorous, and—but you must meet them. You will find them interesting company. They meet with thrilling adventures and encounters, and stirring incidents are the rule, not

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# CHAPTER I

## CAPTAIN BILL BROOM

"What devilment has old Bill got on for tonight, Pete?"

The speaker was seated on an old scarred sea chest in a dimly lighted forecandle.

"I dunno," replied Pete, "maybe he's lookin' fer a wreck."

"I heard the mate say somethin' about a passel of four boys," put in a third man who was laying back in his bunk, "that the skipper was a-lookin' for."

"Kidnapping, eh?" said Cales, the first speaker. "Hold 'em for ransom, I suppose. Well, the old man has been in worse games than that. I reckon the kids' parents are rich and are willin' to pay a high price for their darlings."

"You're on the wrong tack, matey," said the man in the bunk. "Cap'n Brinks, who landed in San Diego from a Mexican port put the old man wise. He told him that those fellars had considerable money and a raft of jewels with 'em that they picked up in Mexico." [10]

"Ho, Ho, that's the game, is it," cried Cales, thumping his knee with a gnarled fist, "that ought to be easy then."

"Looks so, but it ain't," replied the other, "those four boys have got somethin' of a reputation in the southwest. Hard fighters and good shots and their leader is a husky lad and about as crafty as a red Injun."

"He ain't met the Old Man yet," said Cales significantly.

"I don't see where you get all your news from, Jake," growled Pete from his seat on the chest, "you ought to be a reporter."

"I keep my eyes open and my mouth shet," replied Jake, "any man can get larned if he will do that."

"I'd like to have a picter of you with your mouth shet," remarked Pete. "It's open even when you are asleep." He dodged just in time to avoid a heavy shoe flung from Jake's ready hand that crashed against the wall.

"Don't do that agin," he warned, a red light showing in his eyes. "I'll larn you boys that I ain't as old as I looks to be." [11]

Jake laughed harshly.

"You mustn't keep your own mouth open so wide, Pop, cause you'll have to swallow your own words if you do."

"I guess I'll never git choked," replied Pete, truculently. "Kin you tell me what the skipper means snooping down this coast with no lights showing when it's plumb dark? We are liable to sink ourselves or Californy all of a suddint."

"Why don't you ask the Cap'n what he is up to?" inquired Cales, "that is, if you want some real useful information, Pop."

Pop raised himself up and glared at the speaker.

"I ain't done living," he replied.

"We are navigating pretty careful," remarked Jake. "You can hardly feel the Sea Eagle moving."

"Running for the cove, I reckon," suggested Cales, "I'm mighty pleased not to be the man at the wheel. Well, I'm goin' to turn in for a snooze."

In a brief time the two men were snoring loudly, while old Pete sat smoking his pipe, as stolid as a wooden Indian and the forecandle was fogged with the smoke, through which the swinging lantern shone dimly. The air is stifling so let us go up on deck where we can breathe the salt ozone and incidentally get acquainted with Captain Bill Broom, who is to occupy such a prominent place in this narrative. [12]

He is well worth meeting, not only as the opponent of our old friend, Jim Darlington, but because of his own unworthy but interesting character. In those days Skipper Bill Broom was known all up and down the coast and beyond. His fame, such as it was, comes down even to this recent day.

On deck it is muffling dark, with the stars obscured in some dim way by mist or fog. There is a breeze blowing steadily from the broad wastes of the ocean. The bulk of the California coast looms dimly on the port bow. Not more than a half mile distant can be seen the white rushing forward of the breakers towards the rocky coast.

Dangerous work this, navigating the Sea Eagle through the thick gloom of the night but the old man knew his business. He was on the bridge pacing back and forth like some strange animal and giving hoarse directions to the man at the wheel. He knew every inch of that coast, the

sunken reefs and dangerous rocks.

"Starboard your helm," he growled.

The sailor spun the wheel obediently. And the captain resumed his pacing back and forth upon the bridge. Not much could be seen of him, except that he was a powerful man, with a peculiar crouching stoop, as if he and the sea were engaged in a mysterious game. One striving to get a dangerous death-hold upon the other, both wary and using unceasing watchfulness.

[13]

There was a strange softness in Captain Broom's tread like that of a padding panther, but his arms had the loose forward powerful swing of a gorilla's. Once he stepped into the chart house to look at something and the light of the lamp will give us a square look at him.

"That man a pirate!" you exclaim at the first glance; one who carried the blackest name along the coast as a smuggler and wrecker, who had brought cargoes of wretched slaves from Africa in the days before the Civil War and who had had more marvelous escapes than any man in the history of piracy with the exception of Black Jack Morgan! Impossible!

"Why that man is nothing but an old farmer," you exclaim in disappointment, when you see him. "He ought to be peddling vegetables on market day." But just wait.

True, Skipper Broom had come from a long line of New England farmers, hard, close-fisted, close-mouthed men. Young Broom had broken away from the farm and followed his bent for seafaring, but to the end of his days, he kept his farmerlike appearance and he affected many of the traits of the yeoman which he found to be on more than one occasion a most useful disguise.

[14]

Let's look at him. That heavy winter cap pulled down on his grizzled head gives him a most "Reuben" like appearance. Jeans pants are thrust into heavy cowhide boots. The deadly gray eyes soft as granite have become red rimmed from fits of fury and hard through many scenes of coldly calculated cruelty. A most dangerous customer and I for one, and I ought to know, consider that he will have the better of Jim Darlington in their approaching encounter—and yet Jim is never beaten until the last shot is fired and so it is impossible for me to foretell how this contest of wit and daring will come out.

After examining his chart closely, Captain Broom crouched out through the door and on to the deck. He took one keen look towards the shore, then he approached the helmsman. "Git below, Bill. I'll fetch her in."

The helmsman relinquished the wheel gladly enough and under the Captain's masterful hand the Sea Eagle swung slowly around and pointed in towards the curving shore.

The dark form of the mate could be seen on the deck below waiting for the order that he knew must come soon. The crew of the Sea Eagle though subordinate enough were necessarily partners in Captain Broom's wicked enterprises so that the discipline was somewhat different than in ordinary vessels.

[15]

"Call 'em up, Mr. Haffen," roared the skipper to the mate. "It's chore time."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Mr. Haffen.

The watch was called on deck and the dark forms of the men could be seen in the bow. The pulsing of the Sea Eagle had stopped and with scarcely a sound the anchor was dropped into the water.

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## CHAPTER II

[16]

### THE COVE AND CAVE

The starboard boat was lowered into the water. First the mate, then Captain Broom and two men got in. The latter were Cales and Pete who pulled noiselessly at the oars. The boat glided quietly through the silent darkness towards the shore. The Captain was seated in the stern, his great bulk crouched forward, but there was nothing inert in his posture. His big hands clasped either side of the craft.

In a few minutes the boat grounded softly on the sand of the beach and all hands got ashore. Scarcely a word was spoken, though the cove was so hidden that there seemed to be no possible chance that the landing of the free-booters would be observed. However, Captain Bill Broom took no risk of being discovered. He had many enemies upon the coast and inland as well. Besides, the State of California had set a price upon his head.

Two thousand dollars was the reward for his capture, and so profitable an investment was apt to be realized on sooner or later by some enterprising citizen. So Captain Broom took due care whenever he went abroad not to attract undue attention.

[17]

This cove was a favorite lurking place of his when close pressed, where he would take refuge after some daring adventure upon the high seas, until such a time as the hubbub along the coast had died down. Sometimes he lay in hiding there, with the Sea Eagle screened behind the

encircling cliffs, waiting like a black spider to rush out and capture some unsuspecting craft.

"Pick her up, boys," said the Captain, "you know where she belongs," pointing to the boat.

"Aye, aye, sir," they replied, and putting it on their shoulders they carried the boat along a narrow path that divided the thick undergrowth; until, after going several hundred yards, they reached a thick screen of brush through which they shoved, and came to a cave.

Although so well hidden, the entrance to the cavern was quite high, so that the men gained admission without stooping, and going a short distance into the dark interior, they placed the boat gently down against the wall. There was a constant and heavy drip of water, so that there was no chance for the boat to warp, as it would have surely done if placed outside in the dry California air. [18]

"I don't like this yere cave," remarked Pete, when left alone with Cales.

"What's the matter with it? It's dark and damp, but that is the nature of caves."

"It makes me feel creepy, that's all," replied Pete, "and it takes considerable to do that."

"Whatever happened?" inquired Cales, grinning, "something terrible, I reckon, to make your thick hide chilly."

"It were before your time," replied Pete somewhat reluctantly, "we raided a ranch back thar agin the mountings. Senor Sebastian owned it and it was said that he could ride all day and never git off his place, and that he had more sheep and cattle than thar is folks in Frisco."

"The Captain shanghied him, I reckon," cut in Cales.

"You hold your windlass," commanded the old man in a querulous tone, "I'm telling this yarn."

"All right, Pop," said Cales in a conciliating manner, "have it yer own way." He was really anxious to hear the story the old man had referred to.

"Young fry is always flapping," the older speaker mumbled,—then he took up the course of his narrative. "Waal, as I was telling ye, this Senor had lots of money and the Cap'n being short of funds thought that he could use some of it. So one night we ran into the cove, it was blacker even than this. I don't see how the old man ever got the craft past the sharks' teeth at the entrance but he did." [19]

"He could have brought her in with his eyes shut," declared Cales. "I never have seen his equal for navigating."

"Waal, we made camp here that night, and the next day, the Cap'n with some of the gang, left for the ranch and I stayed to look after things. Nothing happened that day, and I was dozing by the fire about midnight when I heard them coming back. They had the Senor, a fine-looking old man with a gray mustache and as cold and proud-looking as they make them.

"The Cap'n was furious because he had not been able to lay his hand on the coin, and he swore that he would make the old Senor tell where his money was or there would be trouble. He took him into this cave and I don't know what happened there, and I don't want to know. All I'm sure of is that I never saw him come out.

"The Cap'n sent me to the ship to get some chains on the second day and he took 'em into the cave. We sailed a couple of days later, but not a sign did I see of the Senor. That's why this cave makes me creepy, Cales." [20]

They were standing near the entrance, when there came a distinct low moan from the interior. It was not a ghostly sound, either. There was no mistaking it.

"Did you hear that, Cales?" asked old Pete in a quavering voice.

"Yes," replied Cales, "I heard it all right. It can't be the Senor?"

"No," replied Pete. "He has been dead these years."

"Let's find out," said his comrade.

"There's nothing in this world could make me go in thar," declared Pete solemnly, "besides, it's agin the Captain's orders."

"Well, I'm going," said Cales either more brave or less experienced than the other. "It sounds to me like a woman's voice."

"And I'm goin' to git," declared old Pete, tottering towards the path.

"You're a brave old pirate," said Cales contemptuously, and with that he went slowly back into the cave. He had to go cautiously, for beyond a certain point he was not acquainted with the interior. He could feel the moist ground under foot and he kept his hand stretched out, not knowing what he might run against in the dense damp darkness. [21]

Then, suddenly, his hand struck a stone wall. Groping his way, he turned a sharp corner and followed along a low narrow passageway that obliged him to stoop. Then came the sound of the moaning just ahead. Jack Cales was a brave man but it was all that he could do, to keep from

turning and running in panic for the mouth of the cave. But though his determination had received a severe shock, it did not turn to flight.

He saw a faint light ahead, spreading a glow at the end of the passage as he came nearer. Then he saw something that held him stone still with a clutch of weird fear. He had reached the end of the narrow passage, and dimly made out a domed room in the rock, white with translucent encrustation.

He struck a match. About him, before, to the right and to the left he could see forms all of ghostly white, some crouching, others standing. Hardly had the light flared up than it sizzled out. Some drops of water falling from the roof had extinguished the blaze. Then was repeated that awful sound of distress.

Cales groped around almost in a frenzy of terror. Where was the exit from that awful room? Round and round he went, and all the time there were strange whisperings in his ears, and unseen hands seemed to clutch his clothes. Once he slipped and was trembling so that he was hardly able to get to his feet. Just as he did so, something swept past him like a breath of wind. Rendered desperate he made another dash, and this time if he had not found a passageway, he felt that he could have knocked a hole through the wall. Then he stood at the mouth of the cave.

[22]

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## CHAPTER III

[23]

### THE BARBED WIRE

Just at that moment was heard the hoarse voice of Captain Broom booming through the darkness outside.

As Cales turned about, some furry animal sprang past him dashing between his legs and nearly upsetting him.

"On deck, you scoundrel, come out of there," called the Captain.

"Aye, aye, sir," came the reply of Cales in a strangely weak tone, though he was now more concerned by the possible penalty to be meted out by the Captain for disobedience of orders, than by thought of the undetermined occupants of the cave. If it were a cat it was certainly a good joke on old Pete. This was, had they but known it, the swift solution of the mystery.

Oddly enough the Captain said not another word, a fact suggestive to Cales that there was something amiss in the cave and the little company at once took up their line of march. Captain Broom was in the lead, followed by the mate, then Cales, with old Pete bringing up the rear. Just as they started Captain Broom extinguished the lantern and they took up the trail in total darkness. Every precaution would now be necessary for they would soon be in a region where the very name of Broom was execrated with bitter hatred, and every bush would grow a poniard if his whereabouts were known.

[24]

It was evident that the skipper was as good a guide on land as he was a pilot at sea, for he led his little party at a steady gait by a winding cow-path through the thick undergrowth. He doubtless knew this region thoroughly, for he had made more than one raid in this locality.

It was soon to be determined, however, that they were not the only ones abroad that night.

They had walked in silence for some time, well on to two hours, when they came to an open space, with the irregular form of a live oak on the southeast corner. Then Captain Broom stopped suddenly, his keen eyesight which no darkness could baffle had discerned some object moving out from the shelter of the oak tree.

It came slowly with uplifted black arms and white hair falling around its face. There was a terrible intensity in its advance across the open space, withal that it moved so slowly. The figure stopped directly in front of Captain Broom.

[25]

"Get out of my way, you hag," he roared, but for the first time in his life a certain tremor crept into his voice. Perhaps he was growing old. He drew back his arm as though to strike the woman in his path.

As he did so Jack Cales stooped and picked up a round rock at his feet, intending to hurl it, not at the woman but at the skipper, for he alone of the party divined the possible cause of this poor woman's dementia. But his interference was not necessary for it seemed as though the Captain's arm was paralyzed. He declared afterwards that some invisible hand had seized his arm.

Then, in a loud, wailing voice the woman put a curse upon the slayer of her husband, for this spectre was none other than the Senora Sebastian. It was terrible to hear her and it must have sent a shiver into the soul of the hardy skipper.

When she had finished, the woman moved past them and vanished in the direction of the ranch. For a full minute the line of men stood without moving a step and in absolute silence, Captain Broom with his arm upraised as he had lifted it to strike.

Then, without saying a word, he took the first forward step and the others followed him through the darkness.

[26]

"Say, Cales," growled Pete in a low voice, "what was it you found in that cave? My old timbers are shaking yet."

"Keep your old jaws shut," yelled the Captain, who had wonderfully keen hearing, when anything was spoken that concerned him.

"How do you suppose the old man heard me?" mumbled Pete to himself. He dropped back a pace or two, then whispered, "The old man must be crazy. He is making direct for the Sebastian ranch."

"Do you reckon that these four boys he is looking after, are located there?" asked Jack.

"I dunno," replied Pete, "you can calkerlate on one thing though and that is that the skipper knows pretty nigh where those lads are. One of his messengers, a one-eyed, twisted greaser, came aboard the other day, and was gabbling in the Captain's cabin. Then the next thing I knew we was under sail, and came kiting down to the cove."

Just then the party halted at the confines of a four strand barbed wire fence. This was the first indication that they were entering the great ranch property that formerly belonged to the Senor Sebastian, the elderly man the Captain had made captive, and which was now the property of his only son.

[27]

"Now, lads," said the leader of the expedition, "Here's a chance to make yourself small. This yere barb is like a devil fish if it once gits a holt of your panties—it won't let go."

"That's so, Captain," said the mate, a generally silent and saturnine man.

"I reckon you know, mate," said the Captain. "The last time we was through these parts, and that some considerable years ago, this same fence got a holt of yer pants and wouldn't let go. I never heard you talk so much and so earnestly in my life before. You want to be more keerful this time."

The mate simply grunted by way of reply and, lying close to the ground, he very gingerly and carefully worked his way under the wire and thus escaped his mentioned former unpleasant detention. He then held the lower wire up as high as he could until his chief had wiggled under.

Pete was the only one of the party who was seriously detained, for Jack Cales had slid under as slick as an eel. But Pete's joints were old and rusty and the venomous wire got a clutch on his coat and his pants.

"What's keeping you back?" inquired the Captain, gruffly, as Cales and his comrade did not put in an immediate appearance.

"Pete has got caught, sir," said Jack.

[28]

"What are you doing there, you old barnacle?" inquired the Captain as he came back to the fence.

There was a certain odd comradeship between the skipper and the old salt who had been with him since his African days. Both were New Englanders and had come from neighboring homesteads.

"Just resting, sir," replied the captive.

It certainly did have something of that appearance, for Pete had kept a decisive grip on his old black pipe with his stubby teeth and was puffing at it in apparent peace and resignation.

"Want me to git you a piller?" inquired the skipper, sarcastically.

"Thank ye, sir," replied Pete imperturbably.

Meanwhile the mate had been at work with deft fingers and he finally succeeded in extricating the old man and putting him upon his pins.

"Now if ye are sufficiently rested," proposed the skipper, "we will hike along."

This they did. Their way now lay between two stretches of fence that enclosed a road not much traveled for there were only faint traces of wheels in the turf. It was probably not a public highway but belonged to the great ranch.

Everything seemed smooth sailing now, as there was no more barbed wire to be immediately met but Pete soon made himself prominent again. He was rolling along with that gait peculiar to a sailor when aboard land, when he gave a sudden spring and clutched Cales convulsively in the back, giving that individual a big scare.

[29]

"Dad burn it, boys. I've stepped on a rattler." An investigation was made very carefully and Captain Broom quickly picked up a short piece of rope.

"I'll rattle you," he cried, touching up the old man with the rope's end.

## PETE'S YARN

They went along steadily through the darkness in an almost directly easterly direction. Being now clear of the brush they could make good time on the springy turf.

"How far are we now from the ranch, Pete?" inquired Jack.

"Too durn close to suit me," replied Pete. "I can't tell exactly for these ranches are as big as all outside creation, but I guess we must be as close as a mile to the buildings."

"I reckon the Captain is going to walk up to the front door and ask for accommodations."

"Wouldn't s'prise me a bit, if he done that," replied Pete querulously. "The old man ain't lacking in nerve. Back thar was the first time I ever seen him hang back in my long experience with him."

"When the old lady was speaking her piece? Suppose I ask him how much he made when he captured the Senor," suggested Cales, who had recovered his flippant humor. [31]

"I wouldn't git gay, lad," said old Pete, warningly. "She is just as liable to haunt you in your black spells."

"Don't have 'em, uncle," replied Cales.

"You collect the material for 'em when you are young," said the old man wisely, "and they come out of your bones like rheumatiz when you git old."

"Somebody is coming back of us," suddenly whispered Cales.

"Take to cover, lads," ordered the skipper, who was as quick to hear as the younger man. The only cover was a high and thick growth of wild mustard growing alongside the fences.

Quickly they stepped from the open road into the shelter of the tall mustard. They had not long to wait. There was the jingle of spurs and the thud of horses' feet walking slowly along. Next came the voices of men talking.

"It is useless, Senor, to try and find her, I fear," replied one man to the other.

"It seems so," replied the other sadly. "My mother always seems to be worse when the time of the year approaches that my father disappeared. In spite of all our care she will escape."

They had now arrived at a point opposite where the free-booters were hidden. The man who had last spoken struck a light and lit a cigarette; the instantaneous glare showed the dark handsome face of the Spanish type. There was the high-peaked sombrero, the striking clothes, the intent face and then the light died suddenly out. [32]

"Ah, Manuel," said the young man to his companion, "if I could only once lay hands on that cursed Gringo," and he ground his teeth in fury, unable to express himself.

"Humph, Gringo," grunted the Captain, disdainfully.

"Did you hear anything, Senor?" asked Manuel.

"Nothing."

"I was sure I heard something," asserted his companion. They had reined in their horses and sat listening quietly for a few seconds.

"It was probably nothing but a calf by the roadside," said the Senor.

The other shook his head doubtfully, then they turned and rode on towards the rancho.

When they were safely out of range, the party of pirates took up their line of march once more.

"So the greaser took me for a calf," remarked Captain Broom. "If it had been you, Jack Cales, there might be some excuse fer such a mistake."

"Aye, sir," replied Cales, glumly.

"Getting kind of close to the ranch, ain't you, Cap'n?" ventured old Pete. [33]

"I thought of leaving you there, Pete, while the rest of us corralled those kids. You are getting too old for these long tramps."

No more remarks were heard coming from the direction of Pete, for he was not at all sure but that the Captain might, in a moment of irresponsible humor, do just as he threatened without regard to the consequences.

After they had gone on for a mile from the point where the two men had overtaken them, Captain Broom led his party away from the road in a southerly direction, once more undergoing the harrowing experience of getting through the barbed wire fence. But this time Jack Cales was especially detailed by the Captain to get old Pete through so there would not be any unnecessary delay.



It was evident that they were getting into a different section, a short time after they left the road, for they began going up and winding among little rocky hills. At last they came to a stopping place. They climbed up an elevation and sat on some rocks among a group of dark trees.

"Now, lads, take it easy," said the Captain, "ye have had quite a footin' and when morning comes, there will be some more ahead and at a faster gait."

"Gosh, Cap'n," declared old Pete, "It's the most walking we've done together since the time we corralled the last bunch of niggers on the west coast of Africa."

[34]

"We certainly made money that trip when we sold that cargo of coons to the traders on that Palmetto Island below Charleston. But we will clean up about as much money when we round up those four boys and twice as easy. Tell the two lads about that trip, Pete."

The old sailor sat on a rock, and taking out his bag of tobacco filled his short black pipe with one thorny thumb, then he commenced his narrative, with the glow of his pipe lighting up his weatherbeaten face.

"Well, orders is orders, and the Cap'n wants me to tell this yarn. I might just as well begin it, lads. I never knew any good to come to sailormen cruising around on dry land any more than on this trip." He cast a wary eye at Captain Broom, but that worthy merely grunted and Pete resumed his story.

"Our clipper lay at anchor in a wide bay with only a couple of men on board and the Captain, myself and six men trailing inland for to find a village of naygurs that our guides had told us of.

"It certainly was hot and steamy going through the jungles and every once in a while a big snake as large as my leg would crawl across our path and rustle away into the undergrowth. Once I felt one of 'em a-twisting and rolling under my foot like a big log that had come to life. I guess I must have jumped twice as high as my own head and I lit on the back of one of the naygurs that was guiding us.

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"He didn't know what struck him; probably thought it was a tiger for I sunk my hooks into his hide. He let out a yell and went ripping and snorting through that jungle and me not having sense enough to let go, until a grape vine about as thick as a manilla rope chucked me under the chin and I fell flat on my back and I guess that naygur is still running."

Here the captain who was evidently enjoying the narrative hugely, burst into a volcanic roar of laughter.

"I can see yer yet, Pete, on that bounding buck of a nigger, and him a-hiking through the jungle and a-yelling like a wild Injun."

"I remember you got out of the way mighty quick," said Pete, "when you heard us a-coming behind you."

"It certainly was a curious spectacle," said the Captain, "but go on with your yarn, Pete."

"The further we went into the jungle the worse it got. The mosquitoes fairly ate us alive and they wern't the only cannibals in those woods by any means. There was a tribe of man-eaters beyond the Big River and we didn't try to capture any of them. They wern't our stripe of bacon.

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"We went on for six days, with the monkeys chattering over our heads all day and the mosquitoes serenading us at night. Talk about birds, there was a whole menagerie of them and their colors beat the handkerchiefs that these greasers wear around their throats and you can't get ahead of that for color.

"One night we got in range of the village we were after and there was a great pow-wow going on. There was a big fire in the circle of the grass huts and some big black bucks were doing a dance around it. Just then I saw—"

"Hold on, Pete," said the Captain in a low, gruff voice, "somebody is coming our way."

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## CHAPTER V

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### THE FOUR BOYS

"Hey, Jim, where are we going to make camp?" It was his brother Jo's genial voice.

"Not until we can strike water," replied Jim. "No more dry camps for me."

"I don't think much of the coast range, or the Sierras, either." It was Juarez Hoskins' well-remembered voice, with its rather low, deep tones.

"Give me the Rockies every time."

Juarez was nothing if not loyal to his mountains.

"I don't think any of the mountains are much to brag of."

It is hardly necessary to say that it is Tom Darlington who is now speaking, for the discerning reader is pretty well acquainted with his style by this time.

"There's always something to look out for," continued Tom, "if it isn't Indians it's rattlesnakes, and you have got to choose between a cloudburst or no water at all. Give me the East every time."

"You make me exhausted talking about the East," said Jim. "Why didn't you stay there when you were there? I had just as soon take a chance with a rattlesnake as with an ice cream soda." [38]

"Tom would like to *play* Indian," cut in Jo, "with turkey feathers sticking up from a red flannel band around his head. And creeping upon a flock of sheep pretending that they are antelope and that cows are real live bears."

"Yes," said Jim, "you have lined it out all right, Jo. Then when they were tired of playing Injun, Tom and his little playmates could pretend that they were Daniel Boone's men with wildskin panties on."

"Shut up, boys," said Juarez, coming to Tom's rescue. "What's the use in rubbing it in? The East is all right for some folks and if the boys back there can't have real adventures they have to do the best they can. After all, Jim, you are an Eastern boy. You can't get away from that." Jim writhed under the implication but replied good humoredly.

"You're right, Juarez, old chap, but I can't help stirring up Tom once in a while. It is good for him too. It keeps his liver active, so he won't get bilious."

"Juarez has got more sense than you two put together," said Tom.

"Forget all about it now, Tommy," urged Juarez good-naturedly, getting the aforesaid Tommy by the nape of the neck with one vigorous brown hand and giving him a shake. [39]

Thus under Juarez's straightforward management the family quarrel was abated.

"We might just as well ride now, boys," said Jim. "The horses are good and rested and we will soon be going down grade instead of up."

The horses had been following in single file back of the four boys. They were to be trusted not to cut up any shindigs or to wander from the narrow mountain trail. The boys had had them a long time and together they had gone through the numerous hardships and adventures. They were as perfectly trained as Uncle Sam's cavalry horses.

