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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FRONTIER BOYS IN THE SOUTH SEAS ***

FRONTIER BOYS

IN THE

SOUTH SEAS

BY

CAPT. WYN ROOSEVELT

ILLUSTRATED BY

RUDOLF MENCL



NEW YORK

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THE FRONTIER BOYS

By CAPT. WYN ROOSEVELT

This series tells the adventures of Jim, Jo,

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 exception.

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FRONTIER BOYS IN THE SOUTH SEAS

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CHAPTER I.

AN ENCOUNTER.

Juarez was sleepy, very sleepy. He had been traveling on a railroad train for several days, and while ordinarily he could adapt himself to circumstances, traveling by car instead of having a soothing influence as it does with some, seemed to keep him awake. He was thoroughly tired out, and was standing, just now, when our story opens, on dark and lonesome dock in San Francisco.

He was awaiting the return of Jo and Tom Darlington, his comrades in many trying and nerve-racking ventures, and he did not observe, or at least he did not give heed to a single, tall, sturdy figure quietly approaching him from the back, but keeping the while in the shelter of the warehouse roof which cast a heavy shadow upon the floor of the dock.

Juarez, as we have said, was sleepy, so sleepy that it seemed to him that the most desirable thing in the world would be to lie down upon the rough and knotty planks upon which he was standing and give himself up to the drowsiness which was overpowering him.

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For the time he had entirely forgotten Jo's last admonition:

"Remember, Captain Bill Broome is in town, and he'll sure get you if you don't watch out."

He had smiled grimly at the warning, visions of some of his experiences with the redoubtable captain passing through his mind, but he had in no other way shown any evidence that the words of Jo had made any impression upon him. Nevertheless he had mentally promised himself to be on his guard, but the sleepy spell that he could not shake off put old Bill Broome and everything else out of his mind.

Beside, how could the captain know that he was in town? It would seem that if he, the captain, knew anything at all about the whereabouts of the boys, he would place them, Jo and Tom in New York, and Juarez in Kansas, for they had arrived in San Francisco only a few hours before and their visit too a most unexpected one.

Juarez, the reader should know, was a youth of eighteen, and although the son of American parents, he had been stolen by Indians when a child and had been brought up by them. He and his sister had been rescued by Jo, Tom and their elder brother Jim.

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He had many of the traits and habits peculiar to the wild life he had led so long, and ordinarily could be depended upon to be watchful and alert. But to-night, after the long railroad journey, he found himself in a large city where safety was seemingly assured. With the insistent desire for sleep he relaxed his vigilance, and was only recalled to wakefulness and a recognition of his surroundings when he felt himself suddenly seized and his arms pinned fast to the rough wall of the building against which he had been carelessly leaning.

We have made some mention of the early life of his comrades, the Frontier Boys, and the reader will likely wish to know more about them. Jo and Tom were twins; however, the former was the most active and go-ahead, but the real leader in their adventures was James, the elder brother. It would be difficult to find anywhere a finer specimen of young manhood than James, better known among his friends as Jim Darlington.

Tall, rather slender in build, but well proportioned, with muscles as hard and strong as though they were wrought of steel, he had the strength and quickness of a catamount, and

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was afraid of nothing, but even more than this, he was manly, honest, resourceful, and to be depended upon to the last. He was not exactly handsome, but the self-reliant way in which he carried himself made him conspicuous even in a crowd. With it all he was in no way assertive or aggressive, but calmly ready to meet whatever might happen to come whether it were good or ill.

From his home town in New York State, Jim had been suddenly called to the Far West to look after his yacht, the Sea Eagle, an ocean going boat equipped for propelling power with sail and engine. He had bought the boat fairly enough, but on enforced conditions, which Captain Bill Broome, the former owner, had recently found a way to override, illegally, of course, but he was in possession, which is generally said to be nine points of the law.

Juarez had known nothing of the Sea Eagle complication, but one day a stranger had come to the Kansas Town where he lived, enquired for him and had promptly laid before the youth a proposition to join in a venture to search for lost treasures in the South Seas. The professor, for so he introduced himself, had all the needed funds for the venture, but lacked experienced assistants. He wanted them not only with experience, but honest as well, for naturally, if success attended his efforts, and the sought for treasure was found it would prove an ever present temptation to an unruly crew, or one disposed to evil.

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Juarez had accepted the offer as soon as made. The quiet life of the farm, and even the occasional visits to the small, nearby country town were dull indeed. To one of his active nature this life was very monotonous. He had promptly wired, at the professor's request, to James Darlington, and Jo, receiving the message in his brother's absence, had, after consulting Tom, wired acceptance of the very liberal offer made.

So it had come about that Jim being in San Francisco on one mission, his brothers and their friend had arrived to take part in another enterprise.

Reaching San Francisco, effort had been made by the three boys to locate Jim, but so far unsuccessfully. The reader of the "[Frontier Boys in Frisco](#)" is fully conversant of the episode which had taxed Jim's time and attention.

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The boys had arranged to sleep aboard the professor's boat, and Juarez was awaiting the return of Jo and Tom, who had gone upon some errand.

Juarez, thus suddenly awakened, struggled vainly but furiously for a few moments to break the iron grasp that held him as in a vice. Then, with Indian cunning he apparently gave up the attempt and ceased to struggle, but resolved to renew his efforts at the first opportunity that offered.

He had been taken so unaware that he had no chance to see who it was that had stolen upon him from the back, seized him, and held him with his face to the wall of the building against which he had been leaning.

"Ho!" cried a gruff voice, "I have got you at last."

"It looks that way," admitted Juarez. "Who are you and what do you want?"

"You," replied the other.

"What do you want with me?" went on Juarez.

"That you will soon find out," was the reply, with just a suspicion of exultant laughter in the tone of the speaker, at the same time relaxing his hold a little.

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With the quickness of a panther, Juarez, as he felt the other's hold relax, slipped from his grasp, and whirling about seized his opponent in turn and a moment later the two were rolling and tumbling about on the floor of the dock. They were so equally matched in strength that it seemed only by chance or through some lucky turn in his favor that either would be able to overcome the other.

CHAPTER II.

[Pg 16]

A CONFERENCE.

Jim Darlington and John Berwick, the latter the once time engineer of the Sea Eagle, were on the morning on which our story opened, after an early breakfast, seated in a secluded part of the rotunda of the Commercial Hotel, where, safe from possible eavesdroppers, they were discussing the events of the previous day.

"Well, Jim," asked Berwick, "what comes next?"

"I don't know," answered Jim. "I am just trying to think it out."

"Well, I hope your mind is in better condition than mine," returned Berwick, "I don't seem to see any way out."

"Then, we must make one."