The horses halted as the boys dropped back to their sides, and they swung into the saddle simultaneously. Jim rode in the lead on a splendid gray, with a powerful arching neck, strong shoulders and hindquarters made for speed. Him, he called Caliente. Next rode Tom on a pretty bay. Then Jo on a black of medium size but finely built for speed and endurance. Juarez brought up the rear on his roan, a sinewy animal with a broncho strain in him which was liable to crop out at unexpected moments.

It is to be noticed that there was a certain formation in the way the column rode. Jim, the strong and resourceful in front, and Tom, the less experienced and capable, following, forming the first division. The second division was composed of Jo and Juarez. [40]

Juarez having an equally important position with the leader, for he was rear guard, a more trying position sometimes than being in front for in their travels through dangerous regions, it was the man in the rear who was more apt to be cut off by the wily Indians. But the cool and crafty Juarez was not likely to be caught napping.

Even now you notice as they ride along through the comparatively safe region of the coast range that Jim and Juarez are ever on the alert, glancing this way and that, halting to examine some peculiar mark on the trail, and not a motion of tree or bush upon either mountain slope escapes their attention. They had lived too long in the midst of treacherous enemies, Indians and outlaws, to be taken off their guard. They had been in Mexico on a venture the outcome of which was all their fondest dreams could wish for. Their expedition over, Tom was for going home, to at least deposit the treasure they had gained, but the others had outvoted him, and now the long pleasure trip to Hawaii was their object.

Now, if they but had known it, they were riding to meet the most deadly danger that they had yet encountered. For as you know, Captain Broom and his party were advancing to meet them. In an open or running fight, we know perfectly well that the boys could take care of themselves, but in the skipper of the Sea Eagle, they were to meet a far more dangerous opponent than in Eagle Feather, described in "The Frontier Boys in Colorado" or Cal Jenkins in Kansas and in Mexico as detailed in "Overland Trail" and in "Mexico." In compliance with a determined plan, they were now on their way to Hawaii. [41]

Not only had Captain Broom the craftiness and cruelty of the Indian, but the cool, hard judgment of the New England Yankee, coupled with a knowledge of their possessions, supposedly limited to themselves alone. The Mexican spy, who had reported the route the boys were going to take, had given the game into his master's hands.

"I wonder what has become of our one-eyed greaser friend," said Jim, "we haven't seen any sign of him since he gave us the shake a week ago at the hunting camp. I kind of thought we

might run across him again."

"It's good riddance to bad rubbish," said Juarez in a surly tone. "If I had my way I'd hang him to the first oak tree on general principles and on account of his personal appearance. I bet he is a treacherous little rat."

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"He isn't very pretty, that's a fact," admitted Jim, "but he is a useful little beast about the camp and can do a lot of chores."

"I kind of like to hear him play his guitar," put in Jo, "and sing those Mexican tunes. They certainly sound pretty."

"He's a picturesque beggar too," remarked Tom. "Just the kind that in the old days would have been made a king's jester. They dressed 'em up in a blazing bright style then. That hump would have made his fortune."

Tom, as you remember, was an authority on Romance, and as pertaining to which he always carried two favorite volumes, much worn by hard travel and frequent usage, but which no amount of ridicule by his brothers could make him give up.

"Have it your own way," acceded Juarez, "but he is not the sort of animal that I would recommend for a household pet."

"Well, he is gone," said Jim, "so we don't need to worry about him."

"I don't know but that I would a little rather have him in sight," said Juarez. "Then you know where he is."

Jim laughed good-naturedly at the prejudice that Juarez showed against the little greaser and put it down to his darkly suspicious nature acquired by his life among the Indians. It would have been better if Jim had taken more stock in his comrade's suspicions. Now, Jim was not to be caught napping when once an enemy had declared himself, but it was his nature to be open-minded and unsuspecting.

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The four Frontier Boys were riding up a winding trail through a narrow mountain valley, having reached a point almost level with the summits, which rose several thousand feet above the eastern plain. It had been a hard, all day climb, and the horses were tired and the gray dust was caked upon their sweaty riders.

Let us take a look at our old acquaintances, Jim, Tom, Jo and Juarez, to see if they have changed any since we saw them last. They are dressed about as we have always known them. In gray flannel shirts and pants of the same color, moccasins on their feet and on their heads battered sombreros with the flaps turned back.

Their coats are tied back of the saddles, and their shirts open at the throat for the air is hot and dry in that California mountain valley. Their rifles are swung across their shoulders held by straps, revolvers in the holsters at their hips.

Jim sits in the saddle tall and sinewy, grown somewhat thinner by constant exercise and by the drying effect of the desert air. His skin is baked to an absolute brown. Juarez, too, is black as an Indian and he rather looks like one with his hair quite long and of a coarse black fibre. The boys look a little fine-drawn but sinewy and strong and fit for any adventure.

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## CHAPTER VI

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### THE HUNCHBACK

The shadows were already falling on that side of the range as the boys rode slowly into a narrow pass. The shade was a decided relief from the glare of the California sun that they had encountered all day.

"Gosh, but I should like to have a cool breath from the Rockies," declared Juarez with emphasis, "This sort of a climate makes me tired. Nothing but the sun staring at you all the time. It goes down clear and comes up with the same kind of a grin on its face."

"It will be cooler when we get on the other side," said Jim, encouragingly, "and it won't be long now."

"I hope we will strike water on the other side," remarked Jo. "I'm tired of looking at that bald-headed stream down there," indicating the dry blistered bed of a former water-course.

Nothing more was said until of a sudden they rode to the top of the Pass, and saw a new landscape spread out before them.

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It was a broad and beautiful view, with the sun striking the wide Pacific, with a blazing glare of silver and below the wooded slope of the mountains, stretched an apparently level plain, where roamed countless cattle, and innumerable sheep. It had all the breadth characteristic of the Californian landscape.

"That's a pretty good looking view," remarked Jim admiringly. He would have been still more interested if he could have seen a trim-looking black vessel in a small cove directly west but a good many miles distant.

"I wonder if it isn't going to rain," said Tom. "See those clouds rolling in over the ocean."

"Rain!" ejaculated Jim with superior wisdom, a wisdom that appertains particularly to older brothers, "I guess not. Those are fog clouds. That's a sure sign in this country that it won't rain."

"Well, I'm glad to see them, anyway," said Juarez. "It looks sort of stormy even if it isn't."

It was restful, there was no question about that, the change from the constant glare of a white sun in a blue sky, to the soft damp grayness of the fog. It was already rolling over the level plain towards the mountains and, in a short time, a high fog was spread over the whole sky. [47]

The boys had ridden down the western side of the range for a distance of a half mile, when Jim suddenly waved his hand backward in a sign of caution for the column to halt. He leaned forward, looking intently in a northwesterly direction to a point on the opposite side of the mountain valley. Juarez followed the direction of the leader's look with a keen gaze.

"I was sure that I saw some one slipping through the undergrowth on the opposite side over there," Jim finally said, "but I could not make sure whether it was a man or some sort of animal."

"I noticed the bushes shaking," said Juarez, "but I did not see anything."

"Might have been a brown bear," hazarded Jo.

"They do have them in this range," put in Tom.

"Perhaps it is the bear that we hunted for two days on the other slope," said Juarez, "and he has come to give himself up."

"We had better keep our eyes open," advised Jim, though he did not take the trouble to unslung his rifle. "Jo, you and Tom watch the upper side, Juarez will take care of the trail in front."

"All right, boss," said Juarez, cheerfully. [48]

"How much reward, captain, for the first glimpse of the lost child?" inquired Jo.

Jim paid no attention to this sally, but kept his eye on the trail ahead. The trees were quite thick on either side of the trail and as dusk was coming on, it was difficult to make out any object clearly.

Just as Jim rode around a turn in the trail, Caliente reared and leaped to one side and a less skillful rider would have been thrown.

"Easy, old boy," said the rider, patting his horse's neck. Caliente stood trembling and snorting and watching a curious object that was struggling up the bank towards the trail.

It was hard to tell what it was, whether man or beast and the dusk only served to make it more obscure. Then the object scrambled up on to the trail and Jim at once recognized the dwarf Mexican with his high-crowned sombrero and his velvet suit richly slashed. With his crooked back and one eye, he was anything but a prepossessing-looking creature. Caliente, when he, too, recognized who it was, put back his ears and rushed with bared teeth for the Mexican.

Spitting out a curse, the greaser jumped to one side with a marked agility, and Jim succeeded after a struggle in bringing his furious steed to terms, but he had his hands full and there were not very many men who could manage Caliente when he got into one of his rages. [49]

"Hi! Manuel," (every Mexican was Manuel to the boys), cried Jim, "look out for my Tiger, he wants to eat that velvet suit of yours."

"Si, Senor," called Manuel from a safe station on a granite rock. "He is a tiger as your Honor says."

One would have expected to hear the crooked little greaser speak in a harsh croaking voice, but instead it had a rich sonorous quality.

"Do you know where there is any water in this country?" asked Jo. "We are as dry as a desert."

"Certainly, Senor, I will show you," replied Manuel. (It was true that Manuel spoke in Spanish of which language the boys had a working knowledge, due to their sojourn in the southwest. But I shall put his words in English.) "Where is Senor Juarez?" inquired the dwarf. "I do not see him."

"The Senor is still with us," replied Jim, gravely, "but you cannot see him on account of the dusk, but you might hear him," he added in a lower tone.

It was true that Juarez was growling to himself about the greaser for whom you know he had a cordial antipathy, a feeling which was reciprocated by the Mexican. [50]

"Lead on, Manuel," urged Jim, "we want to make camp before morning."

"But, Senor, the tiger will eat me up," objected the Mexican.

"I will take care of Caliente. He won't bite you. Go ahead."

"Si, Senor," assented Manuel.

Then he jumped down from the rock and took the trail at a discreet distance ahead of Jim's horse, who was held in check by his rider though his temper seemed in no wise abated. There was something sinister in the figure of the Mexican as he led the way down the trail.

All in black, except the gray of his hat with its golden cord and the tinsel of his clothes. There was something malignant in his make-up and even the unimaginative Jim was affected by the presence of the Mexican, while Juarez was very uneasy, and asked Jo and Tom to allow him to move up next to the Captain. This they did, though it left Jo as rear guard on that rocky trail.

He seemed quite isolated but he had become sufficiently enured to danger and though he kept a wary eye, he was not nervous. The boys had unholstered their pistols and Juarez kept a straight eye on the moving shadow in the darkness ahead. At the first sign of attack or treachery, he was going to get that particular Manuel.

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"I've got my eye on the little varmint," said Juarez in a low voice to Jim. "He may be leading us into an ambush."

"Oh, I guess not," said Jim, with a note of hesitation in his voice. "We have got to find water anyway. The horses are suffering for it, and this beggar can show us where we can locate it."

Just then Manuel threw up his hand with a shrill whistle that had every malignant intention in it. Juarez raised his pistol just ready to fire, when the Mexican laughed shrilly.

"Senor Juarez very nervous. I just stretch and whistle a little and he want to shoot."

A peculiar smile came over Juarez's face, but he said nothing. All the stolid Indian in his nature came to the surface. He merely grunted contemptuously at the Mexican's remark and this made the volatile Manuel uneasy in his turn, for he wanted to realize that his malice had struck home, but Juarez did not give him that satisfaction. There was a sort of hidden duel between these two, the subtle Mexican and the crafty Indian nature of Juarez. It remained to be seen who would win.

The four Frontier Boys went silently along down the dark canyon, each one occupied with his own thoughts and the ill-omened Mexican guide in the lead. Juarez kept a sharp lookout on either side of the trail expecting an ambush. His horse seemed to feel something of the strain his rider was under, as a horse will. Once he shied at something he saw in a clump of bushes, and nearly went off the trail. It was only with the aid of Juarez's horsemanship that he clawed his way back to safety. The Mexican was much amused at this incident, and Jim gave him a sharp call down.

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## CHAPTER VII

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### FARMER BROOM

We must now return to Captain Broom and his escort, whom we left sitting on a hill covered with trees near the Sebastian rancho. Old Pete's story had been interrupted by the skipper's warning,—"Somebody is coming our way."

There was no question about that, they could hear the someone coming towards the hill whistling cheerfully. Then the form of a man could be seen, coming up the slope of the elevation.

"I wonder where those altogether blessed cows are," he was heard saying in Spanish, but of course, this is a free and not a literal translation.

"They are generally hiding under these trees," he continued. The sailors kept absolutely still and old Pete covered the bowl of his pipe with his hand so that its light might not discover them.

"Carambe!" cried the Mexican as he stopped about three feet from the recumbent Captain, "I fear my good master's cows have been smoking, not like nice Mexican cows, a cigarette, but a pipe like a vile gringo. Come, get up, you black brute," noticing the big bulk of the Captain for the first time, and he hauled off and gave the skipper a hearty kick on the haunch.

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Never was there a more surprised greaser in the whole ungainly length of California for this apparently gentle cow that he kicked, (not for the first time either) suddenly turned and grabbed him with a powerful hand before he could yell, though he was so frightened that he probably could not utter a squeak. Another hand got him by the throat.

"Take me for a cow, did you, you bespangled Manuello?" roared the Captain, and he waved the aforesaid Manuello about in his great grip as though he had been a rag.

"No use killing the beggar, Captain," said the mate. "Maybe he can tell us something." The Captain let the Mexican drop and he lay on the ground perfectly inert.

"He won't be able to say much right away," said the Skipper.

It was now getting light, the first signs of dawn showing above the mountains. As the darkness was drawn away, they could see their position more clearly and there came the sounds of the morning from the direction of the ranch houses. The barking of dogs, the crowing of roosters,

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and the call of human voices.

"I guess, lads, it's about time for us to have something to eat," said the Captain, "because we have got to do some tall climbing today and I want to get an early start."

An expression of disgust showed itself on old Pete's face at the idea of more walking, which the Captain was quick to note.

"How would you like to stay here, Old Bones, and look after Manuello?" said the skipper. But Pete shook his head.

"I'll stay by the ship, Cap'n," said the old fellow stoutly.

"Durn my buttons," said the Captain, whose oaths were as mild as his actions were vicious, "if you ain't a good old barnacle, Pete. I wouldn't think of leaving you in such company as this," and he gave the prostrate Mexican a shove with his foot. Manuello looked up at the Captain with an evil eye and a muttered curse.

This roused the fury of Captain Broom and he held him off from the ground as if he had been a rat, his jaws working ominously and a look in his eyes that made the Mexican shrivel.

Nothing was said, not even by the Skipper, and the others watched him fascinated as he glared at his victim, and even the iron composure of the saturnine mate seemed to be moved partially aside. The Mexican began to whimper and moan as his eyes shifted to avoid the terrible ones of the Captain. He was not suffering any special violence, but a strange tremor filled the soul of the Mexican, in the grip of the grizzled giant.

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As the greaser began to cry, the Captain gave a roar of laughter and threw him aside upon the ground, about all the humanity he had shriveled out of him. He lay there absolutely without any power of motion in his body.

Just then the crew of the Sea Eagle became aware of the fact that a horned animal with big brown eyes was looking at them. All the farmer in the nature of Captain Broom came to the surface.

"By Gum," he exclaimed, "if here ain't a bovine cow looking at us. I ain't milked one for forty years, but I'm not afeard to try. 'Member, Pete, when we used to milk the cows back in old Connecticut on the farm. After working in the hay all day, I'd go down in the side hill pasture, that was so steep that you had to hold on with your toes and your teeth to keep from sliding down to the brook."

"You bring it back to me just like it was a living picture," said Pete, his hard face softening under the gentle showers of memory.

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"Then I'd drive the black and white one that was breechy, and the red mooley, the yaller and white that gave the richest milk. I'd drive them into the stanchions in the old barn, with the ground floor stoned up on the side, where it was sunk into the hill."

"But it was winter, Cap'n," said Pete, "that it was interesting doing the chores," and he blew reminiscently on his fingers, "snow two feet on the level and the sun a piece of blue ice in the sky. A condemned sight better place than Californy, where you don't feel no more alive than a embalmed corpse."

The Captain began now a series of manœuvres to get within range of one of the cows so that they might have fresh milk for breakfast. He managed it finally, and he certainly looked like a peaceful old farmer as with his gray head against a fat red cow's flank, he milked into a large tin cup. Pete selected a black mooley and soothed by the man's persuasive manner, she consented finally to give down a thin blue stream. But the saturnine mate was less successful as he knew much more about navigating a ship than he did about cows.

Finally after much awkward manœuvring, he got a cow cornered and began operations upon the left side with the result that the cow landed upon him with her hoof and sent him sprawling on his back to the great delight of the Captain.

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"Hurt bad, Bill?" inquired the Skipper with mock sympathy, "I'm afeard that you will never make a farmer."

"I never calkerlated to," replied the mate. "It ain't my line of business."

"Don't tell me that," said the Captain, "I can see that for myself. Come up here and I'll give you a drink."

They had scarcely finished their simple breakfast when Jack Cales gave a sudden alarm.

"Cap'n," he cried, "I see two men legging it our way. They are making straight for the hill."

"I guess they are coming to see why Manuello doesn't show up with the cows," remarked the Captain, "we don't want to stir up this hen roost as we've got other chicken to fry. So we'll git."

"Take the greaser?" inquired Jack.

"You and the mate fetch him," said the Captain.

Just as the two men were mounting the hill, the Captain and his crew made a swift sneak down the opposite slope, and were soon making their way through the bush towards the foot-hills. In a minute they heard the cries of the two men as they drove the herd of cows towards the home ranch for the morning milking. The sun had now risen above the eastern range just in front of them and was blazing down upon the plain and the sea beyond. There was something exhilarating in the air in spite of the heat.

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"We don't need the company of that greaser any further," said Captain Broom, after they had made some headway up a canyon back of the ranch buildings. So they took some rope grass, tough as manilla, and tied him firmly, and, after having gagged him, they left him to be found later by some of his countrymen.

Then they toiled steadily up the trail of the canyon, until about noon they reached a pocket in the canyon where there was a pool of clear water fed by an invisible spring. Coming to meet them were four boys riding up the trail on the other side of the range.

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## CHAPTER VIII

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### THE CAMP IN THE POCKET

Under the guidance of the Mexican dwarf, the four boys came at last to a halt. It seemed as if the canyon down which they had been riding had come to an end for there was a wall of rock directly in front of them.

"Down there, Senor, is a pool of clear water," announced the Mexican.

"Glad to hear it, Manuel," said Jim heartily.

"Did you ever see a picture, Jim," put in Juarez significantly, "of a pool where the thirsty animals have to come to drink and before they get their noses in the water the hunter shoots them?"

But nothing of this dire nature happened and in a few minutes the famished animals were pumping the delicious water down their long, baked throats.

"My Gracious, but that tastes good!" cried Tom, drawing in a long, gasping breath, after he had been drinking steadily for about a minute. "It makes my head swim."

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"I should think it would," said Jo, sarcastically, "considering the amount you have drunk."

"You weren't far behind," grumbled Tom. "I thought that you were not going to leave enough for the horses."

"I don't especially like this place to camp in," said Jim. "We are not accustomed to get in a pocket like this. But it is too late to pull out tonight and the horses need a rest, so we will keep guard."

"Better drown the brown rat first," remarked Juarez to Jim. But the latter only shook his head and laughed.

The camp was made about twenty feet east of the spring in a small grove of slender trees backed by a high wall of steep granite, down which poured a waterfall in the rainy season.

The fire was built upon a flat rock in the centre of the grove where there was no danger of it catching in the grass and bushes which were dry as tinder. If once a mountain fire was started at the end of the dry season there would be no stopping it until it had devastated the whole country.

The light of the fire showed the usual cheery and active scene that goes with making camp. How many times the Frontier Boys had gone through these preparations it is impossible to say. They had camped on the plains of Kansas, in the mountains of Colorado, on the Mesas of New Mexico, the banks of the Colorado river, and the Pampas of Mexico. Now we find them in the coast range of California.

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It was not an especially dangerous country in which they were camped, nothing to compare with parts of Colorado and Mexico, but never were they in greater danger than at the present moment and this camp promised to be their last together, except they had unusual luck.

There was a traitor in the company, and even now four pairs of hostile eyes were watching them as they moved in the light of the fire. The Captain of the Sea Eagle and his three trusty men were hidden in some bushes at the top of the pocket on the western side.

Juarez and Jim busied themselves first in looking after their horses. Removing the saddles they rubbed down each animal thoroughly, clear to the fetlocks and then gave them a good feed of grain. Jo and Tom were on the supper committee and busying themselves making preparations for a square meal. Manuello, who had been with the boys on the other side of the range and was accustomed to help in odd chores about camp, now offered to aid in getting the supper.

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"I will make the coffee with your permission, Senor Jo," he proposed.

"Do you savvy it all right, Manuello?" inquired Jo.

"Ah, yes, Senor. I can make such coffee as the Holy Father would be pleased to drink," he replied with fervor.

"Not too strong because it keeps me awake," protested Tom.

"No, no, Senor Thomas," replied Manuello with a sweeping bow, "the coffee I make is very soothing. It will give you a long, soft sleep." There was an undertone of subtle irony that was entirely lost upon the two straightforward boys.

"That's a good fellow, Manuello," said Jo, cordially, and he handed the coffee pot filled with water to the Mexican, who went about the preparation of it with a deftness that showed that he knew what he was about. Not one of the boys saw him slip a white powder into the coffee pot. It quickly dissolved and the coffee began to bubble innocently enough under the eyes of the hunchback Manuello.

Juarez and Jim just then came back from looking after the horses which were fastened near the wall of rock. As soon as Juarez saw the Mexican watching over the coffee pot, his eyes narrowed with suspicion.

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"Who made the coffee?" he asked Jo, bluntly.

"Manuello," replied Jo.

"The Senor will find the coffee truly delicious," said the hunchback with a bow, "only the Mexican knows how to keep its aroma when boiling it."

"Humph," grunted Juarez, and he went deliberately to the fire and lifted the coffee pot off and poured its contents on the ground.

"The American does not care for the aroma of your Mexican coffee," he said coolly.

The Mexican merely gave a peculiar hitch to his shoulder, spat on the ground and turned away apparently mortally offended as he, no doubt, was. That part of his scheme had been blocked by the craftiness of Juarez, but the Captain might make good where his spy had failed.

The Mexican sat back in the shadow on a rock smoking a cigarette, while the boys ate their supper of beans, meat, bread and coffee. He was the skeleton at the feast as it were, not only his malignant humor made itself felt, but there was a sense of depression that they could not shake off, try as they would.

This was so unusual that they could not account for it. As a rule, they were jolly and even when danger was impending, they felt a certain confidence and assurance, but not so tonight.

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"What makes us feel so on the bum tonight, do you suppose?" asked Tom.

"Maybe this canyon is haunted," proposed Jo, who had an imaginative streak in him.

"I tell you the way I figure it," said Jim. "We are not used to camping in a hollow like this, for before this we have always selected a place that we could defend, and though there is no particular danger from outlaws or Indians in these mountains, we can't shake off our old habits."

"I believe there is something in that," acquiesced Jo.

"It's that rat over there," said Juarez loudly.

The Mexican laughed coolly and insolently, and lighted another cigarette. This would have maddened an excitable person, but Juarez was in a stoical mood and he contented himself with flinging a bone that he had been gnawing at, carelessly over his shoulder, almost striking the Mexican in the face.

This set that peppery individual wild and he tore around considerably, tearing his hair, stamping his feet and sputtering with maledictions at the insult that had been offered him.

"I am no dog that you can throw a bone to," and he sizzled off into a string of unpleasant remarks.

[66]

"Here you, Manuello," roared Jim, rising to his feet and standing over the Mexican, "not another yelp out of you."

Manuello had a respect for this big American lad much as he despised his simplicity and he sobered down. Besides he had not finished his work for the night. He had failed to get the sleeping drug to the boys in the coffee and now he must be ready to help his master, Captain Broom of the Sea Eagle, in some other way.

There was a person whom he feared and admired absolutely and he had been a most useful spy and agent for the Skipper in certain nefarious plots. It was well for the little hunchback that no one knew of his share in the betraying of old Juan Sebastian some years before.

"You will have the first watch, Jo," ordered Jim. "It is now nine o'clock. I will relieve you at eleven and stand guard until two. Juarez from two until five and Tom can have the short watch."

According to this arrangement, Jim and Juarez would be on guard during the danger hours.



How many times in the past had the boys stood guard over their camp. Was this to be the last guard? There were the old Kansas days, when they had to be on the watch against horse thieves. Then came the dangerous crisis in their Colorado experiences, when they had to guard against the wiles of the Indians. And most exciting of all, perhaps, the night in old Mexico when they camped on the trail of the outlaws. I wonder if Jo, the first on duty, thought of these old times that night. Probably not, his mind being fully occupied with the business in hand.

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## CHAPTER IX

[68]

### THE ATTACK

So the three boys rolled into their blankets with the saddles for pillows and dropped immediately to sleep as they were very tired from the long, hard ride. They lay at different points around the fire, which was allowed to die down as the fog seemed like a warm gray blanket over the whole landscape.

Jo sat on a log by the slowly dying fire, with his rifle on his knees looking into the darkness and not far from him lay the Mexican a mere dark lump on the ground, apparently asleep, but keeping a wary eye on all around. Imperceptibly he crept nearer to where Jo was sitting, but he did not have the weapon he would have preferred in his hand, the stiletto, which was as natural to him as the fangs to a rattlesnake.

But it did not suit the long-headed Captain Broom to have the boys killed. He wanted their life as well as their money, but in a different sense than the adage has it. From what he had heard of them, they were boys of unusual mettle and varied acquirements. If caught young, he could train them to good purpose. If they proved worthless, he would hold them for ransom.

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So Captain Broom had told Manuello briefly and to the point that there was to be no rib-sticking and the Mexican would have thought as soon of disobeying the commands of the Evil One as of going contrary to the instructions of the Captain. So as he crept towards Jo, he held not a poniard in his clenched hand, but a heavy weapon like a black-jack, made of leather with a weight at the end.

Jo, however, spoiled his first attempt, for when the greaser had got within striking distance, Jo got up and went down to the pool to get a drink. If it had not been so dark, when they arrived, the boys would have seen tracks around the pool that would have aroused their suspicions. But everything seemed to work against them this time.

Jo stooped down at the brink and scarcely put his thirsty lips to the water when some instinct of warning made him look quickly around and he saw a small dark object directly back of him.

"Pardon, Senor, for startling you;" it was the voice of the dwarf, "but I, too, was very thirsty. It is in the air."

"You needn't have been so quiet about it," said Jo, crossly. This little rat always had a way of baffling and irritating him, because he did not have Jim's force, which could beat down the dwarf when occasion demanded it, or the stoicism of Juarez, which blocked the hunchback.

[70]

"I came softly, Senor," said the Mexican, imperturbably, "because I did not wish to disturb the slumbers of the Senors who are resting."

"Get down and drink, then," said Jo, who, though he realized that the Mexican was up to some hidden deviltry, did not know how to meet him. Jim and Juarez would have knocked him out of the camp if they had discovered him trailing them, with a warning that he would be shot if he put in an appearance again.

While the Mexican was pretending to drink, Jo satisfied his thirst at a point of the pool where he would be safe from a sudden attack by the hunchback. For Jo was not a fool by any means. Then he got to his feet and with the Mexican ahead of him, he saw to that, he made his way back to the camp.

Scarcely had Jo seated himself upon the rock again than he heard a stick snap upon the mountain side above the horses, so he got to his feet to investigate.

"You can stay where you are, Manuello," said Jo. "I don't need your company this time." The Mexican laughed softly to himself.

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"I hope the Senor Americano will not get lonesome," he said.

Jo made a careful search in the direction of the sound but found no sign of a human being lurking among the trees. Though he felt exceedingly nervous, he was unable to account therefor or give a reason.

Very quietly he went the rounds, so as not to awake the boys, who, however, were sleeping heavily. He found the horses all right standing with drooping heads as though dozing, Jo's black with his neck over Tom's bay, as these horses were great chums. But Caliente and Juarez's roan were not sociable and kept strictly to themselves.

Then Jo returned to the rock where he had been sitting. He stirred the dying fire so that it sent up a feeble spurt of flame by the aid of which he looked at his watch. It lacked a few minutes of ten. The Mexican had taken up his old place on the ground watching for his chance. He was anxious that the attack should take place during Jo's watch for he had his doubts in regard to Juarez or the redoubtable Jim proving easy victims.

All this time, Captain Bill Broom and his crew had been keeping watch upon their intended victims from the top of the cliff above the pool. They could see every move from the time the Frontier Boys had arrived until they lay down near the smouldering fire. [72]

"They are a husky lot," was the Captain's first comment. "That tall fellar, I guess, is a horse tamer and Injun fighter."

Some time later when the altercation occurred about the coffee and Juarez expressed his opinion about the Mexican, the Captain could scarcely keep from haw-hawing right out.

"Them fellars have got some dis'pline," commented the saturnine mate.

"You're right they hev," said the Captain.

"That lad don't know how to handle my pet rattlesnake," was the Captain's comment when the Mexican trailed Jo to the drinking pool. After Jo had returned from making his rounds and had resumed his guard again, the Captain decided that the time had come for action.

"Now, lads," he ordered, "pull off your shoes and the first man that makes a sound will get his neck cracked. Knock 'em out, if necessary, but no killing this time."

Then they started, the Captain in the lead, and old Pete bringing up the rear. They had had a good many hours in that vicinity and had made a path from their hiding place to the soft dust trail. So they moved in their sock feet without a sound. There was an oppressive stillness in that dark canyon under the heavy blanket of fog. [73]

Already it had began to lower and as the sailors advanced with snail-like slowness the heavy white fog settled down, filling the canyon with its white opaqueness. You could not see five feet in front, and the moisture beaded itself upon the eyebrows and mustaches of the men.

This dense fog was a great help to the attacking party. They had now crawled half way down the main trail, when Pete came near putting all the fat in the fire, for his eyesight was not overly keen, and the fog made it more difficult for him. He did not see a round stone poised on the edge of the trail until it rolled down towards the pool.

Although every sound was deadened by the fog, still the watchful Jo heard it distinctly. He got quickly to his feet and, with soft moccasined tread he went in the direction of the sound, his pistol in his hand.

No sooner had the stone fallen than the Captain motioned the mate to halt. This signal was repeated to Jack Cales, who was so hidden by the fog that he could not see the Captain. He stopped suddenly so that old Pete tumbled over him, making some noise. [74]

The Captain almost had a fit of apoplexy because he did not dare express himself at this interesting juncture. Jo had heard the noise on the trail and his suspicions centered in that direction. Noiselessly he went up with slight footprints in the damp dust of the trail. The Captain waited his coming, crouched behind a bend in the trail.

Then Jo saw a huge figure rising suddenly out of the fog in front of him and, before he could fire, a great hand gripped for his throat, but if he could not shoot in defense, at least he could give his comrades warning. He fired one shot, and then he was overpowered.

Jim and Juarez heard it instantly. Then Manuello got in some of his work. Before Juarez could rise, he struck him a vicious blow upon the head that stunned him, rendering him unconscious. Cold with fury, Jim picked up the rat of a Mexican before he could land a blow upon him, whirled him over his head and dashed him upon the ground.

Then he sprang through the fog in the direction of the shot. He heard Jo groan as the ruffians overpowered him and he leaped up the trail blind with a fighting rage. The Captain had just got up from the struggle with Jo, who lay as good as dead in the trail. [75]

Then Jim hurled himself upon him. Powerful though he was, the Captain could not withstand the sinewy lurch of that sudden attack and together boy and man crashed from the trail over rocks and through brush until with a fearful impact they struck the trunk of a pine tree.

The mate sprang swiftly down to the rescue of his fallen master. He was a strong, sinewy man and knew how to act in an emergency.

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## CHAPTER X

### "HAUL IN"

The jar of the fall had knocked out the Captain partially and Jim had risen to give him the coup de grace, when he heard the rush of the mate coming down through the fog. It was a strange sensation hearing your enemy but not able to see him.

Then the mate plunged into view, a dark ball through the opaqueness. He could not have stopped if he had so desired and it was evident that he did not wish to. For, with lowered head, he came for Jim as he would for an ugly sailor.

Jim stopped him with his shoulder and ripped in a right uppercut with his keen hard fist that would have stopped the heart action of an ordinary man, and it sent the seasoned mate back upon his haunches, partially dazed. Feeling the Captain squirming back to life, he planted a back blow with his heel in the latter's stomach that took the wind out of the Captain's sails for the time being. The mate, a really hardy individual, had made good use of the brief respite and, picking up a heavy stick, came for Jim with it. [77]

The latter dodged the blow aimed at his head and it glanced off his shoulder. Then he closed with the sailor, struggling to put him out. Three seconds more and Jim would have landed the proper blow, had not Jack Cales arrived upon the scene under cover of the mêlée. Before Jim could turn to meet this new assailant, a stone crashed against his head—and the frontier boys had lost.

The Captain had now recovered sufficiently to get on his feet, and the fallen Jim was kicked until the Captain himself called a halt.

"Wait till we get him on board ship, lads," he said, "and we will finish this job."

"Better get the other two, Cap'n," advised the mate.

So they dragged the prostrate Jim to the foot of the trail near where the drinking pool was and went to look for Juarez and Tom. They saw a small black object crawling towards them through the fog.

"What's this a coming?" asked Jack Cales.

"Why, it's my Mexican ferret," said the Captain. "What's the matter, Manuello?" he asked as he turned him over none too gently with his foot.

"The big Senor throw me over his head and on the ground. I think I crack the world open," he explained. The Captain roared with laughter. [78]

"Where is the rest of this dangerous gang?" he asked.

"I will show you," he said, struggling to his feet. The presence of his master gave him strength and confidence. "This way, Senor Captain."

He brought them to where Juarez lay upon the ground, partially held up by Tom, who had been crying and endeavoring to bring his comrade back to consciousness from the ugly blow that the Mexican had given him. I am sure that none could blame Tom for tears upon this occasion for it was calculated to try the heart of the stoutest.

"Why, this boy looks like an Indian," said the Captain regarding Juarez closely.

"He lived with the Indians when a boy, Senor Captain," volunteered the dwarf, who by subtle means of his own had become possessed of the history of the four boys.

"He don't seem to be much more than a boy, now," said the Captain. They had not paid much attention to Tom because he seemed a mere kid, but the hunchback was not to be caught napping, for he had worked around back of Tom, and as the latter aimed his revolver at the Captain, having worked it cautiously out of his holster, the dwarf grabbed him in the nick of time else the expedition would have lost its head. [79]

Instead of being infuriated as one might have expected, the Captain was decidedly amused at the temerity of the youngster, for that is all Tom appeared to him, and, therefore, he did not hand him a beating.

"The nerve of the little rooster," guffawed the Captain. "I'll make a real pirate out of you."

Tom struggled wildly, but it was no use, as Jack Cales and the mate disarmed him. Just then there came a loud yell from up the trail.

"Haul in, Cap'n!" It was Old Pete's well known and melodious voice.

"Jack, go and see what the old cuss wants," ordered the Captain. "I expect that the lad up there is trying to kidnap Pete."

When Jack arrived on the scene, he found that the Skipper had guessed right. For Jo had been playing possum and was not nearly so badly hurt as he had appeared to be.

He came near escaping from his keeper and it was only by a quick forward lunge that Pete had grabbed him and then occurred a short struggle in which Pete had called for help and just as Jo had wrestled himself loose, Cales appeared and grabbed him. It took both Pete and Cales quite a while to subdue him. [80]

Finally it was accomplished and they made him go down the trail, one on either side. At the foot of the incline he saw the bruised and battered form of Jim lying on the ground and a big lump came into his throat.

"You fellows will pay for this," he said, rendered desperate by the sight of Jim. But his captors only laughed, not realizing that the Frontier Boys were apt to keep their word.

Then they joined the main gang and Jo saw to his dismay that Tom and Juarez were in the coils as well as himself and that Juarez, too, had been laid out and appeared dazed and only partially conscious of what was going on. Thus there was little hope of escape with the two leaders, Jim and Juarez, done for.

"Better search these beggars for their money, Captain," suggested the mate.

"It hadn't slipped my mind," replied the Skipper.

Now the money and the jewels that the boys had found in Mexico were in leather belts around their bodies. These were soon in the possession of the Captain, but the crew knew full well that they would receive their share and thus it was that the Skipper gave promise of living to a ripe old age instead of being murdered for his money.

[81]

"It's about time to make a start, Cap'n," announced the mate, and the Captain consulted his watch by the light of a lantern. He found that it was half-past eleven.

"We won't be so long going back," he said. "We will use their horses."

This was easier said than done, for when any of the crew approached Caliente, that noble animal became transformed into a tiger and as he came for them with bared teeth or whirled and kicked out with his heels, they decided that discretion was the better part of valor and they left him alone. Sailors at best are not very clever horsemen.

"Let me have a chance and I'll quiet him for you," volunteered Jim gruffly. "I don't want to see you poor fellows eaten alive."

"My lad," said the Skipper solemnly, "I'm no spring chicken and you can't catch me with any such chaff."

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## CHAPTER XI

[82]

### MISSOURI'S MANŒUVRE

The other three horses proved more tractable than Caliente, and after some skirmishing they managed to get their new ships rigged up with the saddles and other tackle. Now as soon as they got their cargo aboard, they would be prepared to set sail and to cruise over the plains. (I must use this nautical language out of respect for Captain Broom and his crew.)

As I have said before, sailors are poor horsemen and when it came to making fast the double cinches, they were quite at sea, where sailors should be, perhaps. Old Pete came near getting his head kicked off by pulling the back cinch too tight, but he and Captain Broom profited by their youthful experience on a New England farm, so the horses were finally all saddled and bridled and ready for a flight—except Caliente. He was to be left marooned in the lonely canyon.

It was surprising to Jim and his comrades how quietly Juarez's roan took matters, but there is no relying on a broncho, because he always does the unexpected, and the Captain was so pleased with his behavior that he decided to ride the animal himself.

[83]

"Now, that's what I call a well broken hoss," he said. "I ain't so sure of the black so I will let you cruise on him, Jack, being the most active. I don't know what I shall do for Pete, unless I can find him a rocking-horse."

"What are you going to do with the boys?" inquired the mate. "Have 'em walk?"

"They can ride their pack mule," said the Captain grimly.

So Jo, Juarez and Jim were securely fastened on the patient mule, while Tom rode behind the mate upon his own horse, but no longer as master. Then the queer procession started up the trail through the dense fog. The Captain was in the lead, followed by the mate with Tom, then the mule with Pete and the Mexican dwarf guarding the animal and its cargo, while the active Jack Cales was the rear guard. It was exactly twelve o'clock when they weighed anchor and sailed from the harbor or cove in the mountain canyon.

The three boys said little to each other. They did not waste their breath with threats of what they would do to their captors later on, but accepted the situation with true western stoicism. But you may be sure that their minds were active even if their tongues said little.

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They were so securely tied that there was no chance for them to make a move as their arms were corded tight to their bodies and their feet were tied under the belly of the mule. Unless they had been experienced riders they would have had a difficult time of it. But it was terribly

humiliating, especially under the insolence of the malignant Mexican. But he did not dare do them any actual injury, because the Skipper had given him a warning which he did not dare to disregard. Finally, old Pete put an end to his slurring remarks to the prisoners, so he had to content himself with ugly looks and frequent expectoration wherewith to express his disgust.

Before they reached the foot of the trail, Jack Cales changed with Pete, though the latter demurred at first, at boarding the strange black craft with four legs, but finally consented under the urging of Jack and the warm recommendation of the boys, who had taken somewhat of a fancy to the old sailor, since he had shut up the Mexican in their behalf.

"He won't hurt you, Pop," said Jim, "he is a good horse. Any lady could ride him."

"I ain't no lady," replied the old fellow suspiciously, as he slowly and stiffly mounted, while Jack held his head, that is to say, the horse's head, not Pete's. [85]

"What did he do that for?" inquired Pete, anxiously, preparing to dismount.

"Stay on, you old Barnacle," roared the Captain from the head of the procession, for though he could not see anything in the rear, still he seemed able to keep an instinctive tab on his old comrade Pete.

"That horse is all right, Pop," said Jo, "and I ought to know. I've ridden him a good many hundred miles. Don't tickle him with your heels, that's all."

"I guess that's what I've done," admitted Pete.

Then the procession resumed its march with Pete as rear guard, riding with due caution and circumspection as though his craft was loaded with dynamite and liable to explode at any time. Jack Cales tried to quiz the prisoners on the mule in a friendly way, but they would not relax in their attitude of grim, if not sullen, defiance towards their captors.

Captain Broom need not think that his prisoners would ever accept any conditions from him. Doubtless, he thought that these boys might be trained to help him in his business for he appreciated their courage and fighting ability, but he did not fully understand what stuff the frontier boys were made of. [86]

The procession of pirates and their prisoners had now reached the foot of the range and were in close proximity to the ranch, but everything favored the plans of the Skipper of the Sea Eagle. The fog became denser when they reached the level plain so that it was scarcely possible for the rider to see the ears of his horse.

Every sound was deadened, so that they could have gone directly past the ranch houses and not even the dogs would have heard them. But the Captain was determined to take no chances, and as soon as the party were free of the canyon, he bore off toward the south, making quite a circuit.

Anybody but an experienced navigator would have been lost in the fog upon the plain, but you could not lose Captain Broom either on the high seas or the low plains. They passed between two wooded hills, which the reader will have to take on faith as he cannot see them. Then across a gully, on the other side of which they came to a barb wire fence.

This did not stop them long, as the Captain cut it and they rode through. From the footing which was about all that could be observed, they appeared to be in a pasture land with a gentle slope towards the sea. The fog did not diminish in thickness and the boys determined to escape. Here was their chance, if they could be said to have one. [87]

"Here's where we make a break," said Jim to Juarez. "Guide the mule alongside of Tom. Then we will run for it." Jim did not say this in so many words, but he had ways and means of indicating to Juarez, who was tied directly back of him, by a sign and poke language which Juarez was quick to seize.

It seemed at every turn that his experience with the Indians was a help to him. The mule was a protégé of Juarez and with a word he could guide it in any direction that he wished it to go. The fog was one thing that favored them. The Mexican could scarcely be seen and Jack Cales stalked along looking like a giant through the mist.

He had grown somewhat lax through the long march. This was the time, if ever. Jim gave Juarez the signal that all was ready. A quick word to the mule and he trotted out from his place in the column, knocking over the Mexican and before Cales was fairly awake to the situation, he was obscured by the fog.

In about two seconds he had hove alongside of the horse that the mate was on. Tom was foot-loose, and no sooner did he see Missouri's long ears through the fog, than he was ready for action. [88]

"Jump, Tom," urged Jim. It took only about two seconds for Tom to execute the manœuvre.

"Halt!" roared the Captain, and he tried to turn the roan to capture the runaways, but right here, the broncho strain in the animal showed itself.

He began to buck and never in all his experience had the redoubtable Captain Broom ever been on so choppy a sea. It was hard to distinguish fog from whiskers. At the second hunch

upward, the Captain shot into space. The boys did not tarry to watch for his descent. A word from Juarez to the mule, and Missouri turned directly south just as Jack Cales came rushing up.

"Touch him with your foot, Tom," said Juarez, meaning the mule, not Cales. Tom's heel reached the right spot and up flew the mule's hind feet with the rapidity of a rapid fire-gun.

One foot struck Cales on the shoulder with a sufficient impact to send him down and out. The mate had been involved in the cyclone of which Captain Broom was the centre. Tom's horse, considered the gentlest of the four, had become infected with the roan's example and he started in to do a little bucking on his own account. Never since the mate had rounded Cape Horn, had he known so much action in so short a time.

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The only one left was Old Pete and he came on right gallantly, but by dodging and turning they got away in the fog. After putting what they considered a safe distance between themselves and their former captors, Juarez persuaded Missouri to halt, and Tom went to work and with great difficulty first untied, then lifted, them to the ground for the boys were as stiff as boards from being tied hard and fast for so long a time.

"My, but it certainly hurts," said Jo, stamping around in an endeavor to get the blood to circulating again. "It's just like it used to be back home in the winter when we would go skating and get our hands numb."

"What is the matter, Juarez?" asked Jim in alarm.

"Oh, I'm all right, I guess," he said in a voice that sounded faint to the boys and far away to himself. Then, without warning, he fell over on the ground and stiffened out.

"It's from the blow that the greaser gave him," said Tom. "It would have killed him if it had struck him fair."

"Wait until I get my hands on him," cried Jim, significantly.

What should they do now? It was not an easy question to decide.

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## CHAPTER XII

[90]

### THE RANCHERO

They could not desert Juarez and they could not get far with him. It was enough to stagger them and it seemed that they had reached the end of their resources.

"If it wasn't such an open country," said Jo, "we might hide until they had got out of range and then get to the nearest ranch."

"If they overtake us we can stand them off," saying this Jim reached for his revolver. To his astonishment it was gone. Then he remembered he had been disarmed by Captain Broom, and they were absolutely defenseless unless they could depend on Missouri's heels which had furnished them such active protection.

Finally they brought Juarez around so that he was able to sit up.

"Where am I?" he asked in a sort of daze.

"You will be all right in a minute, old chap," encouraged Jim, speaking cheerfully, but he did not feel so.

[91]

"You bet I will," he assented feebly, but with invincible determination. "What are you holding me for, Jim? Let's get at those fellows." It was evident that his mind was not exactly clear yet. They got him on his feet and he seemed better, though still very wobbly.

"There come those fellows," cried Jim, suddenly, with more of despair in his tone than he had ever spoken before, no matter how hard pressed they had been. But before there had always been something to do, but now they were helpless. Jim looked hastily around for some weapon. All he found was a small round stone.

With a yell of exultation, Jack Cales and the mate dashed down upon them, followed by the Captain and old Pete. They had been able to follow the distinctive mark of the mule's shoes in the soft earth until they came in hearing of the boys' voices. Then they jumped upon them. They were out for blood this time, for they had the boys' revolvers in their hands, probably because they were better than their own.

Missouri, finding himself free, made off. Tom halted when covered by one of the sailor's revolvers, but Jim dodged as the mate fired at him. The lug of lead spattered the mud between his feet, the next second he was off full speed through the fog, followed by fleet Jo.

[92]

The sailors soon gave up the useless chase, for there was no trail to guide them, so they had to content themselves with half of their original capture and they started for the cove where the Sea Eagle was anchored as fast as they could go, though they were hampered by Juarez.

"Better leave him, Captain," urged old Pete. "He is nothing but a nuisance."

"I'll have use for that fellow yet," said the Captain. "As for the other lad, he won't feel so lively after a few days on shipboard."

This did not have a very cheerful sound for Tom and he was in anything but a happy frame of mind. Still he had great confidence in Jim and did not give up hope of being rescued before the coast was reached. It was now getting towards daybreak, and the fog began to lift somewhat so that they could see a distance of thirty or forty yards.

Captain Broom's gang had now left the region of the level pasture and were coming to the brush section, fringing the coast, and beyond that they reached the sand dunes. The nearer they came to the sea the more depressed Tom became. The only thing that encouraged him was the fact that Juarez began to seem like himself.

[93]

Let us now return to Jo and Jim, who had been so fortunate as to make their escape. As soon as they were sure that the pursuit was at an end, they slowed down to a walk.

"Well, they didn't give us much of a chase," remarked Jim.

"Plenty to suit me. What are we going to do now?"

"This fog is beginning to lift," said Jim, "and then we can take our bearings. I want to locate this ranch the first thing, and then we can get help."

"Here's a wire fence," announced Jo, "I reckon it's the one the old geser cut."

"It surely is and a straight course north is our direction," remarked Jim.

"Here are hills that look like those we rode through," said Jo.

"We will soon be there now," was Jim's cheerful comment "What's that? It sounds like a dog barking." They stopped, listening intently, as the sound came faint, but there was no mistaking it.

"I suppose it's some big hound, that they usually keep on these ranches," said Jo, who was beginning to feel depressed from hunger and fatigue, "and he will jump at us because we haven't any weapons."

[94]

But in spite of Jo's fear they hurried on in the direction of the sound. In a short time, they came to a road between two barb wire fences, which the reader will remember that the Captain and his crew took when they were coming through the Sebastian ranch. But the boys struck it higher up, and were soon in the pasture that sloped down from the ranch houses toward the road.

Jim and Jo now heard the voices of men as well as the baying of the dogs. The men were talking excitedly about the finding of one of their number in the canyon tied and gagged, and it was evident that it was not a good time for strangers to visit the ranch of the Sebastians.

But Jim and Jo were dulled to danger and did not care what risk they ran and so they called to the men in a friendly Spanish greeting. There was instantly a great hubbub, and two men charged down upon them, preceded by a couple of fierce-looking mongrels. These came dashing for them with red, gaping mouths. The boys defended themselves gallantly with two stout sticks that they had picked up. Then the two Mexicans took a hand.

"Look out, Jo," cried Jim, who was ever on the alert. "That fellow is going to throw his lasso." Jo dodged just in the nick of time, but this gave one of the dogs a chance, and if Jim had not stunned him by a resounding crack on the head it would have gone hard with his brother.

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Just then another man appeared on the scene, attracted from the vicinity of the house by the noise of the encounter. He came full speed on a splendid sorrel. It was Juan Sebastian, a dark, handsome young man, a true son of Spain.

"What's all this?" he cried as he rode up. "Here, Sancho, Jan, you brutes, come off." The dogs slunk obediently to heel.

"We found those insolent Gringos," said one of the men, "coming straight for the Senor's house. We undertook to stop them."

"Senor," said Jim, bowing low and speaking in his best Spanish, "we are sorry, my brother and I, to have caused this disturbance. We are strangers and unfortunate, and we have heard of your hospitality, Senor"—Jim bowed again. He was not so simple, after all.

The Senor Sebastian returned the bow with more grace than Jim could command.

"I regret, Senor—" he hesitated.

"Darlington," added Jim.

"Senor Darlington, that you have been attacked in this manner, but there has been a party of desperadoes that have been overrunning this part of the country for the past two days, and they took one of my men and bound and gagged him and so you see, Senors," a smile and bow completed the Spanish gentleman's apology perfectly.

[96]

"We have just escaped, not more than an hour ago, from these same desperadoes," said Jim. "They have taken my brother and friend with them towards the coast."

"We will saddle and overtake them," promised the Senor, "after we have had breakfast."

Jim was stunned by this gentle sort of procrastination.

"But, Senor," he said gravely, "we will not be able to overtake them if we do not start immediately. Pardon my abruptness, but I cannot rest while there are two of my party prisoners in the hands of this gang of cut-throats."

"It is to be perfectly understood," replied the Spaniard with no less gravity, "we will make haste, but first we will eat while the servants are getting two of the horses ready for you and your brother."

This was not Jim's idea of making haste by a long shot, but he was enough of a traveler to recognize that the ways of men and nations differed and that nothing was to be gained by going against the grain of a national characteristic. So while fuming inwardly, he was outwardly quiet and composed. He argued, too, that it was not likely the pirate gang would retain the captured prisoners. Later, when they were themselves at a safe distance they would set free the others. [97]

As they went towards the house, the Spaniard dismounted and walked with them, giving his horse into the charge of one of the men, with directions to bring two other horses to the house. There was an unmistakable courtesy in doing this and the boys appreciated it. They could not help but contrast their appearance with that of the Spaniard. He was not gaudily dressed like a vaquero, but everything he wore was possessed of a certain richness and was not lacking in color. He truly was a Prince of the South in appearance as well as in courtesy.

Jim and Jo were disreputable beyond words. Their clothes were muddy, torn and disheveled, their faces so grimed that it was hard to tell their original color, and there were blotches of blood upon their clothes as well as faces and hands. But, though they looked worse than tramps, there was something straightforward in their manner and their way of speech that the Spaniard was quick to recognize. [98]

As they walked along the Spaniard explained that his household had been unusually disturbed that morning. His mother, he said, was an invalid, and had escaped from her attendant. Some mental trouble, he briefly mentioned as the cause of the elderly lady's worryment. Evidently, he did not connect the tragedy in his own life, in which his father's life was sacrificed, with the boys' antagonist. His mother, he assured them, had been found and was returned to her home.

The boys now had a good view of the house, as they approached it. The fog having lifted, they could take in the whole situation. The structure itself was of adobe, of the early California type, low, with broad verandas, and built on four sides around a court with a fountain in the centre, with fish in the basin, and grass around it. There were beautiful rose-tree bushes with gold and red clusters growing over the corners of the house.

From the verandah there was a beautiful view looking off over the surrounding country. The house itself stood on a rise of ground that sloped gently from the plain below. Back of it rose the mountains of the coast range, while in the distance glittered the broad breadths of the Pacific, shining like an azure floor. As far as eye could see was the domain of this great ranch. It was, indeed, a princely estate, and one of which the Senor Sebastian might well be proud. Those were the days of romance and of charm in the land of Southern California. [99]

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## CHAPTER XIII

### A NEW FRIEND

The servants eyed the two boys curiously as they stepped upon the verandah and the brothers were not reassured by any looks of friendliness, though they were outwardly courteous. A withered looking old woman, who looked to Jim as though she had Indian blood showed the boys to a room, where they could wash up.

"Jove! Doesn't it dazzle your eyes, Jo?" exclaimed Jim, "to see a real room, with a bed and a white spread, with those starched things where the pillows ought to be."