"I confess it's too much for me," went on Berwick, sitting back resignedly. "That old rascal of a Bill Broome seems to have made a clean sweep of it this time. He's got the young senorita safe in his clutches on the Sea Eagle, and with that sister for a jailer, as far as I can see he will sail away with her and we can sit here and chew our thumbs for all we can do."

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Berwick was referring to his own and Jim's experiences as related in a previous book, the ["Frontier Boys in Frisco."](#)

"I am not so sure of that," exclaimed Jim, shutting his teeth down with a snap. "I am not through with that old pirate yet."

"I'm with you there, Jim," agreed Berwick. "I owe him something on my own account, but I don't see any prospect of an immediate payment."

"If we only knew which way he was going."

"That's a pretty big if," said Berwick.

"Maybe not as big as it looks," returned Jim. "At any rate, I mean to find out."

"How are you going to do that?"

"I don't know yet, but I mean to find a way."

"I think you will, Jim. Have you no plan in view?"

"None, except to get a boat and follow him. I'd give half a fortune if I only had Jo and Tom here."

"And Juarez," put in Berwick.

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"And Juarez, of course."

"Why not telegraph for them? It would only take a week for them to come?"

"I'm afraid Broome would not wait for them to get here," answered Jim with a smile. "Whatever we do has got to be done quick."

"I wonder what he is going to do with the senorita, anyway," went on Berwick.

"Hold her for a ransom, I suppose," answered Jim. "I've got it!" he cried, springing to his feet. "Come on."

"What now?" demanded Berwick.

"It's all right," replied Jim, "I'll explain as we go along."

"Glad of it," responded Berwick, "but I'm blessed if I see it."

"Why, you see," began Jim, but as he spoke a bellboy with a yellow envelope in his hand came up to him.

"Telegraph for yo, sah," he said, handing the envelope to Jim.

"For me!" exclaimed Jim in surprise.

"Yes, sah," replied the boy. "Just done come."

Tearing open the envelope, Jim read the message with an exclamation of surprised wonder.

"No bad news, I hope," interposed Berwick.

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"On the contrary, it's more than good. Just what I was a moment ago wishing for," replied Jim, handing him the slip. "What do you think of that? Jo and Tom are actually on their way here. Why, and for what purpose I don't know, but so it is."

"Of all things!" ejaculated Berwick. "What can it mean?"

"That luck is with us," said Jim. "We will get the Sea Eagle back yet."

"I hope so," replied the engineer, dubiously, "but—"

"Now, John, don't be bringing in any buts," retorted Jim. "Don't you believe we can do it?"

"Haven't any doubt of it," returned Berwick, laughing heartily at Jim's impetuous speech. "I was only going to say that Broome is a pretty tough customer."

"We won't quarrel about that," admitted Jim, with a grin. "He is about the toughest proposition we have been up against."

"Have you any plan in mind," went on Berwick.

"I think the first thing to do," answered Jim, "is to go and see Senor de Cordova and learn what he has heard of the senorita." [Pg 20]

"Why do you think he has heard anything?"

"If Broome is holding her for a ransom, as we believe, he will send word to her father as to when and where to send the money."

"That seems reasonable," agreed Berwick.

"I propose to be there, and have a hand in the proceedings."

"Oh, you do! And how do you propose to get there?"

"Can't say yet until I know the when and where of it. It will probably be in some secluded place where they will expect to be safe from attack, which will suit us all the better, as we will give them a surprise. If we can't do any better we will follow them."

"Going to swim after them?"

"It isn't as bad as that," laughed Jim. "I think we will be able to pick up a boat somewhere that will serve us. The first thing to do is to find out where they are going."

"That does seem to be advisable," returned Berwick, "if we expect to be there."

"Now, don't be sarcastic, old chap," replied Jim, good-naturedly. "You know what I mean. Of course, all our plans must be based on that." [Pg 21]

"All right, Jim," agreed Berwick, "but how do you propose to get that information?"

"Ask Senor de Cordova."

"Don't believe he will tell you," said Berwick laconically.

"Why not?"

"Well, if he has had word from Broome, he has probably been warned not to say anything about it."

"I hadn't thought of that," admitted Jim, "but still I think he will tell us. It fairly makes me wild when I think of that girl in the hands of those ruffians."

Jim clenched his hands as he vowed to himself that it would go hard with them if any harm came to her.

"Same here," responded Berwick heartily.

Jim was pondering deeply, and sat gazing through the windows.

"Do you know where to find the Senor?" Berwick went on a few minutes later.

"I suppose he is stopping at the Palace. That is where we saw them the other day."

A few minutes walk brought them to the hotel, where, on inquiry, they learned that the Senor had been stopping there, but that he had gone away that morning. [Pg 22]

"No, he did not say where he was going," the clerk informed them. "He went away on horseback and his man on another mount."

"Then he will probably return to-day?" suggested Jim.

"Who knows?" the clerk answered with a shrug of his shoulders. "No, he did not say where he was going or when he would be back. No, he hasn't given up his room. If it is anything of importance about which you wish to see the Senor, you might interview his lawyer, Mr. Reynolds at No. 10 Court street, who, perhaps might know where he has gone."

"Were they his own horses?" went on Jim.

"Couldn't say," replied the clerk. "Perhaps the porter can tell you. He went for the horses, I believe. Here, Pedro," calling the porter, who was standing nearby, "you got the horses for the Senor this morning, didn't you?"

"Si, Senor," answered the porter, a swarthy Mexican.

"Where did they come from?" asked Jim.

"From Ross and McLanes," replied the porter. "The Senor told me to tell them to send around the best horses they had in the stable, no matter what they cost. They were mucho hermosa, very handsome. He paid for them right down. Never questioned the price."

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"Sorry I can't give you more information," added the clerk, "but I think if you want to find the Senor, you had better see Mr. Reynolds."

"Thank you," replied Jim. "We will go there."

"Hem!" commented Berwick when they were on the street again. "We didn't find out very much."

"I don't know," answered Jim. "At least we have found that he has heard from Broome."

"How do you make that out?"

"He went away unexpectedly or he would have made more preparation, and he left no word where he was going or when he would be back, which shows that he was going on some secret mission."

"You are probably right," admitted Berwick, after a moment's thought. "We won't be able to get any information from him."

"But we may get something from his lawyer," replied Jim cheerfully. "He probably knows where he has gone."

"What shall we do to get there, walk or ride?"

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"Better ride, I think," said Jim, hailing a cab. "We haven't any time to lose."

It was only a short distance, and in less than fifteen minutes they were in the office of Mr. William Howard Reynolds, who was better known to the shady side of San Francisco than he was to the reputable inhabitants of the town. The office was in an old, rather dilapidated building, not far from the city hall.

"Mr. Reynolds is in," so the clerk in charge of the outer office informed them, "but is particularly engaged at this time. If the gentlemen will be seated, I will learn if Mr. Reynolds will see them."