"This room would certainly please Aunt Maria," remarked Jo. "That four poster bed with the canopy over it, is an old timer, I'll warrant you."

"If I slept in this room," said Jim, "I would make a low bow to the bed and then roll up in my blanket and go to sleep on the floor."

"How do I look?" asked Jo, after he had rubbed and scrubbed his face for a long time. [100]

"You have got off the first layer," replied Jim, "and look about the color of a half-breed. Let me try my hand at polishing up."

"It will take you a week," remarked Jo discouragingly.

It cannot be truly said that they looked ornamental even when they were clean, for Jim's face was badly torn, one side of it being scraped raw. He got this memento when he tackled the



Captain and fell down into the canyon with him. One eye was blackened and the other cheek bruised. These disadvantages were not to be overcome in a short time.

Jo was somewhat more presentable, but he, too, showed signs of the rough time that they had had with the Captain and his "merry" crew. But in spite of all this, there was something in their bearing, an honest hardihood and manliness that could not be discounted by torn clothes and bruised faces.

"This room looks dirty, now," said Jo, "I'm ashamed to leave it like this."

"We will go outside to brush off our clothes," proposed Jim, "and I'm going to empty this dirty water myself." He started out with it when he met one of the servants in the hall. With many explanations, numerous gestures and much excitement, she took the pail from Jim and disappeared with it. [102]

"They won't let you do anything for yourself here, Jo," reported Jim, returning to the room.

This was correct and the boys noticed afterwards that the servants regarded them with odd expressions of amusement and it was evident to the sensitive Jo that they were being "guyed" by them, to use a modern expression. The boys being American lads, were self-reliant, and were accustomed to do everything for themselves, and, unknowingly they had gone counter to a custom of constant service of the Spaniards. It was to demean oneself, according to their code, to do any menial work.

"Might as well start for the dining room," proposed Jo. "I hate leaving Tom and Juarez to their fate this way."

"I more than hate it," protested Jim, "but as you can't hurry these people, we will make the best time by falling in with their way of doing business."

Then they went out into a passageway and, taking the wrong turn, which was quite easy in the rambling old house, they came to a door that entered into the courtyard. [103]

"My, but this is beautiful," exclaimed Jo. "It makes you appreciate California better when you see a place like this."

"That hammock looks good to me," said Jim. "I would like to stretch out in it right now."

Just then the door opened on the verandah and a really beautiful young girl stepped out. She was probably seventeen years of age, dressed in white, with a black mantilla over her equally black hair and her dark cheeks glowed with color. A very romantic meeting, Messieurs, the gallant young Americans at one end of the verandah and the Senorita at the other. Then she saw Jim and Jo with their scarred and bruised faces. With a little shriek, and clasping her hand to her eyes, she retreated quickly to her room.

"What did you do to scare that girl, Jo?" inquired Jim severely of his brother.

"Nothing," declared Jo, stoutly. "It was the sight of your face. It would give a wooden Injun a chill." Jim felt of the said face reflectively.

"I guess you are right, Jo," he admitted, "but you ain't so charming in appearance that you would do any damage."

"Let's walk along this side," proposed Jo. "Perhaps we will locate the breakfast."

"All right," agreed Jim. [104]

So they stalked along, more or less conscious that a pair of dark blue eyes were regarding them, and they thought they heard a trill of laughter, but it might have been one of the maids. They need not have felt embarrassed for there was the grace in their movements that goes with strength and youth and suppleness.

They were walking under a perfect bower of flowers anyway. For this side was beautifully latticed and over the lattice work grew vines with purple and golden flowers, that would give a grateful shade when the California sun would drive the fog away.

Under foot there was a double flagging of stone with trodden dirt on either side.

"I don't see a broom anywhere," said Jo.

Just then they heard the voice of Senor Sebastian behind them and they turned quickly.

"I had begun to fear, Senors, that you had become lost again."

"We were, partially, Senor."

"Our simple breakfast is ready now if you are," he said.

"We will have to brush the dirt off before we can go in," protested Jim.

"Antonio bring a brush," called the Senor. In a moment a gray-haired, bent Mexican came with a big kitchen broom. Instantly the Senor flushed with anger. [105]

"Stupid one, my guests are not my horses. Have a care."

A suspicion flashed through Jim's mind that the ancient servitor had brought the broom on purpose. It was clear that the servants did not have a very high opinion of their American visitors. The next time he returned he had gotten the right brush, and made a point of sneezing as the dust flew from their mud-dried clothes. This made Jim laugh in spite of himself.

"More dust than the Sirocco brings," said Jim. The old servitor regarded him with a cunning eye.

"Si, Senor," he said, then he was seized with a perfect convulsion of sneezing. This aroused his master's ire.

"No more of that, Antonio," he commanded, "or it will be the lash." Antonio's cold was cured from that moment. Jim's mouth twitched at the corners with the humor of it but he did not laugh now for that would be discourteous to his host.

Finally the brushing was finished to the regret of the servants, who had kept an amused eye on Antonio's performance, while pretending to be busy on some trivial tasks near the Patio or court. In her own room, the Senorita was faint with laughter as she watched Antonio dusting the two American lads. [106]

It was a simple breakfast that the boys found prepared for them in a long, low dining-room, with its dark beams and white plastered walls. The coffee was excellent, with a delicate aroma, and was probably the best that Mexico could afford. There was a large plate of meat garnished with peppers, and a mixed dish of vegetables that looked odd, but that tasted deliciously. You may be sure that Jim and Jo appreciated their meal, and they felt invigorated when it was finished, wishing all the while, however, that they were on the trail of their captured comrades.

"Now, Senors, the horses are at the door. They are spirited, but I am sure that you ride well."

This was a mere expression of courtesy on his part, for he did not expect any such thing and thought to see his guests fall off if the horses should rise on their hind legs, as they no doubt would, for there was not a horse on the big rancho but what was peppery and spirited. No sooner had the Senor spoke than Jim jumped to his feet, putting his hand to his head.

"I have forgotten about Caliente!" he exclaimed. "It is my horse, Senor," he explained to his host. "He is up the canyon because the gang that attacked us last night were afraid of him." [107]

"I will send for him," said the Senor.

"By the pool in the pocket," said Jim. "But I think I ought to get him myself, though I appreciate your offer, but one's horse, you know—"

"I understand perfectly."

"I cannot leave him without food and water," said Jim.

"I will attend to that. I will send a trustworthy man," and he spoke to the servant who was waiting on the table. In a short time he returned with a tall, sinewy man, with straight black hair and dark skin. He gave this man the necessary instructions and with a "Si, Senor," the man went out.

"A good reliable fellow," remarked Jim. "He looks like an Indian."

"He is an Indian," replied their host, "but of the right kind. Your horse is in good hands."

"Tell him to bring him down to the ranch," said Jim. "I'll trust Caliente with him." The Indian was called back and under his stolid demeanor was an appreciation of Jim's confidence.

Breakfast over they went out on the verandah, where they could see the horses. They were spirited looking beasts all right. One was a bay, the two front legs white stockinged, very trimly built, with a flashing eye, that he kept rolling around. The boy who was holding him had his hands full, as the bay would rise on his hind legs and strike out viciously with his forefeet. [108]

The other animal was much heavier than the bay. A brilliant black, whose coat fairly shone with careful grooming. He had been standing comparatively quiet until the three appeared upon the verandah of the house, then, with a sudden surge backward, he dragged the Mexican boy off his feet, shaking his head viciously.

"We ought to be armed, Senor," advised Jim. "If we should overtake those men, they will put up a desperate fight."

"Certainly, Senor," he answered. "Come into this room and select your weapon."

After both Jim and Jo were armed, they went out to the horses.

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## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PURSUIT

All the servants seemed just now to find duties of importance in front of the house or near it. They had no idea of missing the chance of seeing these Gringoes, whom they held in contempt, thrown from their horses.

Jim took the black and Jo was left the red, the easiest to manage even if he seemed the liveliest. Jo was too quick for his horse and before he could whirl to one side, he was in the saddle. Then his animal reared and plunged but Jo sat on him as easily as a cowboy does his steed. There was no mistaking his horsemanship. The servants were duly and deeply disappointed.

But their hopes revived when they saw Jim tackle the black. He began that steady sideways movement which Jim knew so well, whenever he tried to put his foot in the stirrup. The servants began to smile, here would be some fun. The "Black Devil," as they called the horse, had been known to kill men, so they had pleasant anticipations. When Jim found that he could not mount by the stirrup, he made a quick, powerful leap and was in the saddle. [110]

"Bravo!" cried the Senor Sebastian, but he knew that the fight had just begun.

Jo looked on with interest and perfect confidence in brother Jim's ability. The black stood perfectly stunned for a moment or two at being so suddenly mounted, then he sprang into action. With his back in a hump he shot into the air and came down stiff-legged.

Without loss of a second he went into the air again, higher than before. From the corral the Mexican cowboys were looking at the duel between the horse and the boy with lively interest.

"The Diablo will kill him," said one nonchalantly, blowing a puff of smoke from his cigarette.

"Five dollars that the Gringo stays on," said a second. The wager was made and others followed, for the Mexicans are inveterate gamblers. The third time the horse pitched into the air, Jim swaying with the animal's every motion as the trained cowboy does. Finding that he could not dislodge his rider that way, the black rose on his hind legs to a perpendicular position. [111]

Jim knew the trick of old, and was prepared for it. As the horse started to fall backwards, Jim who had been sticking like a leech, leaped lightly to the ground and with all his strength, pulling upon the bridle, slammed him to the ground. No sooner was the horse upon his feet again than Jim was in the saddle. [111]

Once more he tried that falling back trick and this time Jim brought him down upon the damp earth with a thud that jarred things. The black devil had had enough. He stood quivering and sweating, but for the time being subdued.

"Bravo!" cried the Senor Sebastian again, and he shook his guest by the hand warmly. "You are a true horseman. Now we shall go. We shall eat up the miles."

The crowd of cowboys swung their hats in a salute to the Gringo, who could conquer the black devil, while the house servants, disappointed at the stranger's triumph, went back to their different tasks.

The three horsemen galloped away down the sloping pasture, the Spaniard in advance as he knew the country and the most direct way to the coast. His horse was a splendid sorrel, somewhat taller than the horse that Jim rode. And he was a gallant figure in his leather riding suit and peaked sombrero with a brilliant colored band around it. [112]

Jim and Jo rode few yards behind the Spaniard and side by side. Jim felt a certain exultation in his victory over the Black before people who would have liked to have seen him defeated. It was exhilarating, too, this plunging gallop ahead with a chance to rescue Tom and Juarez and to get even with Captain Broom and his gang, who had taken away their valuables and had given the boys such a cruel defeat.

"This is a fine horse," said Jim, "though he hasn't the stride of Caliente."

"He is a beauty, when it comes to bucking," Jo commented. "There is nothing the matter with this bay but my black can beat him for speed."

So they flew on, the speed of their steeds blowing back their horses' manes, and the fresh air from the sea bringing a feeling of hope to their hearts, that they would yet be able to overtake the pirates, and rescue their comrades in distress. Their horses' feet were devouring the miles.

"We stand a chance to get 'em at this rate," shouted Jim.

"Won't it be fine if we can all sit down to dinner tonight?" replied Jo. "I bet that Tom and Juarez would enjoy a square meal with the Senor at the ranch house. It's kind of nice to be civilized once in a while." [113]

"You're right, it is," declared Jim emphatically.

"I wonder if there isn't a store around here where we could buy some clothes," inquired Jo, anxiously. "We look too disreputable to appear in polite society."

"Thinking about that girl, I suppose?" remarked Jim with brotherly intuition.

"I wouldn't be so sure if I were you," replied Jo evasively. "How about the Senorita down in Mexico who threw you the rose at the castle?" This reference to the Senorita Cordova whom the

Frontier Boys had rescued in Mexico, checked Jim from getting too gay for he still had a tender place in his memory for her.

The fog by this time was entirely dissipated, and they could see by certain white or rather light spots in the clouds where the sun was going to break through and an absolutely clear day would result. The three riders had now reached the brush region that began a few miles from the coast and they were compelled to go more slowly.

But if they had only known what was going on not more than two miles away from where they were, they would not have slackened speed no matter what risk they ran. For Captain Broom and his crew with the two captives had arrived at the cove and old Pete and Jack Cales were going into the cave for the boat. [114]

There was a chance, but the Senor and his companions must hurry. Some mishap to the pirates' expedition just at this point and the frontier boys would win. Tom and Juarez might have sung the tune that they had often sung before in camp.

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching,  
Cheer up, comrades, they will come,  
And beneath the starry flag  
We will breathe the air again  
Of freedom in our own beloved home."

But they did not know and they sat miserable and dejected upon the damp sand of the beach, not knowing that Jim and Jo were coming nearer every second. Then there came an accident, though a slight one, that gave the pursuers a chance.

Old Pete was carrying one end of the boat. He was nervous, anyway, in regard to the cave and its grewsome contents, thought he saw some dark spectre coming for him out of the blackness of the cave and he dropped his end of the boat and scudded for the beach. [115]

The Captain was furious, giving him a blow that sent him spinning half way down to the water, and he and the mate rushed back to see what damage the boat had suffered. It was only slightly stove in, but every second was precious. The pursuers were only a mile away.

Jim began to grow restless as they neared the coast. He seemed to feel that they were nearing the enemy, and at his urging, the Spaniard, who had an increased respect and liking for Jim ever since he had conquered Black Diablo, put his horse to the gallop, and away they went along the narrow winding path through the bushes.

The branches whipt them, but they paid no attention, but on they went; it was evident that they made considerable racket and Captain Broom, with a fierce burst of energy for which he was famous, got the boat launched, the two prisoners in, and with himself and the mate at the oars, made the boat leap forward over the lazy rolling swell towards the graceful Sea Eagle.

When they had reached a point half-way to the vessel, the horsemen came tearing through the last screen of brush onto the yellow sand. The enemy had escaped by the skin of its teeth and it was heart-rending to see Tom and Juarez being carried away from them at every stroke of the oars towards their black prison. Jim put up his hands to his mouth and yelled: [116]

"We will rescue you, boys. Don't give up. We'll get 'em yet."

A derisive yell greeted this challenge and one of the men in the boat fired at the group on the shore, but the bullet fell harmlessly short. They did not dare to fire in return lest they hit either Tom or Juarez.

"They have steam up on board," observed Jim. "But I see one chance to do some execution."

It was this. The Sea Eagle was anchored close under a cliff on the northern side of the cove. So Jim slipped off his horse, for the way on that side was impracticable except on foot. It was hard going at that, especially as there were a good many cacti with their wretched thorns.

Jim stepped gingerly along over the rocks, gliding through the bushes until at last he reached a point above the vessel where he could almost look down upon her decks. The boat from the shore had just come alongside and the prisoners were hustled into the cabin and the door locked. Tom and Juarez were a dejected-looking pair and it made Jim's heart ache to see them.

The Captain went upon the quarter-deck and gave an order to the man at the wheel. The anchor had already been weighed. Slowly and gracefully the Sea Eagle turned, and there stood Captain Broom, as big as life upon the bridge. Why did not Jim fire? Because he had come to a certain wise conclusion. [117]

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## CHAPTER XV

### JIM AND THE SEA EAGLE

As Jim had raised his revolver to fire, a sudden idea came to him. In the first place he rebelled [118]

instinctively from shooting a man down in cold blood from ambush, even if he was as desperate and crime-stained a character as Captain Bill Broom, besides it would not save Tom and Juarez and only make their captivity harder to endure, if any injury was done the Captain.

Another thing, Jim was sure that if he began the attack that his two comrades would be used as shields to protect the man at the wheel, so that the Sea Eagle could be navigated safely out of the cove. He saw with interest the narrow place between two lines of foam above hidden ledges where the boat must pass in order to reach the open sea. He marvelled at the temerity of Captain Broom in daring to bring his ship through such a place.

Then a brilliant thought came to him, a sudden stroke that might turn defeat into victory. The Sea Eagle was now making straight for the narrow channel. Jim slipped back for a short distance and ran as rapidly as he could to a point a little to the west of where he had first hidden. He did not have long to wait. The Sea Eagle was almost directly opposite his place of ambush, and was just sticking her nose into the narrow passage. [119]

Jim raised his revolver and took careful aim and fired. The man at the wheel gave a yell and clapped his hand to the shoulder, letting go the wheel and the nose of the little steamer swung toward the rock. A swell lifted her bow clear by a few inches, and the Captain caught the steamer by the wheel and brought her to a course.

"Bring those boys up on deck and shoot them if that black-haired devil," (meaning Jim) "fires another shot," he called to the mate.

That worthy was not slow to obey the order, he had them on deck in full sight in a jiffy and held a pistol at Tom's head. Jim had raised his arm to fire at the Captain when he heard his order and it was as if he had been paralyzed. He knew that Tom and Juarez would have been killed to a certainty if he fired another shot.

Luck had broken against him again, for that was all that had kept the Sea Eagle from going on the reef, where if she had not been wrecked, she and her crew would have been at the mercy of the men on shore. Just the lifting of the wave had saved the vessel by a few inches, that, and Captain Broom's quick and skillful action. [120]

The second round of the contest had gone in favor of the pirate and his crew, but only by a shade as it were. But it would not surprise me a bit if Jim evened up matters in the third and final round. Let us hope so, at least, for that will give a silver lining to the black cloud that had rolled over the boys' fortunes at this particular time.

Jim made his way slowly back to where Jo and the Senor were waiting for him on the beach. He was despondent over the failure of his plans by so close a margin, and the sight of Tom and Juarez helpless on the deck in the hands of these sea-coast pirates, was always before his eyes.

"What were you trying to do, Jim?" inquired Jo, "Sink the ship?" Before Jim could reply, the Spaniard gave a cry of warning.

"Look out, they are going to shoot."

Glancing toward the Sea Eagle, which was now a half mile from shore, they saw a puff of smoke, and then a shell struck into the beach below them and exploding, sent a shower of sand over them and the horses. The latter, frightened, reared and plunged, but the boys soon got their animals under control, as they quickly tired of acting up in the heavy sand. Jim shook his fist in the direction of the Sea Eagle. [121]

"Curse your insolence!" he yelled. "I'll make every one of you eat crow, you miserable hounds!"

Jim looked ugly, his eyes glared with concentrated fury and the veins on his temple were swollen and throbbing. Unthinkingly, he pulled back hard upon the bit, sending his horse up in the air.

"Easy, boy," he said, soothingly. "Easy. It was my fault for yanking you."

When the horse was quieted, Jim was cooled down to his normal temperature, and he told his comrades of his attack upon the Sea Eagle and how it had turned out.

"Senor Darlington," said the Spaniard impressively, "I will take off my hat to you. You are a natural General. Take my advice, my friend, and go to Spain. There you might head a revolution and in time rise to high mark."

"I appreciate your praise deeply, Senor Sebastian," responded Jim, "but my own country, Senor, I could not leave it for another."

"Right, Senor," replied the Spaniard, "you have the true spirit." [122]

"Which way will she turn, do you suppose?" asked Jo, pointing to the vessel that was moving steadily out on the Pacific in a straight line from the shore.

"To the North, doubtless," replied the Spaniard.

"Wherever she goes we must find her out," said Jim, with grim determination.

"I wish we could follow them," sighed Jo. "If we could only hire a boat."

"They have our money," replied Jim, briefly.

"I had forgotten that," said Jo, and his face showed his disappointment.

"Permit me to help you," said the Spaniard, "I am to blame for detaining you at breakfast."

"That is generous of you, Senor," replied Jim, "but I do not favor going to the expense of chartering a steamer. Even if it were possible, my plan would be to follow along the coast on horseback and see what can be done when they make a landing."

"As you are the General," replied the Spaniard, "we will allow you to make the plans."

"Look!" exclaimed Jo, "they are turning South instead of North."

"Impossible!" cried the Spaniard. "There is only one port within two hundred miles. I do not understand. Yes, they are surely going South." [123]

"Perhaps they have a secret landing place," hazarded Jim.

"Not so," replied the Spaniard. "Not a harbor where they could land save one and there they would not dare to go."

The three watchers on horseback gazed until there was little to be seen other than a smudge of smoke upon the horizon. It was no use, the Sea Eagle was holding to her southerly course to some mysterious port. The sun had now come out and was shining with sheer brilliance upon the sparkling ocean.

"We must return now," said the Spaniard. "There is nothing more for us to do at present."

"I think that my brother and I will start this afternoon and take the trail to the south," announced Jim, "wherever those fellows set foot, I want to be waiting for them."

"I fear it is impossible to start so soon," replied the Spaniard, "I must go with you as I know the country to the South, every foot of it."

"The Senor is right, Jim," put in Jo, quickly, as he saw a frown on Jim's face and was afraid that he was going to say something abruptly. "You will want to give Caliente a good rest, so that when we start, we will make the distance without delay. Then we have to make some preparations ourselves." [124]

Jim looked at his brother with a moment's dark suspicion, but it was evident that Jo was perfectly sincere in what he said.

"I will promise, Senor," said the Spaniard with a peculiar smile, "that when we start which will be early tomorrow morning, that we will travel far and fast enough to suit you and your horse." There was a challenge in his voice that Jim met smilingly.

"So be it, Senor," he said, "I will try to be in sight at the finish."

"My horse is a remarkable animal for speed and endurance, I must tell you frankly," said the Senor gravely. "He has no equal in this country of California. He has proved it more than once and against all comers."

"He is certainly a fine horse," admitted Jim, looking at the sorrel with admiring eyes. "He has a splendid stride."

"Ah, no, Senor," laughed the Spaniard with a gleam of his white teeth, "I did not mean him," patting the horse on the neck, "a good animal, indeed, but more for my little sister to ride than for me. Wait, my friend, until I introduce you to Don Fernando and then you will see a horse for the first time." [125]

"I should be very much pleased to see him," said Jim, frankly curious and interested.

"Tomorrow," said the Spaniard.

They had now turned into the narrow trail among the bushes and had only ridden a few steps when Jo called a sudden halt.

"What do you think, Jim, there's my horse and Tom's tied in that thicket."

Sure enough there they were, utterly worn out, but with spirit enough to recognize their old comrades Jim and Jo, and if ever horses expressed a welcome these two did when they first caught sight of their two friends.

"They have cut the saddles to pieces, the brutes," exclaimed Jo.

"I'm glad to get the horses," said Jim, "I am surprised that they didn't cut their throats."

"They will follow us all right," said Jo, in reply to the Spaniard's suggestion that they would have to be led, and they trotted along behind Jo, who was the last one in line.

"Do you know of any place where we could buy things?" asked Jim. "We need a new outfit."

"But we have no money," put in Jo quickly. [126]

"I will get the money or its equivalent today," said Jim. "If there is a store where the Senor can

get me credit."

"Yes, there is a store where a Portugee sells about everything that we need in this country," replied the Spaniard. "It is some distance to the north. We will ride there before we return to the ranch. There will be no difficulty about the credit," he concluded, with a bow to Jim.

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## CHAPTER XVI

[127]

### THE BOYS PUT ON STYLE

"You do not know my ability to spend," said Jim, "I may have to plunge to the extent of several hundred dollars. You see my brother has very expensive tastes. It will cost quite a small fortune when I buy him a complete trousseau including diamonds."

"I will pledge my lands if necessary to get the young Senor diamonds," said the Spaniard laughingly.

In about an hour's time they came to a large one story frame building painted a rather light blue, which color had weathered a good deal. It had a square, false front with a sign on it that read, "Mr. Gonsalves, General Trader."

They hitched their horses to some well graveled posts, and went inside leaving Jo's and Tom's horses free to graze at will around, or to stand under the shelter of some drooping pepper tree across the road. The proprietor, a short, thick-set Portugee with a close trimmed black beard, and a gray slouch hat which he always wore, apparently, received them graciously. The contents of the store were entirely at their service,—if they paid for them.

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"We will miss poor Tom here," said Jo, "he was always our purchasing agent."

"And a mighty good one," added Jim. "Not even a Connecticut Yankee could get the best of him in a bargain."

The Spaniard sat in a round armed wooden chair, gracefully smoking a cigarette, while his guests busied themselves making purchases. First the boys bought some new clothes, which they retired behind a counter to put on, and emerged in proper apparel for the plains.

Blue flannel shirts, and pants of the same color, held up by leather belts, with much glitter of silver on them, then they bought a sombrero apiece, not after the Mexican style, but of the American type. Jim had a red band around his and Jo had a blue.

"Now we want some handkerchiefs to tie around our necks," said Jo.

"Of course," remarked Jim with a wink, "something that will catch the eyes of the ladies."

So M. Gonsalves brought out a brilliant assortment of handkerchiefs.

"Here's a very fine article, gents," he said holding out a red silk handkerchief, clustered with white horseshoes.

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"Nothing the matter with that," admitted Jim admiringly, with a droll look at Jo. "But this plain red one will suit me. My brother would probably like the horseshoe one." But Jo also declined.

"I will take the dark blue one," he said, "it matches my costume better."

"Gee! but you will look like a color scheme," laughed Jim, "blue eyes, blue pants, shirt, tie and socks, and hat band, you ought to be a sailor on the blue Pacific."

"The next things are boots," remarked Jo.

"Not for me," said Jim briefly, "I want moccasins. Worn 'em all my life, and I am not going to change to boots now."

"Fine line of moccasins," said the accommodating Mr. Gonsalves in his best trade manner. You see he had been in business in San Francisco and knew something of the ways of customers.

"But it gives us more style to wear boots. You notice that all the inhabitants wear them, we can buy moccasins too. You wear them all the time and they will set you down for an Indian."

"When a fellow once gets the idea of style in his head," said Jim resignedly, "nothing this side of matrimony is going to stop him. So lay on MacDuff and cursed be he who first cries hold, enough."

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"I feel like I was anchored," commented Jim, stepping across the floor with heavy tread. "I should like to stalk a deer or an Indian in these things. He could tell you were arriving before you got above the horizon."

"But you look fine in 'em," said Jo.

It was true that he made a striking figure in his blue togs. The lithe powerful physique, and the strong, resolute face.

"Better look out, Jo," grinned Jim. "No Seniorita would look at you, when they see me dashing over the landscape."

"I'm a pretty stylish looking guy myself," responded Jo, confidently. He did make a good appearance, there was no doubt of that. Though slighter than his brother he was well set up, and his frame was well muscled. He was handsomer than Jim. But there was no nonsense about either of the two boys and they never gave an unnecessary thought to their appearance.

"Now, Mr. Gonsalves," said Jim, "we would like to look at some of your man-killers."

"Revolvers?" he questioned, "just step this way. I can fit you out all right."