Going into an inner office, he returned a moment later to say that Mr. Reynolds was very busy, and that he would not be able to give them any time unless their business with him was of importance.

"Tell him," directed Jim, "that I wish to see him on a matter of much importance to Senor de Cordova."

The clerk, a man of about forty, with an expressionless face, except for a cunning twinkle about the eyes, took the card Jim handed him, and again disappeared into the inner room.

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At this moment Jim, who was standing by the windows looking upon the street, happened to glance down and caught a glimpse of the familiar figure of Captain Broome, who had apparently just emerged from the building.

"I wonder what he was doing here," muttered Jim to himself.

"Who? What?" asked Berwick.

"Sh!" whispered Jim, "I will tell you later."

"Mr. Reynolds will see you for a few minutes," announced the clerk, holding open the door to the inner office for them to pass through.

CHAPTER III.

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PICKING UP THE ENDS.

The room which Jim and the chief engineer entered was furnished in marked contrast to the outer room, which was plainly, even meagerly equipped with a few chairs and a table or two and a desk. The inner room was luxuriously and lavishly fitted up with a handsome mahogany desk, easy chairs, fine paintings upon the walls and costly rugs upon the floor.

Motioning to them to be seated with a sweep of his hand, upon which glittered a serpent ring of peculiar design with ruby eyes which seemed to glow as if alive, the lawyer eyed them coldly for a moment through half closed eyes.

"You wished to see me upon business connected with the Senor de Cordova," he said, without any preliminary greeting.

"Yes," replied Jim quietly, "I have been referred to you as being in charge of his affairs."

"By whom?"

"The clerk at the Palace Hotel."

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"Ah, indeed. What is the nature of your business with him?"

"That I will communicate with him personally," answered Jim, who had conceived an instant distrust of the man. "What I wish to know is his present address."

The lawyer leaned back in his chair and softly whistled for a moment with a sort of hissing sound.

"He's concocting some sort of a scheme now," thought Jim, who was regarding him critically.

"I cannot inform you of his exact whereabouts," remarked the lawyer, "but he is somewhere in the northern part of the State. He was called away on some important business."

"Was it in connection with the abduction of his daughter?" asked Jim, rising to his feet and standing beside the desk looking directly into the eyes of the lawyer.

"Eh, what is that?" asked the lawyer, hastily shuffling the papers on his desk, but not before Jim had caught sight of the words "San Mat—" in a familiar handwriting.

"I said, has his journey any connection with the abduction of his daughter?" repeated Jim.

"What do you know about the abduction of the Senorita de Cordova?" asked the lawyer, sharply. "Perhaps you had something to do with it."

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"I haven't anything to do with it," answered Jim, "but I know who did, and I know where the Senorita is."

"Indeed, you seem to think, young man, that you know a good deal. Suppose I were to put the matter in the hands of the police?"

"Just as you like," responded Jim, "there is my address if you want me. You can find me there any time. I think," turning to Berwick, "there is nothing more to be gained here."

"There doesn't seem to be," replied Berwick.

"Then don't waste any more of my time," said the lawyer sharply. "Wickham," to the clerk, "you can show these gentlemen," with a sneering emphasis on "the gentlemen," "out."

Thus curtly dismissed, Jim and his companion made their way to the street.

As soon as they had gone, the lawyer hastily wrote upon a sheet of paper:

"Look out for a young fool who calls himself James Darlington, and knows more than is good for him," to which he added the initials W. H. R. and calling Wickham into the room gave it to him with orders to see that it be delivered at the address given, where it would come into the hands of Captain Broome at once.

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This done, Mr. Reynolds leaned back in his chair, and began whistling softly.

"I think, Mr. James Darlington, that a voyage with Captain Broome might teach you not to meddle in other people's affairs," he said to himself, with an ugly expression on his face.

The message reached its destination within a few minutes after it had been sent, and was in the hands of Captain Broome in less than half an hour.

"Ha!" snorted Broome, when he read it. "I think I can take care of him. Hey, Manuel," to a swarthy Mexican dwarf, who was with him. "That Jim Darlington is making trouble again. Get on his trail so I can catch him."

"Si, Senor," replied the Mexican with an ugly grin. "Shall I give him the knife?"

"No," responded Broome, vindictively, "I want him alive."

CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 30]

BUFFETED.

"I don't know how you feel, chief," remarked Jim, when the two were out on the street again, "but it strikes me that, as we have something of a busy day ahead of us, and don't know just where we shall bring up, it wouldn't be a bad plan to make sure of some lunch now."

"I don't see any objection to it," replied the engineer.

"Didn't think you would," answered Jim with a laugh. "Never knew you to refuse a meal yet. If I remember rightly there's a restaurant just around the corner where we can get something to eat and get a chance to map out our plans. The cooking isn't quite up to the Delmonico standard, but it is good and there is plenty of it."

"Well, that means there's enough of it such as it is," said the engineer, "but I guess I can stand it if you can. Lead on, Jim."

Jim led the way around the corner, not, however, without casting a glance back and walking for several doors past the place he had spoken of. Then, after looking about him, he retraced his steps and entered the restaurant, which was an unpretentious place on a side street.

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"There's a table over there," he said, indicating one in the rear of the room, "that will suit us. We can see all who come in and won't be conspicuous ourselves."

"What's all this mystery, Jim?" asked the engineer, when they had taken their seats and given their order.

"I have a feeling that that Mexican imp of deformity, Manuel, isn't far away, and we can't afford to take any chances."

"You are right there, Jim," responded Berwick heartily. "That chap gives me the shivers. He's more like a snake than a man."

"That's just it. He's so confoundedly slippery, it almost seems that you never can get a hold on him, and if you did, what can one do with such a miserably deformed body? Ugh!"

"One never feels easy when he's anywhere about," admitted Berwick.

Jim made no further comment, but he was evidently thinking deeply.

"The next thing to do," began Jim, when the meal had been served and the waiter gone to attend to other duties, "is to see if we can get a ship—"

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"And follow them," put in the engineer.

"I'd like to get there ahead of them if we could."

"If we only knew where the place was."

"Oh, I know that," said Jim quietly.

"You do!" exclaimed the engineer in astonishment. "Where is it?"

"San Matteo Bay—"

"San Matteo. Where is that?"

"About seventy-five miles down the coast."

"How did you find it out?"

"Mr. Reynolds told me."

"Mr. Reynolds!" echoed the engineer, "When?"

"When we were there," replied Jim laughing at the look of astonishment on his companion's face. "You remember that he told us that the Senor had gone into the northern part of the

State.”

“But you just said that San Matteo was ‘down’ the coast.”

“Of course,” responded Jim, a trifle impatiently. “Don’t you see that he wanted me to think that he went the other way from what he did?” [Pg 33]

“I see. Then when he said he went north—”

“It was then,” broke in Jim, “that I happened to catch a glimpse of a paper on his desk with a name on it. I wouldn’t have noticed it only for his anxiety to cover it up when I was standing there, and I just caught this much—‘San Mat—’”

“Why do you think it meant San Matteo?”

“Because San Matteo is just the place that would suit Broome for his purpose. There is scarcely anyone living around there. It’s about three or four days’ journey by land and about two by water, so Broome can give the Senor a couple of days start and see if he makes any attempt to evade the conditions, and still be there to meet him on time.”

“I see, you have a long head, Jim, but what is to prevent Broome from getting the ransom and still keeping the girl?”

“You and I.”

“Humph!” returned the engineer, “that looks to me like a pretty big contract we are taking up.”

“It is,” responded Jim, “but we have got to carry it through.”

“It looks to me,” went on the engineer, “as if we were going to be pretty busy for the next few days.” [Pg 34]

“And the sooner we get started, the better,” added Jim.

Leaving the restaurant, Jim and the chief engineer walked leisurely to the corner, where they stood for a few minutes, ostensibly watching the hurrying crowd of people on the street, but nevertheless keeping a watchful eye for anyone who might be dogging their footsteps.

“Seen anything of that imp of darkness?” asked the engineer.

“No,” replied Jim, “he isn’t anywhere in sight, but I don’t believe he is very far away.”

“Can’t we shake him off some way?”

“That’s rather doubtful, but we can lead him a merry chase.”

“That’s something. What’s the plan?”

“We will walk down the street,” explained Jim, “as if we had no particular purpose in view, then we will separate, and you will go one way and I the other. Then, unless, as Tom says, ‘he is two gintlemen in wan,’ and can go both ways, he won’t know which one of us to follow.”

“Trust him for that,” said the chief engineer, “he’s sure to follow you.”

“So much the better,” returned Jim. “I think I’ll manage to keep him busy for the rest of the afternoon.” [Pg 35]

“What do you want me to do?”

“You can go down to the maritime exchange, and see if you can learn of something in the way of a yacht that will serve us until we can get the Sea Eagle back. One to buy or hire, whichever is offered. You know what we want.”

“All right. I guess I can locate something.”

“Meantime,” continued Jim, “I will go up the bay and look over anything in the harbor. That will puzzle Manuel if he is after me.”

They separated, and the engineer sprang into a passing street car, and with a “so long, Jim,” disappeared. Jim reached the wharves through another street, secured a rowboat and started on his quest, which occupied his time for several hours.

It was a little after the appointed time when Jim arrived at the designated meeting place coming from across the bay in his boat.

"Call this five o'clock?" grumbled the engineer, when he joined him a moment later. "I was beginning to think that gorilla Broome had gobbled you at last. I have been hanging around for the last hour waiting for you. Well, what luck?"

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"Found some makeshifts, but not just what I want. How was it with you?"

"Failed entirely."

"Well, get into the boat," directed Jim, "and we will talk things over as we go along."

"Where are you going now?"

"Out to take a look for the Sea Eagle, and see if she is still there."

"You haven't told me what you found," persisted Berwick.

"One thing I am sure of, I lost that fellow Manuel."

"See anything of him?"

"Not a thing. Maybe he was after you instead of me."

"Heaven forbid," ejaculated Berwick, with a half glance backward.

"So you did not find a ship for us?" repeated Jim.

"There doesn't seem to be anything in port that we can get. Just missed getting one, though. Martinex sold a ship this morning that would have just suited us."

"That's tough," sighed Jim. "We have got to have one before Broome gets away."

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"Don't know where you are going to get it."

"Neither do I," returned Jim. "But we are like the boy and the hedgehog, 'We have just got to get one.'"

By this time they had come within sight of where the Sea Eagle lay riding quietly at her anchor, but not going close enough to be recognized by any on board who might be on the watch.

"There isn't any signs of their getting ready to sail," decided Jim, after a few moments study of the yacht. "So I think we are safe for another day."

"There is something that would suit us to a T," remarked Berwick on their way back, indicating a trim looking schooner-rigged yacht. "She's a beauty," he observed enthusiastically.

The yacht seemed to rest as lightly upon the water as a sea bird. Long, low, with not too much freeboard, it rose and fell on the waves, tugging at the anchor chains as though impatient to slip her leash and bound away on her course. It was painted in a pale metallic yellow that glittered in the rays of the setting sun like gold.

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"The owner of that boat won't hire her," declared Berwick. "I bet he thinks more of her than he does of his wife."

"I don't believe he has one," declared Jim. "Almost as good as the Sea Eagle, isn't she?"—which was high praise from Jim. "Perhaps we could hire her. We might take a look at her."

"The Storm King!" he exclaimed, when they came near enough to read the name on the bow. "Why that is the boat the old captain told us about when he had the brush with Broome."

"*Brush* with *Broome* is good," said Berwick, with a laugh, "but I thought he said that boat was in the South Seas."

"Must have come in. The captain said Singleton owned her. Maybe he would like to charter her. We'll try him anyhow. Storm King, ahoy!" hailed Jim pulling up to the side of the yacht.

"Boat ahoy," answered a sailor on deck.

"Is the captain on board?" asked Jim.

"D'ye mean Captain Wilkins?"

"I guess yes," answered Jim, "I would like to speak to him."

"I admire your nerve, Jim," said Berwick, in an undertone.

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"Coming on board, sir?" asked the sailor, making ready to heave a small line.

"Yes," returned Jim, "heave away."

Catching the line the sailor had thrown, Jim and Berwick climbed the gangway ladder to the deck where they were met by Captain Wilkins, a grizzled old seaman, attired in an undress uniform. He was tall, stoutly built, with an alert air about him that impressed both Jim and Berwick favorably at the start.

"How do you do, gentlemen?" The captain greeted them with punctilious politeness, "glad to meet you."

"And we are very glad to meet you, Captain Wilkins," returned Jim. "This is a fine boat you have."

"Isn't she," returned the captain with enthusiasm. "There was never a better come out of a shipyard. Look at her lines. Why she sets on the water like a duck. And roomy, too. She ain't one of the slim waisted kind where you don't have room to turn around. Why, Lord love you, lads, ye could be no more comfortable if you put up at the Palace Hotel."

"You're right there, captain," agreed Berwick, "I never saw a prettier boat. I can see you carry quite an armament." [Pg 40]

"Oh, that was for use in the South Seas. She was engaged in trade down there, and we used to have a brush occasionally with the pirates. Not of late, however, for they learned to leave her alone."

"Do you own her?" asked Jim.

"Haven't such good luck. Wish I did. No, she belongs to a professor with a long name, though I'm blessed if I know what he's going to do with her. Just bought her a couple of months ago, and fixed her all up. Overhauled the hull and rigging, put in new tackle and fixed up the engines as good as new."

"Do you think he would sell her?" asked Jim.