He did have a fine collection and Jim examined the different ones carefully, noting their action and how easily they worked. [131]

"I see you are no tenderfoot," complimented the proprietor. "You have handled shooting irons before."

"I'll be a tenderfoot before long, if I wear these condemned boots you sold me," said Jim gruffly ignoring the compliment. He did not care especially for M. Gonsalves' style. "Now let's have a look at your rifles." The proprietor actually took off his hat and bowed.

It was evident that the distinguished gentlemen from nowhere in particular were going to buy out his entire stock.

"Would you be so gracious as to step this way?" he said, "I have the rifles in the back of the store."

They were so gracious, and after due examination they selected a couple of well balanced guns and purchased enough ammunition to stand off a few Indian raids. All the stuff besides what they had on their backs they packed upon Tom's horse, as Tom was not present to resent the indignity.

"Now the last things are some saddles," said Jim, "seeing that our kind friends, the pirates, cut up those we owned."

"Senior Darlington," said the Spaniard coming forward and touching Jim lightly on the arm, "Do not speak of buying saddles. I will see to that." Jim did not know exactly what their host meant but he thanked him and deferred to his request. [132]

Now behold the frontier boys in complete costume, with glittering revolvers at their hips and rifles swung across their backs, upon their hands were fringed buckskin gloves. They had gone the whole hog as Jim said.

"I'll take the shine off this costume in about one day," said Jim grimly, "when I get in the open, I would rather break a broncho, than a new suit of clothes." There was no doubt about his impressive appearance, as the sun flashed on the metal of the accoutrements and he swung himself into the saddle. Even their host seemed to hold them in higher regard. Different people, different manners.

When they reached the house ranch the first thing Jim did was to find Caliente. He was in the long adobe stable that was a half-mile from the house, at the beginning of a wide mountain valley, where the air drew through from the sea.

"How are you, Caliente old fellow," cried Jim, as he opened the box stall and went in to shake hands with his old comrade. But the horse leaped to one side, and then reared up as if to strike Jim.

"He don't know you," cried Jo who was on the outside of the stall. "Take off your hat." [133]

Jim whirled it out of the stall, and a change came over Caliente. He recognized his master, and nickering in recognition he rubbed his head against Jim's shoulder, and took playful nips at his fine new shirt, while Jim fairly hugged him, and gave him resounding whacks with his open hand upon his splendid sides and shoulders.

"A magnificent animal, Senior Darlington," said Senior Sebastian to Jim, "I congratulate you."

It was a true word. Caliente with his proud neck, small but shapely head, powerful but not too heavy frame, and color of mottled gray was magnificent.

All that afternoon Jim busied himself grooming his horse until his coat fairly glistened. He looked carefully to his feed, and saw to his watering. For Jim was determined that his horse should not be beaten by the Spaniard's. He knew that the latter's horse must be an unusual animal. It was not a short race, instead, one of two hundred miles that lay before them on the morrow.

That evening the American boys presented a better appearance than they did at breakfast. It was a pretty scene that evening in the long dining room. The snowy table lit by light of candles and set with ancient silver brought from Spain. The young Seniorita was seated at her brother's right, and on the other side were James Darlington and his brother Joseph. As to the impression she made upon them, we will say nothing, as this is not a romance, but they had a merry and delightful evening. [134]

Their host and the young Seniorita were much interested in hearing of the adventures of the



boys in Mexico, especially that part that referred to the rescue of the Senorita Cordova from the hands of Cal Jenkins and his gang. I do not know that The Frontier Boys told it with any less fervor because the eyes of the young girl, seated opposite, were fixed intently upon them. It appeared that their host knew of the Senor Cordova, who was a man of prominence in his country, though he had not actually met him. So there was one more bond of sympathy between the Senor Sebastian and James and Jo Darlington.

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## CHAPTER XVII

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### ON BOARD THE SEA EAGLE

Let us now turn our interest and attention for a time to the cruise of the Sea Eagle, under the guidance of that redoubtable free-booter, Captain Broom. It was a mystery to the three who watched the ship turn to the South, what her port could be. We will soon be in a position to solve that problem.

No sooner had the Sea Eagle cleared the cove than Captain Broom went to his cabin to go over his spoils which he had taken from the frontier boys. He placed all the belts upon the table, took up one, and with a keen knife slit the first pouch. A large heavy Spanish coin rolled out and then clinked down upon the table.

The Captain's eyes glistened. "By Gosh!" he exclaimed, "it was worth while rounding up those fellows. They must have struck it rich down in Mexico. I bet the boys will be tickled to death to get their share." For whatever crimes and shortcomings Captain Broom could be charged with, at least he always divided fairly with his crew. Thereby he held their loyalty. It was not all policy, either, for there was a sterling streak in the bad old fellow.

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Out of the next pouch there glittered upon the table several diamonds and a small palm full of rubies, with their rich color and radiance. "The boys will have enough to start a jewelry store," commented the Captain. "But I am not surprised at this haul. I know something about the hidden treasures myself, and they do say Mexico is the the place for them."

Out of another belt he got some ingots of gold and a girdle that caused the Captain to open his eyes. At first he did not know what to make of it. When he held it up he saw that it was formed of golden disks linked with strings of rubies and sapphires. In the third belt was a necklace that might have been worn by some Princess of the Incas. It was oddly, almost weirdly beautiful.

The fourth belt that he picked up chanced to belong to Jim.

"This seems lighter than the others," remarked the Captain. "Three of the pouches are empty." His face got black with rage. For instantly his mind leaped to the suspicion that one of his men had rifled it. If such had been the case, the guilty party would have got short shift at the end of a rope from the yard arm.

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But the second examination showed that the cut was an old one.

"So!" he cried, "one of the boys has cached part of his share. I bet it was that long-legged, black-haired guy. That fellow would give the best of us trouble. I wish I had him to train. Maybe, I can make something of the Injun boy," meaning Juarez.

As to the belts, the shrewd old fellow, to make sure, measured them to see where the worn holes of the leather came, and the partially empty belt had been worn two inches longer than any of the others.

"It was the big fellow's," said the Captain.

Then he went upon deck and called the crew forward.

"Now, lads, choose your man to get your share of the goods," he said.

"It's Jack Cales, sir," they said, knowing that they would be called upon to select a man to take their share.

"All right! Come, lad," said the Captain, and led the way to his cabin. When Jack Cales saw the treasures on the table, he opened his eyes and mouth in astonishment.

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"Why, Sir," he exclaimed, "we haven't seen anything like this since the day two years ago when—" he stopped suddenly, seeing from a look in the Captain's eyes that no reminiscences were desired.

"This is your share, lad," said the Captain, gruffly.

"Thank you, sir," responded Cales, as he swept the small pile of gold and jewels into the palm of his big hands.

"And mind ye, lad," warned the Captain, "I don't want any quarreling among yourselves or ye will hear from me."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the sailor and backed out of the cabin.

There was an interesting gathering in the forecabin when Jack Cales deposited his handful of treasures on the top of a sea chest that had been hauled out for the purpose.

For once it was not necessary to have the lantern lit, for a broad band of sunshine shone down the steep ladder and cut a golden swath through the dingy gloom and fell athwart the chest and illuminated the group: the tall and swaggering Cales, the rugged, grizzled Pete, and the other sailormen; a typical group and not to be matched for picturesqueness anywhere; with their faces intent upon the center of the old black sea chest, where glowed and glittered the gold and jewels in the band of light that shone upon some of the faces of the intent group, while others were in the shadow. It was a scene such as Rembrandt—pardon, kind reader, I forgot for a moment, this is a simple narrative of Adventure.

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"Pete," said Cales, "how the ladies will love you when they see a chain of glittering diamonds around your throat."

"One thing is certain, lad," replied the grizzled Pete, "I won't be givin' none of my diamonds away to the ladies. I'll keep the stones safe in my jeans."

"You'll have to be keerful, Pete," rallied another, "they'll be marrying you for your ill-gotten wealth, when they find out that you are an heiress. You can't help yourself, Pete. It won't make any difference because you are a pirate, that won't scare 'em. Not when they see them jewels."

"What's the use of you boys a talkin' to me," he said with a wise wink, "you're only kittens. I'm sixty year old and I'm a free man yit."

"Here's a pill for you, Pop," said Cales, dropping a diamond into his horny hand.

"Gee! I'm just as well pleased to get this as I was to get a bunch of popcorn when I was a kid back in New England, off the Christmas tree."

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"Better have it sot in one of your front teeth, Pop," said Jack. This produced a roar of laughter, for Pete's front teeth were conspicuous by their absence.

So the distribution went on without any bickering at first, only jovial jokes, but at last there came a bone of contention over the last diamond. And in a jiffy Jack Cales and a short, stocky sailor were all tangled up in a fierce encounter. Their comrades, none too gently, hoisted them up on deck. There they continued their fight.

No sooner did Captain Broom see them than he cluttered down from the bridge at a furious rate. The two combatants ought to have taken warning but they were deaf to everything except their own struggle. He was livid with anger, and his wrath was in a large measure justified.

"I'll larn you!" he yelled, grabbing each by the back of the neck. "You won't fight any more this trip."

They were like children in his hands. He had not only the arms of a gorilla, but the strength of one when he was aroused and it was a caution the way he slammed them around, flaying the deck with them, and dashing their heads together. It seemed as if every bone in their bodies would be broken. Finally he flung them unconscious on the deck.

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"Put them in the Sagenette," he ordered the mate.

"Aye, aye, sir," he replied, and with the aid of one of the sailors, they were chained in a narrow cell.

Here was where Juarez and Tom came in. As the two fighters were knocked out and locked up, it made the crew short and they were ordered out on deck from the cabin where they had been kept. Almost famished though they were, they had to jump in and work like nailers, not to say, sailors.

Fortunately for them, they had experienced a hard schooling in many different ways since they came west and were practical masters of several lines of industry, but this was their first experience sailing. It was a hard school, but they learned more in a few days, than they would have under months of more gentle tuition. This was to stand them in good stead when they started on their cruise to Hawaii.

"I'll get even with those fellows," growled Tom as he passed near Juarez who was busy polishing some brass work. "Yes, if it takes the rest of my life."

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"What do you mean, stopping and gabbing, you little shrimp?" roared the mate who chanced to see Tom stop.

And he rushed up and grabbing Tom by the back of the neck, shook him ferociously, landing him a couple of kicks at the same time. This was too much for Juarez, who poised a stone that he was using and was about to brain the mate with it when the Captain's iron grip fell on his arm. He didn't throw that brick.

"Easy, lad," said the Captain. "No more fighting on board this ship, or I'll take a hand again and don't you two lads pass the time of day either. You won't be killed if you work hard and keep cheerful." Then he gave the mate a look, which that worthy understood and Tom was allowed to

go about his work without further molestation.

But this was a new and hard doctrine that the Captain had laid down that the boys had to take hard usage and unceasing work and keep cheerful about it. They soon found that the Skipper meant what he said. It was a bitter lesson, but perhaps they were the manlier for learning it so young. For it's something that life hands out to everyone sooner or later.

Often the boys looked longingly over the rail towards the faint, far outline of the California coast. The Skipper was keeping his ship far out from the land for reasons best known to himself. One thing was favorable in that the sea air had braced up Juarez so that he felt more like himself though his head was queer at times. And no wonder for that blow the Mexican dwarf had given him was sufficient to have stunned an ox. [143]

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## CHAPTER XVIII

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### A DAY AT SEA

The Sea Eagle was steaming steadily South to her mysterious harbor. The day was a brilliant one and as the afternoon wore on the wind from the Northwest began to blow with fresher force and the white caps began to jump, here, there and everywhere over the broad surface of the ocean, and then slide down on the back of the waves.

There was a good deal of motion on the part of the Sea Eagle now, as she plunged into the waves and threw the spray back over her decks. Both Juarez and Tom proved themselves good sailors, which was just as well for if they had been sea sick together with their other miseries they might have succumbed.

Finally the long afternoon wore away and the time came for supper. The boys being neither flesh, fish or fowl, were not allowed to eat with the crew, and they did not mind in the least. When their rations did arrive, or rather when they went to the ship's galley and got their share, they found the fare not lacking in quality and abundance. There was a heaping plate of Mexican beans, a big hunk of bread and a bowl of hot tea. After the boys had stowed this below in their hatches they felt a hundred per cent better and more fit to meet any fate that might await them. [145]

An hour before sunset a heavy bank of fog began to roll up from the West, soon covering the whole sky with its gracious softness, and decided restfulness, after the glittering blue-diamond beauty of the day.

It is the fogs alone that make the climate of California, especially in the Southern part endurable. Too much sunshine becomes as unbearable as too much cloudiness.

The sea went down, when the fog came up and the waters took on a steely color under their blanket of gray, rolling on, in that monotonous meditation that holds the mystery of forgotten ages in its brooding.

"Here's where you will sleep, boys," said Old Pete, who had been appointed by the Captain to have special charge over their education. "The men won't have you in the fo'castle, and it's pretty crowded there anyway."

"This will suit us, sir," replied Juarez. He did not call him Pop, as he would have on the land. This was the sea and had its own rules and customs, therefore Old Pete received his due of respect. But in his rough way he was not unfriendly towards the boys, for he remembered that they had given him friendly advice, when he was aboard that strange craft, a horse, the night before. [146]

The place where the boys were to sleep was a sort of cubby hole in the bow of the boat, that was roofed over and where anchor chains and other junk was sometimes kept. It was not over four feet high, five in width at the broadest and narrowing to the bow.

A rude place to sleep in, but what did the Frontier Boys care for that? They could scarcely count the nights that they had slept out on the ground, and in bad weather too. They had a blanket apiece, and a tarpaulin to pull over them.

The blankets they had spread out on the floor of the cubby hole and they found that the tarpaulin made a mighty warm protective covering, keeping out the damp sea air in fine style.

"Where do you suppose we are heading for, Juarez?" inquired Tom.

"Maybe a port in Mexico or South America and then again we may head for Hawaii before we intend to." [147]

"We are going South now, though," said Tom.

"If we run in close to the coast, we'll jump overboard, and swim for it," said Juarez.

"We could do it if we get within a mile," said Tom, "if it is not too rough."

Just then Juarez put his hand over Tom's mouth, he felt sure that someone was listening or was

preparing to. Juarez ran his fingers carefully over the boards until he found where a hole had been bored through the planking a little back of their heads. It was just as he had suspected, someone was listening to hear what plans they would make.

With the noiselessness characteristic of him when scouting, Juarez crept out partially and cautiously raised his head until he caught sight of the sole of a man's boot. Then he crept back to his place and gave Tom a nudge. Forthwith they began talking in rather loud tones.

"Say Tom, do you know I rather like this ship. These fellows are rough in their way but that is to be expected."

"Of course," said Tom, in an equally loud voice, "but we might as well make the best of it. There is no chance for the boys to find us."

"You're right there, Tom."

Then in a short time they appeared to fall into a deep and sonorous sleep. This was no fake on the part of Tom who was actually and thoroughly tired. But Juarez was more of a veteran and he kept his eyes open and he was rewarded in a few minutes by seeing a man's feet hanging over the edge of their bunk house and then he saw the figure of the mate slouch aft.

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"You sly old rascal, you," remarked Juarez. "We will 'larn' you to try and be too smart with the Frontier Boys. We may be young but we are not fools."

Nothing happened for a while and the gentle plunge of the Sea Eagle into the long rolling swell soon lulled the tired Juarez into a sound sleep, so that neither he nor Tom were aware that the ship had suddenly changed her course.

By and by however, Juarez waked with a start. Something had happened, he knew not what. He sat up and struck his head upon the planking overhead. Fortunately however he did not hit the place where the Mexican had struck him but at the best his head was a tender place with him and the blow stunned him, but as he was now more his rugged self, he soon recovered.

He found what had wakened him was the stopping of the ship. He saw several dark forms moving aft and he crept out to see what was afoot. He had to move very carefully but managed to reach the hood of the forecabin, where he crouched looking and listening.

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He saw that they were lying to, close in to shore and could see the white splash of the breakers as they rolled towards the shore and could hear their monotonous thunder upon the beach. Here perhaps was their chance. Just then he heard the heavy voice of the Captain from the bridge.

"Lower away there." Then the starboard boat slid noiselessly down from the davits into the water.

Juarez got up and glided back into the cubby hole to tell Tom the good news. It was their opportunity to escape and seemingly a good one. The sea was smooth and the night was dark. They could slip over the side of the vessel and pull for the shore, and not a soul on the Sea Eagle would be the wiser until they looked into their nest in the morning to find it empty.

Once they got to the shore it would be an easy matter to make their way North until they met Jim and Jo.

The anticipation of the escape had already thrilled through every nerve in Juarez's body. But he had just started to wake Tom, when something made him look down the deck. There was the tall figure of one of the sailors coming directly towards the bow.

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Juarez lay down quickly as though asleep. Then the man reached down and caught hold of Tom's foot and Juarez's and gave them a rough yank. "So you are here, you young brats. You had better make a move or the Cap'n will finish you."

Juarez was fairly sizzling with rage especially as Tom was really frightened by being wakened in such rough fashion and after all Tom was but a boy and it pained Juarez to see him so scared, but he was helpless, and all he could do was to add one more black mark to the score he was charging up to the free-booters.

Instead of moving away, the man sat on a capstan a few feet distant from the boys' den, watching for the slightest move on their part, a marlin spike dangling playfully in his hands. Juarez had not taken the crafty and keen sighted Captain Broom into account.

From the Bridge, that worthy, although he was watching the launching of the boat, had chanced to catch sight out of the tail of his eye of a dark shadow flitting back to the forecabin. He was not sure it was one of the boys, but he was taking no chances, for he had a real respect for their prowess and audacity as he might well have.

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So he had sent one of his crew to guard this young lions' den, while the ship was so close in shore. He did not intend to stay longer than was necessary right at this point, and he waited with some anxiety for the return of the mate and Pete in the boat.

It was now two o'clock in the morning and Captain Broom wanted to be out at sea a good safe distance before the light broke. The mate's boat had now been gone over a half-hour, and the Captain stood at the end of the Bridge looking towards the shore. There was not a light upon the vessel to show her position. She lay silent and black upon the dark waters.

Then the Captain straightened up. He saw a moving body approaching the ship and heard the slight dip of oars. Then the boat was alongside and instead of two men, there were three in the boat. The Captain went down to the main deck to meet them.

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## CHAPTER XIX

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### THE PASSENGER

They met without any formality. The new passenger was a tall, slightly stooped man, with long hair falling down to his shoulders. Juarez was exceedingly anxious to see him, but could make out only a dark form moving along the deck.

"Come to the cabin, Jeems," called the Captain. "I've got something to tell ye."

They were soon seated in the Captain's cabin. This was a good-sized room, panelled in light wood and very neatly kept. There was quite a broad table of the same wood as the walls and a swivel chair in front of it. The Captain seated himself in this chair and whirled to talk to the visitor from the shore.

It was evident that he was not a temporary visitor for scarcely had they seated themselves in the cabin than the Sea Eagle slowly and gently turned and they felt the pulsation of her engines as she headed once more for sea. The man was seated on a sea chest opposite the Captain.

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He wore long cowhide boots, with jeans pants thrust into their tops, flannel shirt of a nondescript color and a corduroy jacket. His hat was of a battered gray. The face was smooth-shaven, deeply lined and burnt to a dull brown. The hair which came down to his shoulders had that peculiar sun-burnt weathered tinge that comes from continual exposure to the weather. He was not an old man, probably on the sunny side of forty.

"Well, Jeems, what is your news?" inquired the Captain.

"The government boat is in the harbor, that's all." The Captain gave a low, peculiar whistle.

"When did she show up?" he asked.

"Two days ago, Cap'n," he replied.

"Come from the South?"

"Yes," replied the man. "Put in for coal, I reckon."

"Then put out for us," said the Captain briefly.

"Any 'baccy, Cap'n? Been out two days," remarked Jeems.

"Lift your lanky frame off that chest," replied the Captain, "and I'll git you some."

The man sprang up with remarkable alacrity, and as he unfolded length after length of his long figure, it seemed as if his head would touch the ceiling of the cabin. In fact, he did not miss it by many inches. It was a comical contrast between the short stooping figure of the Captain and the tall stranger.

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"Waal, Jeems, I wouldn't advise you to grow any more, or I'll have to raise the roof of my cabin."

"That's what, Cap'n," replied Jeems imperturbably. "That's what happens when you grow up in Californy. You grow all the year around, and not like in New England where the winters makes you stubby."

Then the native philosopher seated himself on the chest again and took long and delightful pulls at his recently staked pipe.

"Hum!" he said. "This tastes right. Did yer ever know what it war to be starved for yer 'baccy, Cap'n?"

"No," replied the Captain, "I can't say that I ever did."

"Well, I want to tell you, Cap'n, that it is worse than going without water and I know what that is. Been on a desert till my tongue was as thick as a cow's, and hung out between my teeth, black."

"How long have you been away?" inquired the Captain.

"Three weeks, Cap'n."

"How are the sheep lookin'?"

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"Pretty fair, Cap'n," he replied. "I think that they had a whiff of rain over there a few days ago."

"It won't be long till we git the rains," suggested the Captain.

"I don't know, Cap'n," remarked the lanky one. "The climate of Californy is a curious proposition. It's built on the bias down at this end."

"How's that?" asked the Captain curiously. He had a certain interest in this particular courier's theories, however he might laugh at their peculiarities. For there was apt to be a basis of reason in them.

"Well, it's this way, Cap'n," said James Howell, to give him his correct name, thrusting one lanky hand deep into his jeans pocket and bending forward awkwardly. "It's this way. You see the storms come down from the North to the Tehatchipei mountains, where there isn't any way for them to get through to the south. Then the clouds shift around to Arizony, and if the wind is right they are blown through the passes of the Sierra Madre into Southern Californy, then we get the rain. That's why I said, Cap'n, that this dazzling climate is built on the bias."

"Waal, Jeems, as a weather prophet you can't be beat," said the Skipper. [156]

"In my business I get plenty of time to think, Cap'n," he remarked, "and as they ain't much to see except climate I think about that."

"Waal, I have a good sight more than that to consider," replied the Skipper. "I'm thinking right now about that government boat. I'm going on deck. You can turn in."

The Captain showed him to an empty cabin and the lanky stranger proceeded to make himself comfortable for the balance of the night, while the Captain went up on the Bridge.

"Where are you heading this boat to?" he asked gruffly of the man at the wheel.

Then he took the helm himself and immediately the Sea Eagle's prow pointed to the Westward as if she were heading directly for Japan. However, she held this course for only an hour and a half when the Skipper swung her bow once more to the South.

Long before the morning broke, Tom and Juarez, hauled out of their resting place, were set to scrubbing the decks and rubbing them down with holy-stone. They waited eagerly for the first break of day to see where they were.

Then the light came slowly through the fog-covered sky, showing a glossy sea with a slight swell and not a sign of land anywhere. The boys' hearts sank within them and they felt sure that they would not see their native land again. [157]

Once in a while they would glance up at the Bridge where stood the Captain with his powerful stooped figure. He was evidently on the lookout, for with his eye at a long glass, he kept scanning the sky-line to the east. What was he looking for? Juarez knew instinctively that he was afraid of pursuit.

If only they could be overtaken and captured, his heart thrilled at the thought and he watched the Captain eagerly for the first sign of excitement. About ten o'clock he saw by the Skipper's actions that something of interest had come under his observation.

There were a number of quick, sharp orders given and Juarez noticed the increased volume of smoke pouring from the stack. The Sea Eagle began to show the speed that was in her trim, black form. Juarez worked around the port side of the boat as rapidly as he dared, and his heart leaped with hope.

He saw low upon the eastern horizon a smudge of black smoke. If he only had known what the Skipper knew, his hopes would have risen still higher. Certain preparations were going on upon deck. The three cannon, one in the stern, that had fired the salute to the group on the shore, one on either side of the quarter-deck, were divested of their canvas jackets. [158]

They certainly gleamed bravely in their polished brass. Then the ammunition was got ready beside each separate gun. It began to look like business. The Sea Eagle began to justify her name and fly through the water. Still the spot upon the horizon grew bigger.

Then Juarez began to have a paralyzing feeling of doubt. The steamer, though coming up fast, did not seem to be steering the proper course to head the Sea Eagle, bearing on her port-quarter instead of across her bows as would have been the natural course if she wished to intercept her.

Then the doubt in his mind was changed to disappointed certainty for the Skipper waved his hand to the mate, who was busy on the deck below. It was after he had taken a pull at the spyglass, which this time seemed to have an intoxicating effect upon the Captain.

"It's all right, Bill," he yelled, "It's nothing but a steamer bound for 'Frisco. It looks like the Panama."

Juarez and Tom resumed their work doggedly. That was all that was left for them to do. They scarcely glanced at the big steamer as she appeared, growing constantly larger above the horizon, and then diminishing as she steamed North towards San Francisco. [159]

Juarez was scrubbing the deck near a cabin door when it suddenly opened, and a tall, long-legged figure stepped out and fairly over him. He came to the conclusion that it was the man who had come aboard the night before.

He took in the tall, gaunt man with the smooth-shaven face and long hair at two glances—one

not being sufficient to his height.

"Well, who are you?" he inquired lounging on the rail and regarding Juarez with mild-eyed interest.

"I'm Juarez Hopkins, deck scrubber. Who are you?"

"I'm James Howell, sheep farmer. I'll add you two lambs to my flock," he replied, whimsically, glancing at Tom who was down the deck a way.

"You are more apt to find us wolves in lamb's hide," retorted Juarez. "Where's your farm?"

"There," said the stranger, pointing with a long, bony finger on the port-quarter, "that nigh island."

Then Juarez saw to his surprise, two islands that seemed to have sprung like magic upon the South-eastern horizon. The further one lay long and low and dark but distant beneath the fog-lined sky, the "nigh one" was more short and dumpy in appearance. [160]

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## CHAPTER XX

### TO THE RESCUE

During the afternoon, everything had been made ready for the journey of the morrow. There was not a great deal to be done for the three rescuers would travel light. There would be no need of a pack animal, because the Senor had assured the boys that they would find hospitality on the way.

Jo however was in mourning because when he gave his black a trial gallop, it was discovered that he was badly lamed in the right knee. It would not have been safe for any of the pirate gang to come within range of Jo's wrath.

"The cursed brutes stove him up for fair," he declared grinding his teeth.

"I'm afraid it will take a month's rest before he will be fit," determined Jim.

"Then I'm out of it," exclaimed Jo sorrowfully.

"Not so, my friend," interrupted the Spaniard. "Take the bay. He is not as good a horse as yours, but he has great endurance. He is yours to use as long as you wish." [162]

Jo thanked the Spaniard heartily for his kindness and generosity. Then he spoke in a low voice to his brother. "How about that money, Jim? Don't forget to pay the Spaniard for those goods we bought at the store." Jim spoke up.