"Not him," responded the captain. "He has just got her fixed to suit him. She's fit for a queen now. Just come below and take a look around."

Accepting the invitation, Jim and Berwick went below and inspected the staterooms and found that they fully justified the captain's praise.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" exclaimed Berwick, "it looks more like a lady's boudoir than a ship's cabin." [Pg 41]

"I fancy you've hit it, don't you know," agreed the captain, "I kind of fancy that he's going off on a bridal tour."

"Where is the professor now?" asked Jim.

"He's off East somewhere," replied the captain. "I wouldn't be surprised if he's gone after the lady."

"Much obliged to you, captain," said Jim, when they had gone up on deck again, "I'm awfully sorry she can't be bought. I think she would have just suited us."

"You can't never tell," observed the captain, philosophically, when they were leaving, "you might hunt up the perffesser when he gets back. Perhaps the lady might change her mind. Such things have happened."

"So I have learned," laughed Berwick. "Well, goodbye, captain. We may act on your advice."

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 42]

WHEREIN ARE SEVERAL SURPRISES.

John Berwick had taken the oars on leaving the Storm King, and had pulled for some time in the direction of the city. Without speaking, he gave undivided attention to his task, while Jim seated in the stern sheets, was also silent, lost in thought.

"Well, Jim," began Berwick, after a time, as they were nearing the city wharves, "have you decided on your next move?"

"Yes," responded Jim, rousing himself. "The next thing I am going to do is to get dinner."

"Then," continued Jim, "I am going to bed and get a good night's sleep and make a fresh start in the morning."

"A most sensible thing, Jim," agreed the man at the oars.

"That's what Broome is going to do, too."

"What?" asked Jim.

"Make a good start in the morning."

"Can't help it if he does," growled Jim. "Have you anything better to suggest?"

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"No, I suppose that we have done all that we can."

"But not all that we are going to do!" snapped Jim. "I'll find some way of squaring our accounts."

"Hallo!" he cried in an undertone a moment later. "Now what do you think of that?"

"What is it?" asked Berwick in alarm.

"Look there on the wharf."

"By the beard of Neptune! You're right!" exclaimed Berwick, dropping his oars in his surprise, and nearly capsizing the boat as he grabbed for one.

"Easy there, old fellow," cautioned Jim, "remember I haven't got my bathing suit on."

"What in the name of all that is wonderful is *he* doing there?"

"Looks as if he was taking a nap," said Jim. "Sh! Don't wake him!" as Berwick with his hand to his mouth was about to call. "We'll crawl up on him and take him by surprise."

"Make him think old Broome has got him," chuckled the engineer.

Berwick pulled the boat gradually up to the wharf, and after making fast, the two conspirators climbed up on to the wharf and crept toward the unsuspecting Juarez, as has already been told in the opening chapter of this book.

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Juarez had not recognized his antagonist, and struggled furiously. The two rolled and tumbled about on the floor of the wharf, there being no time or opportunity for any explanation. Berwick, who had watched the outcome of the "surprise" with amusement, thinking it had gone far enough, was about to interfere, when Jo and Tom, who had come up unobserved, threw themselves into the melee, and in a trice had Jim secure and powerless to move.

"Whew!" panted Juarez. "That was a close call."

"I told you to watch out!" declared Jo. "But it isn't Broome."

"Jo! Tom!" called Berwick, who was shaking with laughter at the turn the affair had taken. He stepped out of the shadow where he had been hiding.

"Hallo!" cried Tom, suspiciously. "Who is it?"

"It is I, John Berwick," responded the engineer, between peals of laughter. "Better let your captive up, but keep out of his reach. It's Jim."

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"Jim!" exclaimed Jo and Tom together. "What is Jim doing here?"

"Just giving Juarez a little surprise party," explained Berwick.

Promptly while still talking the boys had released Jim, who got on his feet sputtering and angry.

"Hold on, Jim," expostulated Berwick. "It's all your own fault. You brought it on yourself. But, I say, Juarez, where did you come from?"

"Just came on from home," said Juarez. "Thought I'd give *you* a surprise."

"You did all right," laughed Berwick. "It seems to have been a surprise party all around."

"Ho!" cried Jo, "that ain't all, we've got a bigger surprise yet."

"What is that?"

"What do you say to a trip to the South Seas and a search for a treasure island?"

"For a what?"

"What are you talking about?" demanded Jim, who had been slowly recovering his good humor.

"A trip to the South Seas," reiterated Jo.

"I say," interposed Berwick, "I thought you said, Jim, that the first thing you were going to do was to get dinner. I begin to feel a hollowness in my interior that needs attention. Suppose we postpone explanations until we have had something to eat." [Pg 46]

"Now, you're talking sense," agreed Tom. "And we'll hunt up the professor and have him, too."

"The professor!" exclaimed Jim. "Who is he?"

"Oh, the professor with a name as long as the alphabet," replied Jo. "He can explain better than we can."

"The professor with the long name!" cried Jim and Berwick simultaneously. "What do you know about such a man?"

"Nothing," replied the boys, "except that he has engaged us to go on the Storm King for a treasure hunt. What is the matter with him?"

"Well, that beats all!" said Berwick weakly.

"What's all the palaver about anyhow?" demanded Jo. "I thought we were going to get something to eat before we had any more talk."

"Come on," said Berwick. "I know I'm dreaming, but want to get the dinner before I wake up."

"Where is the professor?" demanded Jim.

"He's at the Golden Gate Hotel," answered Jo. "We all came on together and went to the hotel. Then we came out to hunt you up. We were going to get a boat and row out to the Sea Eagle." [Pg 47]

"Lucky you didn't," returned Jim. "Old Bill Broome has got the Sea Eagle again."

"He has!" cried Jo and Tom in consternation, "what did you let him take her for?"

"That was unavoidable," volunteered Berwick. "He has some illegal claim which Jim can't upset, the lawyers say."

"Can't we get her back again?" asked Juarez.

"We certainly will," answered Jim, "now that you are all here. I'm awfully glad to have your help."

"Let's go and see the professor," suggested Juarez. "Perhaps he will help us out."

"Of course, he will," said Tom. "He'll know just what to do."

"Which is more than we do," remarked Berwick to himself.

CHAPTER VI.

[Pg 48]

THE PROFESSOR'S STORY.

It was only a short walk to the Golden Gate Hotel, where they found that the professor was in his room. They sent to him to ask if he would see them. A moment later the bellboy returned, accompanied by a spare but sinuously built man of medium height. It was difficult to judge his age, though Jim conjectured him to be about forty. Still, he might have been either ten years older or younger. He had a sharp but pleasant face that had been warmed to a deep brown by the ardent rays of the tropic sun. His moustache and full beard in the fashion of the day, was dark brown, almost black, and was closely trimmed like his hair, which was quite gray—an individual that you would know at once as a man that had done something worth while. His movements were deliberate, but so easy and graceful that there was not a fraction of wasted effort, and much quicker than they appeared to be. His eyes were clear and penetrating, and, as Juarez expressed it, "seemed to look right through you." [Pg 49]

"That's the professor," whispered Jo to Jim as the man came into the rotunda where the boys were waiting. "There isn't much of him, but he's all there."

Coming toward them, he cast a rapid glance over the group that seemed to appraise them all in one moment.

"You are James Darlington," he said in a pleasant drawl, advancing to Jim with outstretched hand. "I would recognize you anywhere from your likeness to your brothers. I am very glad to meet you. And," turning to the engineer.

"Mr. Berwick," answered Jim. "He is the chief engineer of the Sea Eagle."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Berwick," said the professor. "I suppose, Mr. Darlington, that these young gentlemen have told you about my expedition. Not yet. Oh, by the way, have you dined? No? So much the better. Neither have I, so we will have dinner first and our talk later."

"But," objected Jim.

"Objection overruled," returned the professor promptly. "You are my guests to-night. I hope you are hungry." [Pg 50]

"No," replied Berwick, "we are way beyond that. We're starved."

"Then we won't delay any longer," returned the professor with a low laugh that was pleasant to hear, and leading the way to the dining room.

"Shall I order the meal?" he asked, when they were seated at the table. "There are some dishes they have here that I can specially recommend."

"All right," said Tom. "I'm ready to tackle anything."

When the meal, during which all reference to the purpose which had brought them together was strictly tabooed, was over, the professor invited them to his rooms and told them to make themselves at home, and he would explain the purpose he had in view.

"Now," began the professor, settling himself in a big chair and lighting a curious looking pipe, "where shall I start?"

"That's a queer looking pipe," interjected Tom, who had been regarding the object with a good deal of interest.

"It is a little odd," agreed the professor. "What do you think it is?"

"Looks like a skull of some kind," ventured Jim. [Pg 51]

"Not a bad guess," replied the professor. "It is part of the skull of an ophidian."

"An o' what?" ejaculated Tom.

"Not an owat," corrected the professor, "but a giant ophidian of palazoic times."

"Gracious!" cried Tom. "I thought it was something awful, but I didn't suppose it was as bad as that."

"I suppose there is a story connected with it," said Berwick.

"Yes," replied the professor, "rather a tragic, though a common enough one in that region."

"We would like to hear it," suggested Jo.

"Well," began the professor slowly, "imagine if you can the depth of a tropical jungle with a wilderness of tangled vegetation, of arching palms and giant forms whose fronds sway in the air high above a man's head. Through this tangle there creeps a naked savage intent on the hunt for some animal upon which he can feed. In front of him, pendulous from an over hanging branch there falls a rounded body like a mighty cable, whose green and yellow colorings mix in with those of bush and tree. As the savage creeps beneath, there is a sudden motion in the cable. It comes to life and coils about the man. [Pg 52]

"With a shrill cry of fear, the man tries to unloosen the deadly folds, grasping the slimy serpent about the throat in a desperate clutch. But all in vain. They writhe and struggle, but neither relax their hold, and they fall to the ground beneath the arching palms.

"The seasons come and go. The ferns and palms die and bury the snake and his victim beneath the fallen leaves and floods bring down the waste from the hills and cover them more completely."

"My goodness!" cried Tom. "Did you see it?"

"Not actually," answered the professor. "All that happened a long time, years, centuries, aeons, perhaps, ago. What I know is that one day on making an excavation we found the two skeletons, that of the man and the snake in such a position as to indicate the story I have told you. I picked up the skull and the fancy took me to have it mounted and made into a pipe. But that isn't getting on with the business."

"Are you a zoologist?" asked Berwick.

"No," replied the professor. "I suppose you are thinking of my title. I use that because people generally know me better that way, and—" he smiled broadly—"it's easy to say. I am a mineralogist—a mining engineer. I got the title of professor from a college back East where I lecture occasionally on mineralogy and petrology. People haven't time to write my name though it's not so difficult to pronounce."

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"Sure enough," said Jim. "I do not know your name yet."

"Let me write it for you," said the professor. And taking a sheet of paper this is what he penned.

Featheringstonehaughleigh.

"You will always be just plain professor to me," determined Jim, and there was a general laugh.

"To resume," went on the professor, "for the past three or four years I have been down in the South Sea Islands prospecting. Acting for an English syndicate which had an idea that there were some gold or silver mines that could be developed."

"Did you find any?" questioned Jim.

"None that were worth while, but while I was there I came across an old sailor who had a story of a fabulously rich mine that was located on one of the islands. He didn't know just where, and had been hunting for it for a good many years, traveling from island to island in his quest."

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"Couldn't he find it?"

"All he had to guide him was a rudely drawn map of the island that was located somewhere in the Southern seas. He worked all alone, for he was afraid to share his secret with any for fear that they would kill him to get it all."

"Are they as bad as that down there?" asked Tom.

"About as bad as they are made, a good many of them are," replied the professor. "But, to get on with my story, it happened that I was enabled to do him a good turn on one occasion, and he confided his secret to me. I tried to help him to find the island, but, as the longitude and latitude were rather vague, we couldn't locate it. I helped him all I could, and when he was taken down with the fever, just before he died he gave me the map on the condition that if I found the mine I would share with his family, which I agreed to do."

"Do you think there was any foundation for his story?" asked Jim.

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"I think there is. At least I thought there was enough in it to give up my work for the syndicate and organize an expedition to hunt for it. It seems, according to Brook's story, John Brook was his name, that his father when a young man was a sailor on an English vessel. On one of his voyages, his ship was captured by pirates and the crew were made prisoners. They were carried to the pirates' lair on an island away from the usual track.

"Here, those who did not join the pirates were compelled to do all the rough work about the place. As there was no means of getting away from the island except by the pirates' vessel, they were not kept very close watch of, and were allowed the freedom of the place. This island, it would seem from his description, was of volcanic origin, and had a mountainous ridge, several hundred feet in height at one end. As this part of the island was exceedingly rough and rocky it had no attraction for the pirates, who kept to the low ground along the shore.

"In one of his rambles about the island the sailor came upon a ravine leading up into the mountain, and he followed it up to where it ended in a fissure in the rocks. He was curious to see what the inside looked like, and returning another day, entered the fissure, which lead into a large cavern, where, according to his story, the walls were glittering with gold."

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"Fool's gold," interjected Berwick.

"So I thought at first," responded the professor, "but Brooks said that his father picked up a half dozen nuggets ranging in size from that of a bullet to that of a walnut. He seems, like his son, to have been a secretive sort of a man, for he kept his discovery from his shipmates. From time to time he made visits to the mine as he had opportunity, gathering the nuggets, which he kept concealed about his person until he had accumulated a considerable store, hoping that some time he would be able to make his escape, which, with several of his companions, he was finally able to do."