"Senor, I wish to show you a little something of interest."

Then Jim got his heavy saddle, on which he had ridden so many hundred miles. And the Senor regarded it with interest, because of the carved leather workmanship which was of the finest and he was a connoisseur of such matters.

"How much would you give for it, Senor Sebastian," inquired Jim, "if it were put up for purchase?"

"It is a beautiful saddle. I would be willing to give a hundred dollars. It is worth it."

"That saddle is worth several thousand, Senor," replied Jim confidently.

"I do not understand," replied the Spaniard. "It is the personal value, I suppose."

"I will show you," said Jim.

Then he took from his hip pocket a heavy bone handled knife which he had bought at the store and pulled back the hoof cleaner, an instrument attached to the knife that was used to get a pebble or anything that had got into the horse's hoof. [163]

With this he worked at the leather that covered the high and rather thick horn of the saddle. Finally he pried the top leather flap off. There was a heavy piece fitted into the top of the horn. With some difficulty Jim got this out disclosing a hollow, in which was concealed most of the jewels he had found in Mexico.

"Hold your hands, Jo. Tight now." And with the word he emptied the contents of the horn into Jo's palms. Diamonds, rubies, turquoises and some heavy gold pieces.

"That is what you might call a horn of plenty," said Jim jocosely.

"But!" cried the Spaniard in amazement, "where did you get these?"

"In Mexico," replied Jim. "This was what the Pirates were after. And they got all but this. Sometime I will tell you the story of its discovery. Now take this to reimburse you, Senor, for the money we spent at the store." And he held out the diamond.

"That is far too much. That stone is worth five hundred dollars at least," said the Spaniard. "These three rubies would be more exact and I will take them."

Jim, handing over the three stones selected, said, "Now, Senor, you shall take the diamond as a token of good will from my brother and myself."

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"We insist upon it," chimed in Jo.

Finally the Spaniard accepted the gifts with many protestations of obligation and appreciation. Jo was about to urge him to accept a jewel for his sister, but Jim stopped him, knowing that the proud Spaniard would not hear to such a present.

The next morning they were up an hour before daylight and ate a hearty breakfast by the light of the candles. Veterans though they were, the boys felt a thrill go through their pulses as they thought of the expedition that lay before them. Outside they could hear the pawing of the impatient horses.

"To the success of our expedition and the rescue of our friends!" was the toast the Spaniard proposed as they rose from the table. The Frontier Boys drank it, but not in wine. They felt just a little foolish too, but such is the reward that often comes with doing what is right. But they were sturdy in their determination to stick to their principles.

If they had only known it, down in his heart the Spaniard respected them the more, even though it seemed odd to him.

Then they went out on the verandah, fully armed and ready to take their departure. Two oil lamps near the door and fastened to the wall, backed by shining reflectors sent a strong light across the verandah and into the darkness outside.

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There stood the three horses, eager to be off, each one held by a Mexican groom. Caliente we already know, and the horse that Jo is to ride also. So let us take a glance at the third animal, Don Fernando. He evidently justified all the enthusiasm of his master, a truly splendid creature.

A dark chestnut, as large as Caliente and built on something the same lines. They were beautifully matched except in color. It was with a thrill of pleasure that Jim swung himself into the saddle. His mount was in fine fettle and ready for the long pull ahead.

They started from the home ranch with a thunder of hoofs in unison, the riders checking their horses to a slow gallop with a heavy hand. Together they pressed through the waning darkness. There was a wonderful exhilaration, as they leaped forward, the horses powerful and fresh.

Instead of following in the direction of the morning before, the Spaniard turned to the East until they came near the foot of the range. In a short time they came to a gate, which seemed to open mysteriously as they approached, but the motive power proved to be a small Mexican boy, whom the Senor had sent on ahead.

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Now they were on a turf road with bushes on either side and down this they thundered, Caliente the gray, and Don Fernando the dark, matching stride for stride, with Jo well in the rear. For he found if he rode close up he was blinded and stung by sods and stones thrown back from the flying hoofs of the two horses in the front.

It was a bit lonely for Jo and he wished that one of the other boys was here to keep him company. As they rode, the bushes seemed to fly by as they do when you look from a railroad train and Jo was afraid lest his horse would be unable to keep the pace indefinitely. One thing in Jo's favor was that he was the lightest of the three and what is more to the purpose a very light rider.

So like the good horseman he was, he determined to save his horse all he could and make him last out. For eight miles or more they rode without a stop until they came to another gate. This the Spaniard unfastened and swung open without dismounting, then closed it after Jo.

The morning light was now distinct, although the fog was over the sky. Before them stretched a long level plain that broke into sand dunes near the sea. They could see the ocean lying dark in its monotonous level of color, to the Western horizon.

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"We have just left the Sebastian ranch," called the Spaniard.

"It is immense," commented Jim. "May I ask how many acres it embraces?"

"It was immense in the old days," replied the Spaniard. "Before your people took possession of the land. It was held by no fences then. But your laws were not ours and we lost many square miles. Now there are fifty thousand acres under fence."

"Fifty thousand acres!" exclaimed Jo.

"Ah, but it was double that before the Americans came," replied the Spaniard. Then he glanced critically at Caliente. "Your horse looks as cool as though he had been standing in the stable. The pace does not affect his wind either. Splendid condition!"

"Caliente is as hard as nails," said Jim proudly. "But your horse has wonderful speed."

The chestnut seemed more on edge than the old warrior, Caliente, and tossed the foam from his bit, until his dark coat was speckled with it.



"He is high strung," said the Spaniard, "but I would back him against any horse flesh in California. We can let them out here for a half dozen miles."

"Let her go, Senor. I won't let you lose me."

At the word the Spaniard gave his chafing horse his head and away the chestnut sprang in the lead. It was slightly down grade for a mile, then there was a gulch twelve feet wide and of considerable depth. It was a good jump and to make it saved a little distance. Going at top speed the chestnut took the jump in fine style. His rider half turned in his saddle to watch Jim's effort. Caliente had faced worse leaps than that, he rose to it and swept over it as gracefully as a bird. [168]

"Good fellow!" exclaimed Jim patting him affectionately on the neck.

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## CHAPTER XXI

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### THE BANDITS

When Jo saw the gulch ahead, he decided that discretion was the better part of valor as he did not know his mount well enough to risk the leap, so he galloped a few hundred feet below, where the gulch narrowed and then he took the jump nicely, and scampered after the other two riders who were quite a way ahead.

Jim purposely held Caliente in check, keeping a hundred yards in the rear of the Spaniard. Ahead a few miles, there was a perfect sea of yellow where the tall mustard covered the plain for a great distance. Into this they charged full tilt, the mustard reaching as high as their heads.

There was a swish of its blossoms in their faces as the powerful horses charged into it and in spite of their strength they began to tire after going some distance.

"Where is Jo?" inquired Jim suddenly after they had slowed down, "I don't see a sign of him." And he rose in his stirrups looking over the level lake of mustard. [170]

"Hello, Jo," he yelled at the top of his voice. No answer came. Could he be drowned in this lake? There was not a motion to indicate his whereabouts, no waving of the yellow tops.

"It is very strange," said the Spaniard. "Did he cross the gully all right?"

"Yes, I saw him take the jump below us a ways." Then Jim raised his revolver above his head and fired.

"That ought to fetch him," he said. Then they listened intently. Suddenly about a quarter of a mile ahead of them they saw a sombrero rise like a gray mushroom above the yellow surface of the mustard, and Jo's voice came back to them.

They both gave their horses the rein, this time Jim did nothing to hold Caliente back, and with their powerful speed the two great horses tore forward, on even terms until in the last hundred yards Caliente forged ahead by half a length.<sup>[1]</sup>

"Hold on boys," yelled Jo in warning. There was Jo sitting quietly on his horse.

"That's how you beat us," exclaimed Jim, pointing to a cow trail running diagonally through the growth of mustard. [171]

"Yes," laughed Jo, "I struck it further down after I jumped the gully. Otherwise you fellows would have lost me."

"Good work, Jo," said Jim. "Now we will have it easier going."

So in single file they galloped along the path, until they found themselves by noon, at the foot of a spur of mountains that extended from the main coast range to the ocean. Jim regarded this barrier in their way with a practised eye.

"This will slow us down, Senor," he said. "It looks like a pass below there, about two miles."

"Yes," said the Senor, "we can get through there all right, but it is pretty rough going."

They had to advance more slowly now, as the ground was broken into stony ravines, and there was a good deal of brush. In this kind of country Jo's horse more than held its own with the bigger animals, for he was as nimble as a goat.

"I hope we will find water, Senor," remarked Jim. "Our horses are pretty dry now."

"Yes," replied the Spaniard, "there is a good spring at the foot of the Pass."

They found it all right, in the entrance to the Pass, where there was a small green cove, surrounded with bushes, and on one side was a sheep herder's shanty. Jo investigated this immediately and found nothing in it but the charred remnants of a fire and a pair of discarded overalls. [172]

Jim, who had himself been looking around, made a more important find.

"There has been somebody here recently," he announced. "Here are some tracks around the spring and not over twelve hours old."

"Yes, I have no doubt," said the Spaniard carelessly puffing at his cigarette. "This Pass is used occasionally by ranchmen and herders."

"There have been five or six horses here," said Jim, whose experiences had made him suspicious.

"There are no Indians," said Jo, "in this section, at least none who are on the warpath."

"I suppose you do have cattle rustlers, Senor?" inquired Jim.

"Yes, there is a band of outlaws," replied the Spaniard, "that raids from as far north as our ranch, south to San Diego, but we have seen no trace of them for many months."

"Then, Senor," remarked Jim, "it is about time that they paid you another visit."

"Ah, Senor Darlington," exclaimed the Spaniard. "We Castilians do not reason so. We say that there is no trouble today, why worry about tomorrow. Perhaps these bandits may have starved to death, or been hung, or the good Padres may have persuaded them by the fear of Hell, to become quiet, sheep raising citizens. God knows."

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"I fear that they are raising sheep in their old style," grinned Jo. The pun glanced off the Spaniard harmlessly.

"The theory that they may be hung, sounds plausible, Senor," admitted Jim. "But before we advance into the Pass, I will scout a little."

"If the Senor pleases," responded the Spaniard courteously.

"Do you chance to know of a small, hunchbacked Mexican who is more or less in this section of the country, Senor?" Jim suddenly inquired.

The Spaniard flushed with red anger and spit emphatically on the ground.

"You give him into my hands and I will reward you well," cried the Spaniard.

Jim made no immediate reply but gazed thoughtfully at the ground. He was considering the case. This was not the time to turn aside in a chase for even so desperate a criminal as the hunchbacked greaser. So he made no definite reply to the Spaniard.

After the horses were fed, and watered, and while Jo was looking after the coffee, Jim started off, to do a little scouting up the Pass. The first thing that he did was to slip off his heavy riding boots, which the stylish Jo had forced him to buy, and to put on his noiseless footed moccasins.

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Then with his revolver loaded and ready to his hand, he went swiftly and silently up the trail that followed through thick brush, gradually working up the side of the mountain. It was no difficult task to follow the tracks of the horses. In a half hour's swift climbing he came to the top of a stony ridge, over which the trail curved, and dipped down the other side.

Jim now saw that the Pass was an irregular one with recurrent spurs, thrusting out from the mountains on either side, at quite frequent intervals. There were innumerable chances for ambuscades. Jim did not stand in the trail but to one side partially hidden in a thicket.

All the time his keen eyes were taking in the canyon below, not however admiring the scenery. In fact there was nothing particularly beautiful, or interesting in the view. In the Rockies and further South too he had seen canyons incomparable to the rather ordinary ones that he had seen in California.

Jim was watching for some slight movement of a living creature in the canyon. Finally he gave it up, and was about to turn away, then he gave a start, he saw one, two, three, men crouch across the trail, a quarter of a mile below, and disappear into the thick brush. He was almost certain that the first one was the hunchback.

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That was all that Jim wanted to see. He noiselessly took the back trail, thinking over the best course to pursue. He would have liked nothing better under ordinary circumstances than to fight it out with the outlaws and to capture the hunchback. But their first object must be the rescue of Tom and Juarez.

Was there not some way by which they could get to the South without going through this bandit infested Pass?

"Well brother, what didst thou find?" inquired Jo, who was at times pleased to be dramatic.

"Very few specimens in the way of bandits," replied Jim.

"As I said, Senor," remarked the Spaniard, "they have become good citizens."

"Not yet, I am sure, because they are alive."

"That is a good one, Jim," remarked Jo, appreciatively, but the Spaniard was politely mystified. "Same as Indians."

"I found one thing out," said the diplomatic Jim, "and that is, that the Pass is a hard one on

horses. Are you sure, Senor, that there is no easier way than this to get through?"

"Positive," briefly responded the Spaniard.

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Jim who was seated on a rock digging his heel into the soft earth, looked up as a sudden idea struck him,—but without knocking him out.

"How far is it from here to the sea, Senor?" he asked.

"Not over five miles."

"Can we not get around that way?" Jim inquired eagerly.

"Why, yes," replied the Spaniard slowly, "if the tide is not coming in. In that case we should be drowned." Jim glanced hastily at his watch.

"We can try for it and make it, if we do not waste any time," he said. "The horses have had a good rest."

"Very well, Senor," said the Spaniard resignedly. He regarded Jim as an amiable hurricane whom it was not worth while battering to resist. Jim hastily swallowed his coffee and a hunk of bread and in five minutes the three musketeers were in the saddle again.

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## CHAPTER XXII

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### RACE WITH THE TIDE

In spite of the rough going, they made good time for the five miles, spurred on by the constant anxiety lest they should not reach the beach before the tide began coming in. There were several gathered to see them off when they left the mouth of the Pass, but not to give them a send off.

A short explanation will prove this. It is not to be supposed that the hunchbacked Mexican and the bandits did not know that the three horsemen were coming over the plain of the mustard growth. Indeed, their scout, the Mexican dwarf, saw Jim, Jo and the Spaniard when they first landed in the entrance to the canyon.

He had gone back to report to the bandits their coming, and after Jim had returned, they had prepared the nicest trap imaginable near where Jim had been hiding. They had had numerous experiences in that line and were perfectly qualified experts. The spider and the fly was nothing to the arrangements they had made to receive their supposably unsuspecting guests.

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You can imagine the surprise and disgust of the bandits and their scout when they saw the three horsemen ride in an entirely different direction than that they had looked for. Talk about convulsions, you should have seen these desperadoes express their disappointment. It was terrific. Not a saint in the long calendar was left unscathed.

How Jim would have enjoyed the performance. But entirely oblivious to this, Jo, Jim and the Spaniard were riding rapidly towards the sea. Before an hour had passed, they had ridden between the rounded sand dunes and then out upon the hard, smooth sand of the beach.

"This is splendid going, Senor Sebastian," exclaimed Jim.

"It is all right," he replied, "if the sea does not get hungry too soon." But the sea appeared to be in a very pleasant mood and the white breakers had withdrawn as far out as it was possible to get. It was such a smooth smiling sea with the laugh of its little sparkling waves that it seemed that there could be no possible harm in it.

"I never saw a road that was better than this!" exclaimed Jo in delight. "It is perfectly springy and no dust or mud."

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It deserved all of Jo's praises, this broad, firm California beach. The brown sand, that had been pounded down by the force of the great rollers some hours before, showed scarcely a sign of the shoes of the horses.

There was plenty of width and the three horses pressed on abreast, the powerful sweep of the gray Caliente and the chestnut Don Fernando, and the snappy, nervous leaps of the little bay that Jo was riding. With the bracing sea air and the exhilarating speed, the three musketeers were invigorated.

The Spaniard hummed a gay ballad, while at times Jim's heavy bass and Jo's lighter treble were joined in a rollicking American song. They laughed without reason, for the simple joy of being alive and on the move; but as pride sometimes goes before destruction, so happiness often goes before disaster.

It was a small matter too, but it made for trouble. The Spaniard's horse stepped between two small rocks that were close together and wrenched one of his hind shoes nearly off. Jim and Senor Sebastian hastily dismounted. Of course they carried with them the necessary things to fix the shoe on again, but even then it was a question of a number of minutes.

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"You had better ride ahead, Jo," urged Jim. "Your horse is beginning to tire and we will overtake you, when we once get started."

"It is a good idea," joined in the Spaniard.

"All right," acquiesced Jo readily enough, and he gave his bay the rein, riding slowly down the beach.

Then the two began operations on Don Fernando's hind foot. Here they found their first real delay. At the point where the accident happened, the mountains came down quite close to the sea, so that they were crowded in much closer than they had been. The nearness of the water made the big chestnut restless and hard to handle.

The Spaniard had great difficulty in getting near enough to his horse to get hold of his hind foot. When he did succeed in doing this, and was just starting to peg the shoe on, an extra big wave slapped down upon the beach, though at a safe distance and caused the big chestnut to jump and hurl his master to a distance of a dozen feet.

"This won't do," cried Jim. "I'll take my horse around to the sea side of yours and close up. Perhaps that will give your animal confidence."

It worked like a charm, for though Caliente was high-spirited, he was not flighty and he steadied his comrade so that the two workers were able to fasten the shoe. [181]

"We have lost a good half hour," said Jim, looking at his watch with a grave face.

"Perhaps we shall have to turn back," remarked the Spaniard with gravity. "We may not escape the incoming tide if we go on."

"Don't you believe it," cried Jim, impetuously. "I've got business ahead and must go."

"Have it your way," said the Spaniard with a peculiar smile. He knew what dangers lay ahead with a rising tide and Jim did not or he probably would not have been so insistent.

"I see no sign of Jo," remarked Jim, as they swung into the saddles.

"Ah, we will not catch him. He is safe," replied the Spaniard.

Then with tremendous speed, they swept down the beach, the splendid horses responding to the crisis. It was their fleetness against the steadily rising rush of the inexorable sea. They actually gained ten minutes on the first two miles and a half. Then Jim saw ahead the dark form of a headland thrusting out towards the sea.

Already the rush of a long wave would send the water lapping around their horses' feet. Jim recognized the danger. They must get around that promontory or give up beaten. Then he gave Caliente a touch with a spur, the first that day. With a snort, the spirited animal sprang forward faster than before and at his shoulder was the chestnut with flaming nostril. [182]

None too soon had they reached the headland, for the recurrent waves were beginning to surge against it, with full force and gnawing foam. In the fierce fury of their charge, they sent their horses against the sea. It was at the long withdrawal that made bare the scattered black rocks, that they rounded the headland.

But too soon a great thundering wave with the force of the Pacific behind it came roaring in and swelled to the horses' throats, almost submerging the riders. But the animals held against its withdrawing power and before the ocean could return to the attack, they had got beyond the headland to a safe place on the beach.

The horses were trembling and quivering with their exertions and with the fear of the sea which is the most terrible and paralyzing of all fears. Jim drew a long breath of relief and looked ahead to see if there was any sign of Jo. Then to his consternation he saw that the beach curved inland and at the further end of the curve was another frowning headland thrusting itself out somewhat further than the one they had but just rounded. [183]

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE ENCHANTED ISLE

Let us now return to the Sea Eagle, and find out what is happening there.

You recollect that Juarez had just discovered two islands lying on the South-eastern horizon, the one, long and low, the other comparatively short and dumpy. He had been conversing with the tall shepherd of the island, who seemed to take an interest in Juarez. But because of his isolated life during a greater part of the year, he would have taken an interest in a stone idol, if he had chanced to discover one.

"Which of these islands are we making for?" inquired Juarez.

"The one where we land," replied the sheep farmer oracularly. "I might ask the Cap'n, only I

never pester him with questions. You aren't a Yankee, are you?"

"No," replied Juarez, "I'm not. My folks live in Western Kansas."

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"I'm glad to hear it, son. But what are you doing here?" he asked.

"You aren't a Yankee, are you?" inquired Juarez, quizzically. The man laughed softly to himself.

"You've got me there, lad," he said. "It looks to me," he continued, "that the old man is going to steer for the further island."

"Then you will have to swim for your home," remarked Juarez.

"I can wade," he replied whimsically, looking down at his long legs.

"You are a humorist," said Juarez.

"No, you can put me down for a philosopher, that is to say, a man who has much time to think and nothing to do."

"I should like to be one," said Juarez. "Suppose you holy-stone these decks while I try it."

"No, my friend," replied the shepherd, "I am too much of a philosopher to make any such swap."

"Is Captain Broom one?" asked Juarez.

"Well, he is a sort of a philosopher till he gets mad, then he becomes a living active volcano, belching out a lava of hot language and scorching things generally. I guess that I had better be moving along. I see that he is eyeing me from the Bridge, and he is likely to get active any moment if I keep you from working." With this the lanky shepherd strolled forward and seating himself upon the top of the boys' sleeping place in the bow, smoked his pipe in meditative comfort.

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His estimate in regard to the destination of the Sea Eagle proved to be correct. For in the early afternoon the ship passed under the lee of the long island and was steaming up the channel between it and the mainland, which was distant some thirty-five miles.

The fog had cleared by noon, and there was that complete transition to brilliant, sunny weather. There was a sort of a white haze along the distant coast and beyond far inland, rose the faint summits of the high mountains.

Fortunately Juarez and Tom had a chance to observe their new surroundings for they had been set to work sewing on a small sail that was to be used in one of the boats. They sat upon the top of one of the hatches, under the watchful eyes of old Pete and the philosophic gaze of the shepherd. Sewing was one of the accomplishments of the Frontier Boys. They had been obliged to learn.

"What is that particular bronze looking weed, floating in these waters?" asked Tom. It was as Tom phrased it, bronze and a most beautiful color.

It was indeed a giant among weeds; just such as the garden of the ocean would grow. The stems were fifty to eighty feet long, with peculiar colored leaves eight to ten inches in length, growing on little boughs from the parent stem. The whole structure was held up by small bronze buoys, of a round shape.

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"Well as ye seem likely boys and want to learn, I'll tell you about this plant," said the shepherd. "The scientific fellows call it Algae. When the world was first made this algae covered the whole surface of the ocean."

"How did you learn this?" asked Juarez.

"You know that the Captain is quite a collector, and in his travels has gotten together among many other things some interesting books. He gives them to me when convenient." The face of the lanky shepherd was perfectly grave when he spoke of Captain Broom as a collector.

"What makes the water so clear around here?" asked Juarez. "I never saw anything like it."

"Well, you see," replied their mentor, "this island is placed peculiarly, I mean this side of it. You see how quiet the water is?"

"It is certainly smooth and blue," said Juarez. "More like a lake than the ocean."

"That's only true of this side," resumed the shepherd, "the other is rough enough, but you see the prevailing winds are from the Northwest and this shore is never disturbed. So on the beaches you will find not sand, but smooth round pebbles, because there is no action of the water, no breakers or waves to grind them into sand."

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About four o'clock the Sea Eagle came into a perfectly beautiful little harbor, at the South-eastern end of the island. There was a small level plot back from the beach and on all sides rose steep hills and back of them the mountains. It was the most picturesque scene the boys had ever beheld in all their travels.

What would they not have given to have been free to roam that island, hunting inland, or

fishing or bathing along those quiet, enchanted shores. But this was no pleasure excursion. Far from it. Captain Broom had his own ideas, and he did not intend to make a landing at all.

"Get the whale boat ready, lads!" he ordered. "And put her over, we've got no time to lose."

They lost no time either, under Captain Broom's commanding eye.

What was necessary for the cruise was already in the boat. Two casks of water, several guns, and a lot of provisions. Then the boat was hove overboard into the quiet bay. The captain was ready with a much battered satchel in his hand. Not for one second did he entrust it to any one else.

"Now over with you, you two lads," he commanded and Juarez and Tom, with a sinking of the heart, got into the boat. This was the last leg of their mysterious journey, and it boded them no good they felt sure of that. The mate they noticed stayed aboard in charge of the ship. [189]

They were put in the stern where old Pete had the steering oar. Near them sat the shepherd on one of the casks of water, his long legs getting uncertain accommodation. The captain had his position in the bow and two powerful sailors were at the oars, one on either side. They did not sit down, but stood up to their work.

Without any loss of time the boat got under way proceeding seaward from the shelter of the beautiful little harbor. In spite of their depression, the two boys could not help being interested in the absolutely clear water in which they could look down for eighty feet.

They could see the straight slender columns of the Algae rising to the surface, starting from where they were rooted in the bottom of the bay and swaying to the slow pulsation of the tide. These strange plants of this marine garden were marvels indeed. Between their stalks and among the encrusted rocks swam in absolute unconsciousness of being watched, many beautiful, and strange fishes.

Some were small of golden hue, with little spots of a marvelous blue (poetry) that flashed like keen electric dew, (that will do). Others were like gold fishes, a foot in length and of corresponding breadth. There were long mackerel, and innumerable minnows, and over the rocks a peculiar little fish crawled or rather walked on thin rat-like feet. [190]

Before they had time to observe further the boat had got out of the harbor where the water sunk away to blue unfathomed depth. When clear of the harbor, they turned to the South, passing near a cove with a symmetrical pebbly beach, built up for five feet, above the level of the water. The ocean was perfectly smooth, with not a ripple upon its surface. They were evidently making to round the Southern extremity of the Island.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### IN THE WHITE BOAT

Ahead of them was a rock rising fifty or sixty feet out of the water. It was evident that the rock was inhabited for there could be seen dark forms moving around upon it. Nothing had been said since they started, for the Captain was not in a talkative mood. Jeems Howell, the shepherd, had sat silently smoking his pipe in philosophic contentment. [191]

"What are those things on that rock?" inquired Tom, his curiosity getting the best of his reserve.

"Two yankees in this boat," commented the shepherd. "Those are seals, son. Didn't you ever see any before?"

"No!" admitted Tom.

"You didn't know that seals, next to humans, are the smartest animals, in the world."

"Is that so?" inquired Juarez. "They certainly are sleek."

"They have got the most brain room, that's a fact." [192]

The boys regarded the seals with peculiar interest as the boat passed near the rock. They were moving about awkwardly by means of their flippers, moving their sinuous necks this way and that and regarding the strange boat with their soft brown eyes. Then they dived headlong into the sea, swimming about with a peculiar grace.

"Queer animals," remarked Tom, "belong half to the sea and half to the land."

"Something like sailors," remarked the shepherd.

"What's the Captain going to do with us?" asked Juarez in a low voice. The shepherd's face took on a solemn expression, but before he could reply the Captain's voice roared.

"None of that, you'll find out soon enough. You can talk about the flory and fauny, with long shanks, but don't let me hear anything else out of you," such was the Captain's ultimatum.

But soon matters grew so interesting that they lost all inclination for talking. When they got near the Southern end of the island they began to notice white caps to the Southward, dotting the darkness of the sea.