"How did he manage to get away?" asked Jo.

"It seems, from the story, that he and some of his shipmates, having procured a small boat, which they secreted at the mountainous end of the island, and stocked with provisions, they set out on a dark and stormy night when there was less chance of detection. The storm developed into a gale which they ran before, and which drove them many miles, bringing them into the course of trading vessels, one of which a day or so later, picked them up and landed them in a Chilian port. Here Brooks sold a nugget and got money enough to get home. On his return he talked much of the mine, and drew a map of it for his son, who started out in search of it."

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"How did he expect to find it when he didn't know its location?" questioned Jim.

"He had it figured out something like this. The place where they were picked up by the vessel was about latitude 9 south, longitude 129 west. Now, when they were picked up they had been driving for some thirty-six hours before a southwest wind at not less than fifteen knots an hour. This would make about five hundred and forty miles they had come from the island, which must, therefore, lie somewhere between five or six hundred miles to the southwest."

"I should think that would be the spot where he would look for it," said Juarez.

"That is what he did, and so have I," was the reply, "but we were, neither of us, able to locate it."

"Do you think it really exists?" asked Jim.

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"I am quite certain of it," answered the professor. "At any rate, I am going to make another attempt, and I want you to go along with me."

"What do you want with us?" questioned Jim.

"Well," replied the professor, slowly, "I need some efficient help, and I have had my eye on you boys for some time. I had heard of you, that you were thoroughly trustworthy and could be depended upon in any emergency, and I decided that you were just the kind of companions I wanted. But I may as well tell you right at the start that this is not going to be a picnic party; we are going to have our work cut out for us, and plenty of it, so if you go along you are likely to see some pretty exciting times before we get through."

"That don't scare us any," put in Jo.

"I didn't think it would," the professor went on, "and if it turns out as I believe it will, we shall all have all the money we need for the rest of our lives."

"But why should you take us in?" persisted Jim.

"Why, if we should succeed in finding the treasure," the professor explained, "it would be a great temptation to those who learned of it to use any means, fair or foul, to get possession of it. That is one of the reasons I want you. I feel that I can depend upon you through and through."

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"I think you can," responded Jim quietly, but not the less emphatically. "What we say we are ready to stand by."

"I am quite sure of it. Now, the proposition I have to make is this: I will finance the expedition, taking all the risk. Now wait"—to Jim, who was about to interrupt. "If we succeed I will take one-half of what we get. Out of my half I will provide for Brook's family. The other half I will divide, one quarter for you and one quarter to the crew. How does that strike you?"

"That's fair enough," agreed the boys.

"Should we fail, I will pay you for your time."

"Oh, we'll take our chances on that," broke in Jo. "We'll get enough fun out of the trip to pay for that."

"When do you want to start?" asked Jim.

"I'm ready now. If you are, I think we can get off within a day or two."

"I would like to go with you," went on Jim, "but there is something I would like to attend to first." [Pg 60]

"May I ask what that is?" inquired the professor.

Whereupon Jim told him of the seizing of the Sea Eagle, and of the abduction of the Senorita de Cordova.

"Broome!" exclaimed the professor, when Jim had concluded, "is that old rascal mixed up in that?"

"Do you know him?" asked Jim in turn.

"A little," replied the professor, dryly. "He tried to work off some of his little tricks on me, but I wasn't to be caught napping. Do you happen to know a particular friend of his, one called Manuel?"

"Ugh!" broke in Berwick. "Don't speak of that incarnation of wickedness or I shall begin to smell brimstone. I'd rather contend with his satanic majesty, himself."

The professor made no comment, but asked, "Have you any plans?"

"Nothing definite," answered Jim, "except to get to the place where the girl is to be returned and see that the bargain is carried out." [Pg 61]

"Good!" agreed the professor. "That is the first step, of course. Now, if you want us, I and my boat are at your service."

Jim sprang to his feet. "Oh, thank you!" he exclaimed enthusiastically, "we shall be ever indebted."

"Don't mention it," returned the professor. "I have a little score to settle with Broome, myself. I have reason to think he is after me. In some way he has found out about the mine and the map that I have and he is ready to resort to any measures to get possession of it. So you think San Matteo is the place appointed?"

"I feel sure of it."

"Where are you stopping?" continued the professor.

"At the Commercial Hotel," replied Jim.

"Well, then we won't waste any more time. Suppose you meet me at the foot of Market street to-morrow morning at six o'clock. We will then go on board of the Storm King and be ready to take up the chase at once if the emergency arises. It is late now, too late for you to go aboard, so I will arrange for Jo and Tom to stay here to-night." Then to Jim and Juarez he added: [Pg 62]

"Good-night, and remember to-morrow it's six o'clock sharp."

"Good-night," responded those addressed. "We'll be there."

A room adjoining that occupied by the professor was secured for the boys and their baggage was brought up from the office where it had been temporarily deposited.

CHAPTER VII.

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THE STORM KING.

It was still lacking a few minutes of the hour named when Jim, Juarez, and Berwick, who did not intend to be left out of the venture, arrived with their handbags at the wharf at the foot of Market street. The professor had not yet arrived. The sun had risen above the hills, and the place was in heavy shadow. Putting down their bags upon the wharf, the boys walked to the water edge and began a discussion of the merits of the boats at anchor in the harbor. They were soon joined by Jo and Tom.

Unobserved, a dwarfish figure stole noiselessly from the shadow, and seizing upon the nearest bag—it was Jim's—he ran swiftly down the wharf. Not quickly, however, as to

escape the watchfulness of Juarez, who, to make up for the dereliction of the previous evening, was especially alert. With a shout of alarm to the others, Juarez set off at once in pursuit of the flying figure, which had already disappeared around a corner. Jim and Tom followed more leisurely, depending upon Juarez to run down the culprit. Berwick and Jo remained as a guard over the rest of their baggage.

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"What happened?" cried Jo.

"That villain, Manuel," replied Berwick. "He has made off with Jim's handbag. He seems to be everywhere at once."

"Juarez will catch him," said Jo, confidently.

"I hope so," returned Berwick, "but an eel has nothing on him for slippiness."

And so it proved, for the others came straggling back, one by one, without having found any trace of the Mexican or the bag.

"That's rather an unauspicious beginning to our trip," commented Berwick. "Did you have anything of importance in your bag, Jim?"

"Nothing but my clothes," replied Jim, ruefully. "But it's bad enough having him carry them off right in front of us. That's another score I have to settle with him."

"He will be carrying some of us away, if we aren't careful," put in Jo.

"Hallo, look there! What in the name of goodness is that coming?" cried Juarez, indicating a strange object which was advancing down the wharf.