"You lads will have to hold tight now in a few minutes," remarked Howell. "Do you get seasick?"

"No," replied the boys.

[193]

"Well, you will have a chance soon, and if it don't fetch you, nothing will."

So far they had been rowing under the sheltering lee of the island whose huge rocky bulk had shouldered off the charge of the wind-driven seas. Now before they had fairly rounded the island the character of the water began to change. The boat began to toss on the great rollers. Then as they cleared the land for good and were in the channel, a fresh gust of wind struck them, drenching the occupants of the boat with spray.

The Captain stood up in the bow of the boat and steadying himself took in the conditions of the sea and wind. There was nothing in his grim weatherbeaten face to show what he felt. The men at the oars now made hard work of it against the headwind and the running sea.

They would climb up a steep wave and then with a sickening slide, go down into the hollow, then with a lusty pull the sailors would bring the heavy boat over the toppling crest of wave to find another rushing to meet them. No rest, this was what made it such heart breaking work.

The early fog had come, covering the sea with gloom, and the waves did not go down perceptibly. At times, they shipped a good deal of water and Tom and Juarez were kept busy bailing out. After an hour's hard struggle the sailors were about all in and seemed hardly able to hold their own against the sea and wind. The Captain was quick to notice this.

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"Can you row, lad?" he inquired of Juarez. Now the latter's experience had been confined to his work going down the Grand Canyon of Colorado, on the raft-boat that the Frontier Boys had built.

Even the old ocean itself could not show anything worse than some of the rapids that the boys had run. As for rocks, nothing could beat the canyon for them.

"I'll try, sir," he replied, "I've never rowed on the ocean."

"Humph!" grunted the Captain, "take the starboard. And you, you lazy long shanks, you take the other oar."

"All right, sir," replied cheerfully, the one addressed.

"Get out of here, Pete," he cried, giving that worthy a lift with his foot that landed him on top of Tom, "I'll do the steering. You boys will only have to pull, that's all. I'll keep her headed up right."

Fortunately Juarez was in fine condition, or he could never have stood the gruelling work ahead. He weighed one hundred and sixty pounds and there was not an ounce of fat on him. Likewise he had had a sound night's sleep and three square meals so that he was fortified for what was ahead.

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Juarez buckled to the task with all his strength, and he was glad of the chance to get his blood in circulation for he was chilled to the bone by the flying spray, and then too, anything was better than thinking of the fate ahead. He was surprised to find out that the shepherd who appeared rather frail in physique was able to keep up the pace.

But he had that sinewy length of muscles that counts for more than mere bunched thickness. Juarez was crafty enough not to spend all of his strength in the first fifteen minutes of work. He liked this, fighting the sea and standing on his feet he was able to put the whole leverage of his body into the stroke.

The change in speed was noticeable right away, and the boat began to pull ahead steadily. The two sailors who had been laid off from exhaustion, had watched Juarez with a sneering grin as he took the oar. They were sure that the first wave that came along would wrench the oar out of his hand. Great was their surprise when they saw him buckle to the oar, rising and pulling at the right time to meet the toppling, rustling seas.

"That little shrimp will last about ten minutes," said one of them to his mate.

[196]

"Sure, Bill," replied the other.

Juarez choked back a hot reply, for he knew that it would not be good for him to say anything to them. They were in the majority and would get him if he did, besides making it bad for Tom. The ten minutes passed and Juarez was just beginning to warm to his work. This took the wind out of their sails completely.

The powerful hand of the Skipper at the steering oar was a great help, for now all that the two men at the oars had to do was to pull and not to worry about keeping her headed right. Juarez kept steadily at it for an hour and then darkness began to fall over the channel but not until the island that they were approaching had begun to loom up, dead ahead.

They were now getting in the lee of the strange island and the sea was moderating perceptibly.

At this juncture the two sailors who had become thoroughly rested took the oars from Juarez and his co-worker and pulled steadily through the gathering gloom. In a short time the bulk of the island loomed above them in the darkness.

Not a word was said, only the swish of the sea was heard and the groaning of the oars in the locks. Tom and Juarez were deeply depressed and gloomy. They felt exactly as though they were being taken to prison and could sympathize with sailors who had been marooned on lonely and desolate islands.

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"Easy now, lads," called the Captain, as he brought the boat's head squarely around towards the shore.

"Two strokes," he yelled, "and let her run."

With great force they pulled the oars in succession, then they shipped them in a hurry. Juarez could see the dashing of foam on either side of the boat where the waves smote the rocks. There was a roar in his ears as the boat rushed toward seeming sure destruction. It was going with great speed from the impetus of the sailors' strokes.

The Captain was standing taut at the steering oars, his eyes piercing the darkness ahead, then the foam of the breakers dashed in their faces, there was a quick sliding past of dark rocks and before they could draw breath again the boat was in quiet water, under some black cliffs. At last they had reached the mysterious goal of their mysterious journey.

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## CHAPTER XXV

[198]

### IN PERIL

We must now go back in our narrative to where we left Jim Darlington and the Spaniard, Senor Sebastian, in a position of extreme peril, between the cliffs and the deep sea, with the white-fanged tide coming in like a devouring monster eager for its prey.

"Is there a chance, Senor?" cried Jim as soon as his horse gained his footing.

"It is the fatal day, I fear," replied the Spaniard with resigned hopelessness. "The sea is hungry."

"As for that, so am I," declared Jim coolly. "So let us try to get around the headland and after that, supper."

"As you please," acquiesced the Spaniard quietly.

Then Jim turned Caliente's head and with a quick touch of the spur sent him full stride along the curving beach, followed closely by the Spaniard. Already the heavy waves were licking far up the slant of the sand. Even the veteran Caliente seemed nervous at its approach, while Don Fernando would jump and shy as the hissing water crept around his feet.

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In about two minutes the two horsemen reached the base of the rocky headland that barred their way. It was a desperate moment, there was but one thing to do and that was to take the chance.

"Better be drowned quick, Caliente, old boy," cried Jim, "than slowly, but we'll beat you yet," and he shook his clenched fist at the ocean, and whirled his horse to meet a wave that struck Caliente breast high. So for a moment, the two, boy and horse, stood facing their powerful enemy, The Sea, that came with the recurring charge, its evenly separated files robed in blue with white crests. Thus they stood getting a full free breath before they leaped into the ranks of the foe.

Jim's strained, keen gaze took in every detail of the situation, noting the position of the rocks that a receding wave left bare, so that he might find a clear path or trail in his dash for life. Nor did his gaze flinch as he saw the advancing wave break against the front of the cliff.

"Now, Caliente," yelled Jim, with a sense of fierce determination and exultation that communicated itself to his horse, and lifting his feet free from the stirrups so that he would not be entangled, if Caliente should fall, he headed him seaward, galloping fast down the beach upon the heels of the withdrawing wave.

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Meeting a smaller inrush of water and dashing through its foaming crest, his gallant horse swam until he got a foothold upon the rocks at the base of the cliff. Now was the crucial moment. With absolute recklessness, Jim urged his powerful horse over the foam-covered rocks, striving to get around the prow of the headland before the charge of the next wave. Not one look did Jim give seaward, all his energies were bent upon using every precious second, and Caliente was filled with his rider's indomitable spirit.

Then above them towered the fatal wave, and with a confused roar, it broke over them in sweltering foam and they were swept towards the black front of the cliff. Then came the impact against the rock and the next moment, stunned and bruised, Jim holding to the pommel of the



saddle, with a death-grip, was carried out to sea with Caliente in the grasp of the retreating wave.

It was all over, as like pieces of drift, horse and rider were swept away, but fortune does sometime favor the brave and, being caught in a powerful current, Caliente was carried South of the headland and his progress towards the sea was stayed by a rock that rose high, an out-guard of the headland. So then the next great wave bore them toward the beach, and once Caliente got his feet upon the sandy bottom he braced himself against the fierce pull of the retreating sea, striving to drag him back again.

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Though almost unconscious, Jim clung to the saddle with his body half-drooping over the pommel. Then Caliente plunged blindly forward until he stood with head bent down and nose almost touching the sand, his great sides heaving, but safe at last.

In the distance, a horseman could be seen coming at full gallop along the straight line of the beach. It was Jo, who finally had become frightened by the non-appearance of his two comrades and had turned back. His fright had been increased by seeing a horse and rider coming apparently out of the sea.

When he came up, he found his brother Jim sitting on the sand still half dazed but slowly coming to himself.

"Where's the Senor, Jim?" cried Jo. This question served to bring Jim completely to himself. He got up, looking pale, with one side of his face bruised to a real blackness, and the flesh of his left hand badly torn, where it had struck the cliff, but he was not thinking of these matters.

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"Why, Jo, the Senor came after me. Where is he?" Then it came over him all at once, that his companion was even now caught between the jaws of the black cliff.

"We must get to him, Jo," he cried.

"But how did you ever get around that cliff?" asked Jo.

Already it was an awesome sight as the waves crashed in foam against its front and rushed shoreward along its black sides. It seemed impossible that only fifteen minutes before Jim had actually come around that foaming headland.

In reply to Jo's question, Jim threw his arms around Caliente's neck with warm affection.

"This is the old fellow that pulled me through," he cried. "But we must go to the help of our Spanish friend."

"How can we?" inquired Jo. "We can't get around the headland unless we become fishes."

Jim considered the problem carefully. One thing he was determined on and that was not to leave the Spaniard who had been so hospitable and helpful to them.

"No, we can't go around by the headland," he determined, "but we might be able to find a way over the rocks and down on the other side."

[203]

"All right, I'm ready."

"Let's find a place for Caliente first," advised his owner. Back a short distance from the beach there were some trees on a lower spur of the mountain. Here Jim brought Caliente and took off the saddle and bridle.

"Now make yourself comfortable," said Jim.

Caliente, in seeming recognition of what was said, took immediate advantage of the invitation and rolled heartily in a dry and dusty spot.

"Get your lasso, Jo," urged Jim, "and we will start."

So together they made for the steep rock and soon reached the base of it, and now began a hard climb, but no more difficult than they had encountered before in their travels.

"Do you recollect, Jim," inquired Jo, "that day you got stalled in our first canyon in Colorado, when you tried to imitate an eagle and fly up a precipitous cliff and we had to get you down?"

"Oh, yes, I remember," replied Jim, "and how I scared you and Tom by pretending that an Injun was after me, when I went down to the creek for water."

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"Poor Tom," said Jo sadly, "I wonder when we will see him again."

"In a couple of days," stoutly declared the optimistic Jim.

They were now going up the face of the cliff, the lariats over their shoulders, and searching with careful feet for a foothold, while their hands clutched some piece of projecting rock.

"Lucky this rock isn't rotten," cried Jo, "or we would find ourselves stuck headfirst in the sand below."

"Like an ostrich," said Jim. "We couldn't do much in a place like this without our moccasins, that's certain."

The moccasins did make them nimble as goats, and they not only made possible a secure hold, but they protected as well the feet. At first they were not in any grave danger of a fall because the drifted sand at the bottom of the cliff would have made a soft landing. But after a while they were forced to work their way out over the rushing water, then if they had slipped and fallen it would have been all up with them.

It seemed as if the sea, furious at having lost Jim a short while ago, was making fierce efforts to get at them now. The great waves foamed against the cliff and the spray dashed over the boys, making the surface of the rock treacherous and slippery. [205]

"I can't bear to look down," said Jo. "It makes me dizzy."

"Look up, then," Jim called back.

"That's almost as bad," replied Jo.

"Keep 'em shut then," was Jim's command.

Finally they came to a place that stopped Jo entirely. Jim was able to get over it, because of his superior height and reach, and he attained a point of safety above Jo.

"What am I going to do now?" cried Jo. "I can't go any higher and it is impossible for me to go back."

"You wait," urged Jim, "till I get a secure foothold above here."

"Oh, I'll wait," said Jo grimly, "you don't observe any anxiety on my part to move, do you?"

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## CHAPTER XXVI

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### TWO LASSOES

Finally Jim reached a broad ledge, that gave him an excellent foothold, and he got his lariat ready and dangled the loop under Jo's nose.

"What are you going to hang me for?" inquired Jo.

"For a horse thief, I reckon," replied Jim, "that bay don't belong to you does it, Mister?"

"Meaning this ocean bay?" queried Jo.

"I certainly will hang you for that," retorted Jim, "Now get the loop under your armpits."

"All ready," cried Jo.

Then Jim, bracing himself, kept a taut line on his brother, and with this help he was able quite easily to get over the slippery, bare belt of rock, and in a few moments was safe with Jim on the ledge.

"It won't take us long now," said Jo, "to get to the other side."

"Let's give him a yell," suggested Jim, "to let him know that we are coming." [207]

Then Jim put his hands to his lips and cried:

"Senor, ahoy." They listened breathlessly and in a few moments came a faint reply. This put renewed energy into the boys and as the way was now easier, they leaped ahead, agile as goats, and had soon reached the top of the cliff. They looked eagerly down.

There was the deep short semi-circle of the little bay with the waves heaving in against the cliffs and at the point midway between the two head-lands, where the beach was highest, they saw the Spaniard on Don Fernando. Already the encroaching waves were gnawing at them.

It was only a question of minutes now, and horse and rider would be carried out to sea. The Spaniard sat like a statute. It was seemingly possible for him to have made his escape up the cliffs, which were not overly precipitous, like those Jim and Jo had just scaled, but he was a fatalist and believed that his day had come. Perhaps he did not want to abandon his horse, in which his pride was centered.

"Cheer up, Senor, we'll be there," yelled Jim.

Then followed by Jo, he sprang forward, leaping from rock to rock, and from jutting point to opportune foothold. It was dangerous and daring work, but the life of their friend was at stake and the boys were not the kind to consider their own safety at such a time. [208]

It was only their sure-footedness and varied experience in climbing that saved them from broken limbs or possible death. In a remarkably short time, they stood upon a ledge above the Spaniard.

"Here, Senor," yelled Jim, "catch the rope."

He did as ordered but called up, "Is there no way to save my horse?"

Jim considered a moment, then shouted: "All right, yes, we will save your horse, too. Tie the ends of the lasso to the iron rings at the ends of the front cinch." This was a broad, strong band, which would furnish a good purchase, when Jim tossed down the lariat. The Spaniard caught it and made it fast as ordered.

"Now, fasten this under your arms," ordered Jim, as he cast down the second lariat, which belonged to Jo. They then drew up the Spaniard to safety and he appeared to be pleased in a quiet way but not at all enthusiastic.

"I am your eternal debtor, Senors," he said with a courteous bow.

"How was it you did not follow me, Senor?" questioned Jim, "when I sailed around the headland?" [209]

"Don Fernando balked," replied the Senor. "I thought, too, that you had been drowned."

"Came near it," replied Jim. "I would, too, if it had not been for Caliente."

"But my poor Fernando, he will be drowned," cried the Spaniard, now much more excited about the safety of his steed than he had been for his own. It did look rather bad for the big chestnut, as a large wave swelling in, almost took him off his feet. He began to neigh wildly.

"Don't worry, Don, old boy," cried Jim to the frightened horse. "If you will help yourself." There was something in his voice that seemed to reassure the animal.

"Now, Jo, we will let you down by the lariat and get the bridle reins over his head and help him get a foothold on that ledge below us. He will be safe enough there, even if he does get somewhat damp."

"Let me go. It is my risk for my horse," urged the Spaniard.

"It is no risk, Senor," replied Jim. "You are heavier than my brother and stronger and can do more good on this ledge with me."

"The commands of the General!" said the Spaniard with a low bow. "I see your plan is good." [210]

"We will tie this end of the lasso to the tree," said Jim, "so you will feel perfectly safe, Jo."

The tree referred to was a sturdy, gnarled cedar, growing on the ledge. Then Jim swung his brother off and with every confidence in the strength of the lariat to hold, Jo made his way quickly and safely down, while if he had been without the rope he would have doubtless fallen into the water below.

A wave surged in, submerging him, and then started triumphantly to carry him out to sea, but when the lariat pulled taut Jo struggled safely back on the rock, while the wave went grumbling back.

"Catch the bridle now, Jo," urged Jim. "Don't waste any more time swimming."

Thus adjured, Jo grabbed the bridle reins and pulled them over Don Fernando's head, and braced himself on the rock above. All was ready now, and the two above held the loop of the lasso that had been tied at the cinch, with both hands, and they pulled together. Again a big wave swelled in towards the cliff, which gave the frightened horse a big boost.

Then, with Jim and the Spaniard pulling mightily from the ledge above, and Jo giving the big chestnut a purchase by a steady pull upon his bridle, the horse scrambled with a mighty clatter and all his frightened energy up the sloping rock. The lariat and Jo's work helped a whole lot. Without the three, he would never have made it. [211]

Before the next wave swept in, Don Fernando stood, trembling and dripping, but safe, upon the lower ledge. He seemed above the danger point now, though an unusually big wave welled up around the horse's fetlocks and the spray was continually dashing upwards.

"He is all right now," cried Jim, "better come up, Jo, where it is dryer."

"Haul in then," replied Jo, and then he was landed safely on the ledge.

"Caught a speckled trout," exclaimed Jim in happy humor again.

"Referring to my freckles, I suppose," grinned Jo. "If I'm a fish, I reckon Don Fernando is a whale."

"Do you suppose he is safe?" inquired the Spaniard anxiously.

"Who, Jo?"

"Ah, no," said the Spaniard smilingly. "I mean the Don. The water seems to be rising."

"You may rest assured that he is safe," replied Jim. "It is the turn of the tide now, and it is only a westerly wind that makes it appear higher. All we will have to do now is to wait." [212]

"It is a great pity, this delay," said the Spaniard warmly. "You are anxious to be on to the rescue of your brother and his friend. Anyway, I hope you will succeed as well in their case as you

did in mine."

"In another hour we will be able to start," said Jim, "the tide will then commence to run out."

"Where shall we stop tonight?" inquired Jo.

"Camp in the open as usual," replied Jim.

"I hope we will get up above the sea so high that it won't come within a mile of us," said Jo, fervently.

"As to a place to stop, I will see to that," said the Spaniard. "Do not give yourselves any uneasiness on that score."

"It's getting kind of chilly roosting up here," remarked Jo, plaintively, "especially as the fog is coming in."

"I'll warm you," said Jim. "Put up your Dukes."

"You'll take the counts if I put up my Dukes," said Jo, who was an inveterate punnist.

"Shut up," yelled Jim, giving his brother a hearty chug in the chest. Then they went at it hammer and tongs, giving and receiving good hard blows, and after ten minutes of whaling at each other, both were plenty warm. The Spaniard looked on in mild wonder. [213]

"You Americans love the hard exercise," he said. "I should think you would have great pleasure in resting awhile."

"I got the best of the bout," declared Jo. "See how black and blue your face is on this side."

"You didn't do that," protested Jim. "That was a wallop that old Neptune handed me when he bumped my head against yonder cliff."

"Neptune! Yonder cliff!" jeered Jo. "You ought to be a story writer and use fine words."

"Me a story writer!" growled Jim. "I ain't got so low as that, not so long as I have got two hands to steal chickens with."

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## CHAPTER XXVII

[214]

### ANOTHER FRIEND

"Do you not think, Senor Darlington, that it is now safe to start?" inquired the Spaniard, who was fearful of bloodshed, not quite understanding the boys.

"Certainly," responded Jim, "we will get Don Fernando down from his perch and proceed."

This proved to be an easier task than getting him up. His master lowered by the rope to his side, one scrambling leap and the horse was on the firm wet sand of the beach, almost knocking his master over in his eagerness to be on safe footing again. Don Sebastian now showed the gay side of his nature, as he vaulted into the saddle.

He swung his hat wildly, the blood mounting to his face, and the horse seemed to feel the sting and excitement of his master's mood, as he pranced, danced and caracoled upon the sand and ended up by bowing in unison with his master to the two American lads, who were looking on with interest and amusement.

Then the party made their way quickly along the curve of the beach and went around the fateful headland with perfect safety, while quite a distance out among the hidden rocks snarled the defeated ocean. Then Caliente heard them coming and he quickly raised his head, neighing in welcome to Jim and his comrade, Don Fernando. [215]

Jim gave him a vigorous hug for more than ever he was fond of his faithful horse. In a few minutes he had him saddled and away the three horsemen thudded in a swift gallop down the beach. The horses fairly flew, the wind of their speed tossing their manes back. It was cool beneath the fog laden sky and the refreshing sea air seemed to give the horses tireless endurance.

Soon three miles had spun backwards under their hoofs and the boys were filled with the joyous excitement of the run. It seemed now that every stride of the horses was bringing them nearer to the hoped-for rescue of Tom and Juarez. And this was an incentive to their energy.

"Here, friends, is where we branch off from the beach," cried the Spaniard.

Then he turned his horse to the left and headed straight for a wooded spur that extended from the range to the shore. In a short time the three came to a well-traveled trail and were soon riding through the semi-dusk of the woods. For two miles they went up a steady grade. [216]

Then they rounded the summit of the wooded ridge and saw stretching far below them in the indistinct dusk, a wide plain bounded on the West by the blue darkness of the level sea with its

rim of yellow sand.

"We will soon be at the home of my friend, Senor Valdez," said the Spaniard, "where we will spend the night."

"I'm a lovely looking object to present itself in a civilized home," protested Jim, "I look like a tough who has been in a bar-room rush."

"You are my brave friend," said Senor Sebastian, quietly, "and will be welcome."

Jim blushed, at least one side of his face did, the other was already too deeply colored to show any emotion, and he grinned sheepishly. Before he had time to reply they swept into an open driveway, carefully sanded, and drew rein in front of a long, low white adobe house, that from its mountain terrace looked over Plain and Sea.

Out came Senor Valdez to receive them, a stately Spaniard, who furnished the boys with an ideal of perfect courtesy ever after. To the end of their days they remembered their first visit to the home of Senor Valdez. How they did enjoy their dinner that evening in the long, pleasantly lighted dining-room. [217]

It was an excellent meal, with delicious soup, a salad garnished with peppers of the Spanish style, and garlic. Jim and Jo had never tasted anything equal to it. Besides there were frijoles and lamb, while the dessert was some slight and delicate confection of jelly and cream, made by the hands of the Senora Valdez.

"I feel wicked sitting here and eating this fine meal," said Jo, addressing Jim in a low voice, "when Tom and Juarez are being ill used and probably starved."

"Well," replied Jim, who was always practical, "I think it is better to eat, and to keep my strength up."

"I guess it won't fail," commented Jo slyly.

The boys bore themselves well, and without any diffidence though Jim had a whimsical recollection of his bruised side face and blackened eye, and he tried to keep it turned from the Senora Valdez, the fragile little woman who sat at the end of the table opposite her husband. She had snow white hair, parted low over her ears and the pallid face was lined with years. Very gentle was the Senora Valdez, but she had in her time beheld scenes of carnage and terror, so Jim need not have worried about his bruised face. But the wise old lady noticed his solicitude and understanding, was the more gracious to the young Americano because of it. [218]

That evening they sat on the piazza, that looked out towards the sea, the Spaniards smoking and Jim and Jo enjoying the music of a guitar played by a Mexican in a dim corner of the verandah and the boys heard a bit of important news.

"There was a mysterious ship put into shore several miles South of here, late last night, Senor," said their host, "one of my shepherds brought me word."

"The first scent of the trail," cried Jim eagerly. Then the Senor Sebastian explained to his friend more fully the objects of their search. Immediately the listener was deeply interested. Then he sent for an Indian, one of his trusted men, to come to him, and gave him minute instructions about some matters. Without a word the Indian turned and disappeared in the darkness, and in a short time there came the sound of a horse galloping full speed down the road.

"Tomorrow, Senor Darlington, this Indian will meet you at a point near the Puebla de los Angeles, which my friend knows and he will have all the information there is obtainable as to the location of this ship and its crew," thus spoke the Senor Valdez. Jim thanked him with deep fervor for his unusual kindness, but the Spaniard made light of it. [219]

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

### A TALE OF YORE

As they sat there in the dusk of the verandah, Jim would have liked to ask his host to relate some of his experiences in southern California for he felt sure that the Senor Valdez had known something of adventure not only because those early days were full of marvels of interest, but there was something in the bearing of the old Spaniard that spoke of former days of romance and of stirring incidents.

Then, too, there was something in the after-dinner content and quiet, following the perilous adventure which they had been through that predisposed the boys to listen to a good story of adventure. Their friend, the Senor Sebastian, seemed to divine what was passing through Jim's mind, for he suddenly spoke, breaking the meditative spell that had fallen upon the group on the piazza.

"It just occurred to me, Senor Valdez, that our friends here might like to hear something of the early days in this part of the country, for you of all men know it thoroughly and I am sure it would [221]

interest them."

"Indeed, it would, Senor," cried Jim enthusiastically, "it was in my mind to ask Senor Valdez to tell us of the early days but I was afraid to impose upon him."

"I feel greatly honored to think that you young men would care to hear anything my poor tongue could relate. It would hardly be worth your distinguished attention." Jim made due allowance for the courteous exaggeration characteristic of the Spaniard.

"Try us, Senor," he said briefly, "we would want nothing better."

"I will have the coffee brought first," replied the Senor, "that may serve to stimulate my dull imagination."

In a short time a softly moving servant brought out a tray of coffee cups, and placed one before each guest on a small wicker table. Jim noticed these cups with immediate interest. They were certainly beautiful and he had never seen anything like them before. They were of a wonderful blue, each one, and had a coat of arms in gold with raised figures on it; a scroll above with a Latin motto, and beneath the representation of a wild animal couchant. The Senor Valdez was quick to see Jim's interest and respond to it. "That is the coat of arms of my family," he explained. [222]

"I am not a scholar, Senor," said Jim, "and all I can make of the motto is that it has something to do with a lion."

"You are quite right," the ghost of a smile hovered around the white-fringed lips of the Spaniard, at Jim's innate boyishness.

"That figure does not look exactly like a lion," remarked Jo frankly.

"Not like an African lion certainly," replied the Spaniard, "but a lion nevertheless, such as one finds yet in the mountain fastnesses of Spain, something like a panther only larger and much more fierce."

"The lion seems to have a rope or chain around his neck," commented Jim, "and fastened to a collar."

"Quite so," responded the Spaniard, "likewise the motto translated reads, 'Gentle as a Lion.'"

"Rather strange way of putting it," said Jim curiously.

"I will explain, for you would naturally be puzzled by the phrase, 'Gentle as a Lion,' as it seems to contradict common knowledge," said Senor Valdez. "You see my family has the distinction, if such it can be called, in these modern days, the distinction of being old. This coat-of-arms dates back to the eleventh century." [223]

Jo was about to give a prolonged whistle of surprise when Jim gripped his knee to enforce silence, for though Jo might mean all right, the Spaniard might not understand.

"The founder of the family who flourished at that time was a rather rugged character, and I am afraid would regard the family representatives of this day as very puny and unworthy specimens. This Rodriguez de Valdez had his castle in a rugged mountainous part of Spain, where there were plenty of wild animals and of wilder and fiercer men, bandits and free-booters without number.

"His castle was a very powerful one, not only in construction but likewise in location, as it was built on a shelf of rock above a deep chasm, with precipitous cliffs behind it. However, Rodriguez de Valdez spent but very little time behind the protection of its powerful walls. It would take the forces of some strong Duke from the lowland to cause him to seek the shelter of his castle and to raise his war banner of crimson with a blue cross upon it, above the turret.

"He spent his days hunting among the mountains for wild beasts or for marauding bands of lawless men. Rodriguez was a man of wonderful strength, even for those days, when there were giants in the land. In stature six feet five and powerful in proportion and likewise very fleet of foot. If I should tell you of some of the legends of his strength and swiftness, you would probably laugh. [224]

"But the one that has to do with the coat-of-arms of my family I will tell you. It chanced one day that he was out in the wilds of the mountains and quite alone. Intent upon the trail of a deer that he was following along a shelving mountain side, he did not see a lion half grown, but nevertheless very dangerous, which was crouching on the branch of a tree ready to spring upon him when he got beneath it.

"When he had passed by under the tree a pace or two, the lion sprang with distended claws. Some instinct of danger made Rodriguez turn and he was just in time to grapple with the brute, clutching it by the throat. The lion had some advantage in weight but not a great deal, for my brave ancestor was probably three hundred pounds of sinew, bone and muscle. So that the struggle was not such an unequal one, but it was terrific while it did last. Finally, though torn and bleeding, the man subdued the beast, and had it in abject fear of him. [225]

"Then instead of killing the lion as one would naturally expect, Rodriguez took a strange humorous notion into his head. He would make a pet of this same lion and it should be his dog to follow obediently at its master's heels wherever he went. This idea he carried out and he even had a heavy brass collar placed upon its neck, and it followed him on all his trips, slouching with

padding tread at his heel, or behind his war horse as he rode abroad, like a powerful yellow dog.

"I do not imagine that the beast ever had any great amount of affection for his master, but he no doubt was in great fear of him, which seemed to answer the purpose quite as well. So, my friends, you have a full and complete explanation of the coat-of-arms of my family. My only fear is that I have wearied you with what could not have the same interest for you as it does for me."

"Indeed, you have not wearied us, Senor," exclaimed Jo enthusiastically.

"That is one of the most interesting accounts that I have ever listened to," said Jim. "I only wish I could have lived in those days when there was plenty of adventure."

"I do not think that you have any reason to complain," remarked the Spaniard laughingly. "Perhaps your descendants in future years will be pointing out your daring deeds as emblazoned on their coat-of-arms." [226]

"No danger of that, I guess," laughed Jim, "though they might have a picture of Jo and me tied to a mule. That was the way old Captain Broom treated us." The Spaniard joined in the merriment at this unheroic representation of Jo and Jim.

"Now, Senor Valdez, you have told us a tale of old Spain, tell us something of new Spain here in California," urged Jo.

"It seems to me that it is now someone else's turn," said the Senor. "I would not do all the talking. A host should sometimes listen. Perhaps Senor Darlington will tell us of some of his experiences. They will be much more stirring than any musty tales of mine." But Jim shook his head firmly, not to say obstinately.

"I would not think of telling our adventures," he replied. "Perhaps after we have travelled more, we will have something worth while relating."

"That's right," said Jo, "we would much rather listen to you, Senor."

The Senor Valdez sipped slowly at his coffee, looking out into the semi-darkness beyond the verandah, where over the plain below stretched the gray blanket of the fog-clouds. Then he rolled another cigarette, lit it and took a few meditative puffs. The Senor now began his next story at a peculiar angle, and did not commence with the stereotyped form of "once upon a time," so dear to the days of one's childhood. [227]

"I see you do not take cream in your coffee," he said addressing Jim.

"No, but I like some sugar, not too much."

"It has seemed to me," said the Spaniard, "that the seasoning of coffee is in a way an indication of character."

"Where the party uses milk in his coffee that indicates weakness, does it not, Senor?" inquired Jim with a sly look at Jo, but the subtle Spaniard was not to be trapped.

"Not necessarily," he replied, "only mildness."

"And when it is taken straight and black that means a strong character," remarked Jo.

"You have stated it," replied the Spaniard.

"But I would like to know how I would be sized up?" questioned Jim, "you see I use a little sugar."

"My friend," said the Spaniard with playful earnestness, putting his hand lightly on Jim's knee, "that shows a character of great strength, tempered with mercy and human kindness. All of which leads one to speak of a man who was once famous in this part of the country, but not popular. He always had the reputation for taking a strong liquor in his coffee, Fernet, if I remember right. His name was Alverado, but I judge that you are not acquainted with it." [228]

"No," replied Jim, "but I should say that he was a very fierce character."

"He was. He was a bandit."

"I thought so," agreed Jim.

"This Don Alverado came from a well known Spanish family, of ancient lineage, but impoverished fortune. He was such a wild and unruly blade that his family were decidedly relieved when he left Spain and came to the new world to mend his fortune, if not his ways. He landed first in Mexico, and after a series of more or less remarkable adventures, he came to this part of California. I knew him, or rather I knew of his family in Spain, and for their sake I made him welcome here at my home. [229]

"He was really a charming fellow in manner and appearance, tall, slight, with dark eyes and hair, a typical cavalier. But the graces of his manner did not reach down to his heart, and after a disagreeable episode which I need not revive here, he left my rancho never to return except as an enemy. I heard nothing further of him after his departure for some six months. My next introduction to him was an unpleasant one.

"It consisted in the loss of a band of horses and a herd of cattle which were driven off by a

gang of raiders, thirteen in number, at the head of which was this fellow Alverado. His depredations went on for years among the ranchmen in this part of California. So resourceful and crafty was this desperado that he evaded trap after trap laid for his capture.

"He had several very close calls and there were numerous battles between the outlaws and the ranch owners, but though some of his men were shot, he seemed to bear a charmed life. I remember one running fight over the plain yonder, when, believing me to be absent from home, as I had been, but returned unexpectedly from the north, this Alverado and his gang made a bold dash to capture some horses from a field directly below the house.

"It did not take long to get my men together and I gave the bandits a surprise indeed. Nothing but the speed of Alverado's horse, a splendid black stallion, saved him from capture. We got several of his men however. At last there came the turning of the lane. Through the treachery of one of the band we found that their rendezvous was at the head of a small canyon in a range of foot-hills several miles south of here. [230]

"You will go through it tomorrow on your way south, if you carry out your speed schedule, which with your remarkable horses you ought to be able to. We came upon the gang about noon, where they were resting after a long chase. In a corral near by were a number of stolen stock. They were not expecting trouble of any kind. Some were playing cards, a few cooking, most, however, were enjoying the siesta, their leader among the number lay under the shadow of a tree, his head resting on a saddle, sound asleep.

"There were fifty of us, and we had them surrounded, so that there was no chance of escape. Alverado himself made a desperate dash, but the cordon was too strong. The rest surrendered. That afternoon we took the bunch to the lower end of the canyon, where there was a giant sycamore tree. There we hanged the whole thirteen, and by them no more were troubled not even by their ghosts."

Jim and Jo expressed their appreciation of their host's kindness in entertaining them as he truly had done in relating his tales. Then they said good night and went to their room.

That night the boys slept in a comfortable bed in a quaint old bedroom with roses nodding in at the half open casement windows. By the light of the candles they could see the strange old and carved furniture and tired as they were how they did sleep. [231]

The next morning they started hours before daylight. "I will be prepared to welcome more of you in a few days," said the Senor Valdez, and the boys thanked him heartily. Promising to return soon they galloped away through the darkness.

All day they rode, hardly drawing rein at all. At first through the foot-hills and then over the wide plains. Jo had a fresh horse, a powerful black, as his other mount could not stand the strain of the long trip that meant three score and ten of miles before evening.

Early in the afternoon they left the plain and rode into the deep and rugged gorges of a mountain chain, running East and West. Thence into a broad valley leading South-easterly, and about four P. M. they turned directly South entering a Pass in the Southern side of the valley, from which they emerged on a plain. Where the trail left the Pass stood a large sycamore tree, when they reached it, the Indian messenger rose from its shelter.

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## CHAPTER XXIX

### A WONDERFUL LEAP

Now without hesitation we must take up the fortunes or rather misfortunes of Tom and Juarez as they landed in the darkness upon the mysterious island, for our narrative presses to its conclusion. Never did they feel more hopeless than on this occasion, when they were going to a dubious and uncertain fate.

"You boys come with me," called the Captain gruffly.

"How about me, Cap'n?" asked Jeems Howell, the lanky shepherd.

"What's your business?" inquired Captain Broom briefly.

"Looking after the sheeps."

"Then attend to it," said the Captain grimly.

"Certainly, Cap'n," replied the shepherd, who was incapable of taking offense.

"You come, Jake," called the Captain, to one of the sailors, "and be quick about it, we haven't much time." Tom shivered, for in the gloom and tired as he was he felt that his time too was short. [233]

Then with the Captain in the lead, carrying a lantern, which was muffled in his great coat, they started, the sailor bringing up the rear.



"Look out sharp, that these lads don't spring something on you, Jake. They are a bad lot."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the sailor, "they'll have to be quick to get the jump on me, sir."

"It's the Injun one's the worst. Don't let him scalp you," warned the Captain jocosely.

"I'm no Indian," said Juarez, hoarsely and utterly reckless of his fate, "I'm an American, and was proud of it, till I found you were one, you cursed yankee barnacle."

"Ho, ho, lad!" roared the Captain, "you won't talk so tall in a few minutes. Nothing like a slow fire for stewing the nonsense out of a fresh kid."

"How far is this cave of yours, you are taking us to, old salt horse?" said Juarez insolently, and utterly unwise.

This was too much for Captain Broom, and with an imprecation he turned to strike Juarez. This was what Juarez was looking for and as the furious Skipper whirled facing him, Juarez dodged his huge fist, and sent a fierce hook to the Captain's jaw. There was anger, desperation and strength behind that blow and the Captain fell, striking his head on a rock. That time the Frontier Boys scored. [234]

"Follow me, Tom," yelled Juarez, and he sprang away through the darkness. It seemed like a hopeless undertaking to make an escape with the sea on one side and the cliffs on the other, and a desperate enemy near at hand. But Juarez thought it was best to take a chance. Anything was better than captivity, that was seemingly just ahead of them.

One thing he was determined on and that was, that he would not be taken alive. He ran splashing through the water, leaping rocks, with the two sailors in fast pursuit. Not far ahead to the right was the white dash of the breakers that shut off escape in that direction, to the left was the cliffs.

Then before him rose a steep but not precipitous rock that had been divided from the main cliff by the action of the water. Instantly Juarez abandoned his desperate plan of plunging into the sea, and without lessening his speed, he sprang up the rock, in his moccasined feet.

The sailor who was following most closely, got up ten feet when he slipped and rolled violently to the bottom, knocking down the one who came after. Once Juarez came near falling but he caught himself, and kept going up, driven by a desperation that seemed to carry him over every obstacle. [235]

"We've got yer, ye little shrimp," exultantly cried the sailors at the base of the rock, "Ye can't get away unless you fly."

"Shoot the blasted little varmint," roared the Captain, who, still dizzy, had struggled to his feet. In obedience to the order a flash punctured the darkness and there was a roar like artillery echoing among the hollow cliffs. A slug of lead whistled past Juarez's head.

The boy had now reached the top of the rock and was at the crisis of his fate, a distance of ten feet separated him from the main cliff, not an impossible jump but the foothold was precarious and uncertain, and fifty feet or more below were the jagged rocks, and enemies equally as hard, but Juarez did not hesitate.

He dodged down just as the sailors fired another shot, then he sprang to the narrow pinnacle of the rock and bending slightly forward with bent knees and swinging hand, poised for the leap.

"The condemned fool is going to jump," roared the Captain. "Shoot him on the wing."

But the sailors were not ready and the skipper ran between the rock and the cliff to be at hand to stamp the life out of Juarez when he should fall as he knew he would. Then he leaped, a dark object flying through space, his hands caught the edge of the cliff, the roots of a small bush held him for a moment, then he slipped. Below him was certain death. [236]

Two strong hands caught his arms, and he was drawn in safety to the cliff above. The Captain and the two sailors watched in open mouthed wonder, all they could see was the dim figure of Juarez crawl in safety over the top of the cliff, but they could not determine the means of his escape.

It struck a superstitious chord in their natures and the skipper became moody and silent.

Juarez breathlessly followed the lanky figure of the shepherd through the darkness, for it was no other who had extended the rescuing hand. Hardly a word was spoken, and they started off. After going a considerable distance they came to a slab hut built at the foot of a high range of hills that formed the backbone of the island.

Two shepherd dogs rushed forth and gave their master a boisterous welcome, and were soon good friends with Juarez. Everything in the hut was neat; with Indian rugs on the floor which gave a warm touch of color to the interior and one side of the hut was lined with books. [237]

"What am I thinking of," suddenly cried Juarez in dismay, "to leave Tom in the hands of that crew? My head is wrong." With that, he grew pale and slid unconscious to the floor. He had evidently not recovered from the blow that the Mexican had dealt him a few days before, and the strain he had been under brought on a relapse. The shepherd worked over him a long time before

he finally brought him around.

Meanwhile what had become of Tom? He had not been quick enough to make his escape, and his fate was in the balance when the Skipper came up to him just after Juarez had disappeared over the cliff.

"You don't get away, I promise you that, lad," growled the Captain. Roughly seizing the boy by the shoulder he dragged him toward the cliff. Then the two disappeared into the entrance of a cave, the Captain still holding in one hand his battered leather satchel.

The sailor who stood on guard at the entrance, saw just then the lights of a steamer that was just entering the channel and he rushed into the cave, called to the Captain, and in a few minutes that worthy appeared. If he felt any alarm he showed none, but without any loss of time he assembled his crew, got his boat free of land and rowed silently out to sea. Whatever he had intended to do with Tom, evidently passed from his mind, now awakened to the solution of some other problem.

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## CHAPTER XXX

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### IN THE STRAIT

As Juarez and Tom were under the kindly escort of Captain Broom and his sailors in the whale boat on their cruise to the mysterious island, Jo, Jim and the Spaniard had stopped at an old sycamore tree, where, as had been promised, the Indian messenger was awaiting their coming.

"What news, Yaquis?" asked the Spaniard, who knew the Indian well.

"I saw the boat by my own eyes," he replied, "heading for the Big Island," pointing to the South. "By her smoke she stopped in the Bow Harbor near the lower end." So spoke the Indian, standing straight and tall. He was a picturesque sight with his coarse, black hair cut square and long.

"The trail is getting warm," exclaimed Jim eagerly. "Where can we get a boat?"

"There is a small boat at the Harbor of San Pedro," replied the Spaniard, "that is the property of a friend of mine. I doubt not we can have the use of it."

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"It is now a little after six," said Jim. "How far is it to the Harbor?"

"A dozen miles," replied the Indian.

"Is your horse too tired, Senor Sebastian, to make it by eight?" The Spaniard's eyes flashed.

"Senor, Don Fernando is never tired. Let us start."

"We are ready," replied Jim. "Which is the shortest cut?"

"I will guide you," was the Indian's response.

"He knows this country like the foot does the shoe," assured the Spaniard.

Without more ado, the new guide took the lead and they rode at a rapid gait in single file. At first they went down a gentle grade for several miles until they came to a perfectly level plain that stretched in three directions to the sea. At the end of the land was a perfectly rounded rise like a huge long bolster.

The party of rescuers left the Puebla de los Angeles several miles to the East, taking the shortest way to the harbor. There was no let-up to the speed, if anything, they seemed to be going faster, with sweaty sides and shoulders, but with unaffected stamina. The going was fine, over a springy turf and sometimes they tore through wide belts of tall mustard.

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Jo and Jim were in fine fettle as the end of the journey came in sight and there was promise of their coming to close quarters with the pirates and possibly rescuing their oppressed brothers from captivity. Then, too, the passage of the strait in an open boat appealed to their sense of adventure.

About eight o'clock, they came to a ranch two miles from the harbor, where Senor Sebastian had a short talk with a man who owned the small boat that had been referred to. He was perfectly willing to lend them the boat and also sent a Mexican servant to bring back their horses and put them up in his stables. Not forgetting to thank him for his great kindness to them, the boys turned their horses' heads for the harbor, the last lap of their long journey had begun.

In a half hour, they stood on the shore of a long, narrow inlet, at a point where a craft was moored. From a small boat-house, they got the oars, the mast and the sail to be used if the wind was right. Then they were ready to get aboard. Jim looked at his watch. "It lacks ten minutes of nine," he said.

Then they embarked. The boat was not a mere row-boat, but was found to be of good size and about equal to a whale boat. It was staunch, too, and sea worthy. The mooring was cast off. Jim

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was at the bow oar, and Jo at the one back of him on the other side, while the Indian, Yaquis, steered. The tide favored them as they glided quickly between the banks, and they were not long in reaching the channel.

At first, there was a slow, heavy swell, while in the lee of the land, that did not bother the boys but within a half hour they were in a choppy sea with breaking crests, and now the real work for Jo and Jim began. Fortunately, the Indian was a most skillful oar, and he kept them from being swamped. As yet there was no breeze to help them.

"This is almost as good as running the Rapids in the Grand Canyon," cried Jim joyously.

The boys were in fine fettle for their work, notwithstanding their long day in the saddle, and they buckled to it with a will, although wet through with flying spray. They had enjoyed a good rest the night before and after their long ride they were glad to get the kinks out of their muscles. They really made remarkably good headway against the sea and the stoical Indian grunted approval of their work. Ah, but it was fine, battling with the waves through the darkness, while the boat thrashed and beat its way ahead. [243]

The boys stood to their oars and put all the strength of their lithe young bodies into the stroke and they seemed tireless. The Spaniard had made himself comfortable in the bow, where, sheltered by a short overhead deck, he was soon fast asleep.

"Wake me when it is time to be drowned," he said. "I know it is my fate." Jim remembered the Spaniard's melancholy of the day before, and laughed heartily, as he promised.

"There are the lights of a vessel," cried Yaquis, who, though silent, was ever on the watch. "Ahead of us to the Southwest."

"You are right," said Jim. The lights were like two faint, moving stars, one aloft and the other below.

"That isn't the Pirate ship," declared Jo. "She wouldn't be showing any light." After a while, the lights of the vessel were suddenly eclipsed, but by the dull light of the moon, now risen, the vessel's bulk could still be made out.

"She has gone into the further straits," said Yaquis, "between the two islands."

A gentle breeze sprang up, but blowing directly toward them, it lent no aid. Before midnight, the westerly breeze had died absolutely down, and in a not very long time, the sea followed suit, leaving a long swell and the rowing became much easier. Nothing occurred to break the monotony for a while. There was the steady grinding of the oars in the row-locks and the lapping of the waves in the gloom, for the moon was now obscured by clouds. Then, of a sudden, the Indian called a halt. [244]

"Do you hear footsteps?" inquired Jim, jocosely.

"A steamer coming, I hear her, no lights. Pull hard." In a minute, even the boys could hear the beat of her engines and saw the occasional flare from her stacks, then a dark form took shape through the night. They pulled lustily for they knew their danger and who it was. How quickly they would be run down, if discovered, and left to drown in the wide strait, when Captain Broom found out their identity. No wonder they pulled.

"Stop now, draw in your oars. Lie down," warned the Indian.

Not a hundred yards to the Eastward came The Sea Eagle and she was on an even line with the boat that lay a black patch on the dark water. If Captain Broom was not on the Bridge they would be safe.

"Boat ahoy," boomed out his voice. [245]

"Indian fishermen," cried Yaquis. "Stop, take me ashore."

With a growl, the Captain sent his ship ahead, paying no attention to the "Indian fisherman" in distress. There was a gleam of white teeth as the Indian smiled at the hearty congratulations of the boys and their glee at his stratagem. Then the Spaniard and Yaquis took the oars while Jim steered and Jo slept.

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## CHAPTER XXXI

### CONCLUSION

When morning came, they were but a few miles from the Northern end of the longer Island and the fog was over the whole sky. The sea was glassy with a sullen glaze. Nowhere was there sign of any steamer or ship. The Sea Eagle had made good her escape.

"I wish we had a stiff breeze to help us along," said the Spaniard, who loved not manual labor, as did the boys. [246]

"It will come, the strong breeze, soon," said the Indian.

"When we make the Island, what are we to do?" asked Jo.

"Who can tell, maybe Tom and Juarez have been taken along with the Skipper, instead of being marooned."

"That's so," replied Jo, and gloom settled down upon his spirits, heavier than the fog upon the sea.

"We will keep after them," said the never despondent Jim, "even if we have to chase them around the world." [247]

The boat seemed to crawl so slowly along, and the boys began to fret in their eagerness to find out whether their comrades were on the island or not, but they were not yet close enough to make out any object upon its surface. Then from the West there came a breeze rippling the glassy water.

"Up with the sail," cried Jim. "Here's where we fly."

As the breeze strengthened to a wind, they went towards the island at a clipping gait. When they got within a half mile of the shore, they began to look eagerly for some sign of a living being and they were disappointed at first, but they drove their boat along as near the shore as they dared.

"Say, did you hear that?" cried Jim in excitement. "That was a rifle shot, or my name is Dennis."

"Three men on the shore," said the Indian, imperturbably.

"I see them," cried Jo, "on that beach yonder. I believe it is Tom and Juarez. Hurrah for the Frontier Boys."

"It is they," declared Jim as they drew closer, "but how Tom has grown. He looks over six feet." [248]

"That isn't Tom," said Jo. "It's some one else. The short one is Tom." Then he saw Jim grin and realized that he had been kidded.

"If this wasn't my busy day," said Jo, "I'd give you a punching for being so smart."

Five minutes later, the boat had grounded on the pebbly beach and The Frontier Boys were again united. There was a great jubilee for a while with the Spaniard, the Indian, and the lanky shepherd on the outskirts of the family celebration, but in a short time they were all good friends, each according to his different nature; the Spaniard, suave and courteous, the Indian stolid, but with his share in the general good-will, and Jeems Howell, the shepherd, lankily humorous.

"We met our old friend Captain Broom in the channel, boys," said Jim, "steaming along like the Devil was after him."

"I'll give him reason to think so," growled Juarez sullenly, "if I ever get on his trail."

The Indian, Yaquis, grunted approval, for there seemed to be a bond of sympathy between him and Juarez, as the reader can well understand.

"How far is that cave, Tom, where the old codger left you?" inquired Jo. [249]

"Just around the bend," said Tom. "Here's the rock where Juarez made his famous jump."

"How did you ever get up there?" asked Jo in wonder, looking up at the pinnacle of rock.

"You'd a done the same if those fellows had been chasing you," replied Juarez, "but if it hadn't been for Jeems here catching me when I jumped they would have got me after all."

"I was afeard you might have fallen on the Skipper and a hurt him. He's a kind of a tender plant you know." The Shepherd made this remark with a perfectly sober face, in no wise disturbed by the hilarity of the boys, over the idea of the tenderness of the Skipper.

"Here's the cave," said Juarez, and he led the way through an arched opening in the wall of the cliff. Picking up a lantern, he went ahead as guide.

"This is certainly a dry cave," said Jim.

"It ought to be," said Jeems Howell. "It don't rain on this Island more than twice a year, but I feel it in my bones that it is coming on to storm today."

"I hope you don't feel it in *all* your bones," remarked Jim, quizzically, "because it is liable to be a long drawn out storm if you do." [250]

The lanky Shepherd gave himself over to spasms of silent mirth at Jim's queer humor.

"Here's where we found Tom," said Juarez. "Just discovered him a couple of hours before you discovered us."

When the Captain had made his sudden change of plans, Tom made himself as comfortable as he could for the night, intending to search for Juarez in the morning.

"Sometime I hope that this wretched Captain will be captured and imprisoned right here," said the Spaniard with a cold, vindictiveness.

"If he comes snooping around here again, that is what will happen to him," remarked Jim quietly. "I suppose, Tom, that he hid some of the loot he took from us in this cave somewhere. I bet this is his safe deposit vault, all right."

"He went back in there with his small satchel," said Tom, indicating the depths of the cave as yet unexplored.

"It will keep," said Jim, "but before I leave this island for Hawaii, I am going to search every corner of this cave and see if I cannot find our property."

"We discovered it in a cave and perhaps we will lose our treasure in a cave," said Juarez, who was something of a fatalist.

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"Don't you believe that we won't find it," declared Jim stoutly, "but no work for me for a while. I'm going to take a good rest."

"So say we all of us," chanted the boys.

"Gentlemen," said Jeems Howell oracularly, "If it pleases you, and Christopher Columbus," with a wave of his hand toward Jim, "who discovered this savage group, we will now adjourn to my castle on the distant hillside."

"We are with you," declared those assembled in unison, and in a short time they were making their way up the slope towards the "castle" on the hillside, where they made themselves at home.

All the new arrivals at the island were soon fast asleep.

Later after several hours of rest, they occupied themselves according to their different ideas of comfort.

The Spaniard amused himself thrumming on a guitar, that belonged to one of the Mexican herders on the island. Tom got a book, and stretched out on a rug forgetful of all his recent troubles, while Jim and Juarez borrowed a couple of guns and went for an hour's hunting, in the woods which at that time covered the mountain ridges of the island.

That evening they were all gathered in the cabin before the blazing fire on the stone hearth, while outside raged the Easterly storm that Jeems Howell had predicted, with rush of wind and sweep of rain. But the slab cabin was storm proof and comfortable. It is a good place to leave the boys after their days of trial and bitter hardship. In our next book we will meet "The Frontier Boys in Hawaii, or The mystery of The Hollow Mountain." There, I feel confident they will cope with adventures as unusual and as remarkable as they have heretofore encountered. I am sure that the Reader will be anxious to accompany them on their journey. But we must permit the Frontier Boys to have the last word, in this volume.

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"Do you think that Captain Broom, will return here, before we get away for Hawaii, Jim?" inquired brother Jo.

"I certainly do," replied Jim, "and we will be right here, to give him a warm and hearty Welcome, you can rest assured of that."

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### Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

[Page 170](#), text was both missing and repeated in the original. The original read:

on even terms until in the last hundred yards Caliente forged ahead by half a length.

"Hold on boys," yelled Jo in warning. *"Don't on even terms until in the last hundred yards Cal-horses up.* There was Jo sitting quietly on his horse.

The italicized text was removed to try to assist readability.

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

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