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Seen in the half-light of the morning, it seemed to consist principally of arms and legs which were wildly waving in the air.

"Looks like a big devil fish," cried Tom. "Better look out, boys."

But as it came nearer it resolved itself into two figures, one of which, the larger, was carrying the smaller, which latter was squirming and struggling in an effort to escape.

"It's the Professor!" cried Juarez, "but what the mischief has he got there?"

"That's it!" cried Jim, joyfully. "He's got the 'mischief' himself. It's Manuel."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Jo and Tom, running forward to meet him. "Where did you get him?"

"You will find your bag back upon the wharf," explained the professor, when he came near, holding the snapping, snarling object up in the air with a vicelike grip on the waistband of its trousers. "And mine, too," he added, as the boys started off on a run in the direction indicated.

"I caught this viper sneaking along with a bag that I knew did not belong to him, and that I took to belong to some of you. What do you think we had better do with this thing?" indicating Manuel.

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"I think," observed Berwick, "we had better take it on board with us and put it in a cage like any other wild beast."

"Not a bad suggestion, that," agreed the professor. "That's about the best thing we could do with him."

But with a sudden twist the wily Mexican slipped from his loose trousers, leaving the garment in the professor's grasp.

"Hi—stop him!" shouted Jo, making a futile attempt to seize him.

But with an inarticulate snarl of rage, the Mexican made a headlong plunge from the wharf into the water, disappearing from sight.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the professor, holding up the empty trousers. "He's shed his skin like the snake he is. He had better take them along," tossing them into the water.

"We will get him when he comes up," cried Tom.

But, although the boys ran along the string piece of the wharf looking for him to reappear, they saw nothing more of him. An officer in uniform was called and told of the circumstances. After watching for some time they were obliged to conclude that the villainous Mexican had at last met his just desert.

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"Well," remarked Jo, at length, "I guess we have seen the last of him."

"I sincerely hope so," returned Berwick, "but that fellow has more lives than a cat."

"There doesn't seem to be any use of waiting any longer," said the professor. "He doesn't seem to be coming back. There is nothing we can do and we may as well go on."

By this time the sun was up, and the wharf was beginning to be astir with people. The boatmen were coming and going over the bay, intent on business. Hailing one of the larger boats, which was rowed by two Hawaiians, the professor asked them if they could carry the party out to the yacht.

"Si, senor," replied one of the rowers. "Take you all; no sink the boat."

Although the boat sank nearly to the gunwales when they were all on board, and they were uncomfortably crowded, still the water was calm and the trip to the yacht, which was anchored about a quarter of a mile out, was made without any mishap.

"Well, what do you think of my ship?" asked the professor, when they drew up alongside the Storm King. [Pg 68]

"She's as pretty as—as—" began Jo.

"As a picture," added Tom.

"As a pink," supplemented Juarez.

"As she can be," finished Tom.

"Wait until you get on board," interposed the professor.

"We have been on board," put in Jim.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the professor. "When?"

"Yesterday," replied Jim. "Berwick and I called on the captain. We thought perhaps we could secure her for our trip."

"That expresses your opinion," said the professor with a laugh. "You wouldn't have wanted her unless you thought she was pretty good."

"That's right," agreed Jim. "She looked good to me."

"Good morning, captain," called the professor to Captain Wilkins, who was standing by the gangway waiting to receive them. "I have brought out some young men who are going to show us how to sail the yacht."

"Good morning, professor," replied the captain. "Same to you, gentlemen. They say you can't teach an old dog new tricks, but I think it is never too late to learn. If you have any new tricks of seamanship I shall be glad to learn them." [Pg 69]

"That's only a joke of the professor's captain," replied Jim. "All we know is enough to stand watch, and do our trick at the wheel if need be."

"Well said, lad," responded the captain, heartily. "Are you going to make a voyage with us?"

"Yes," replied the professor, "they are booked for the trip. Now, how soon do you think we can get away?"

"Well, now that depends," replied the captain, rubbing his chin, thoughtfully. "Did you bring the new engineer along with you?"

"The new engineer?" asked the professor. "What do you mean?"

"Don't you know, sir," replied the captain, "Mr. Ward has gone? 'Twas day before yesterday he went ashore, and when he came back he had another man with him. Said he had a better job, and was going to leave. Said this other man was going to take his place. Thought he had it all arranged with you."

"The first I have heard of it," said the professor.

"I told him I had nothing to do with it," went on the captain. "If you said it was all right, it was all right." [Pg 70]

"So, we haven't any engineer," said the professor. "That's awkward. I suppose we shall have to lose a lot of time while we hunt up another."

"Why not Mr. Berwick?" suggested Jim. "He's a first class engineer, and he wants to go with us anyway."

"Why, of course," replied the professor. "Never thought of that. How stupid of me. How is it, Mr. Berwick, will you take the place?"

"Suits me to the dot," replied the engineer. "Wanted to go along, and glad to be of use."

"All right, Mr. Berwick. Suppose you take hold at once and look things over."

"Very well, sir," replied Berwick. "Lucky I brought my traps along." Picking up his bag he descended into the engine room followed by Juarez.

"Well, how is it?" inquired the professor, when Berwick came on deck again a little later. "Everything all right?"

"Indeed no," replied Berwick. "Looks as if somebody had been tampering with the engine. Lot of loose bolts and nuts. If she had been started up there would have been a pretty smash-up. However, I think two or three hours' work will put it all right." [Pg 71]

"That must be some of Broome's work, I suppose," commented the professor. "Bribed the engineer. You see what we have ahead of us, boys. Go ahead and do the best you can, Mr. Berwick. But I suppose we had better have breakfast first. Got anything to eat on board, captain?"

"Fully provisioned, sir," replied the captain. "I told your steward that you would want breakfast and I think he has it ready."

"Very well, then," said the professor. "That seems to be the next thing in order."

A handsome, and what was more important, a very competent man, the steward proved to be. The professor explained that ever since his early youth Pedro had been in his employ, and his father before him for many years.

CHAPTER VIII.

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THE JOURNEY BEGINS.

"Well, boys," said the professor, "have you had enough breakfast?"

"I don't know whether I have had enough or not," responded Jo. "But I'm afraid I can't eat any more."

"That's bad," remarked the professor. "I'm afraid there is something wrong with you. Still, if you go on deck, perhaps you will be better by dinner time. But while we are down here you might pick out your staterooms. This is the captain's room, and this is mine. That is the engineer's room. But you can take any of the others you want."

Looking over the rooms about which there was really little choice, Jo and Tom selected one to their liking, and Juarez decided on the invitation of John Berwick to room with him as he was going to act as assistant engineer on the voyage. This left Jim with a cabin to himself.

The boys had but just settled the matter when they were startled by a series of loud and angry exclamations from the professor. [Pg 73]

"Now, what do you think of that?" he cried, when the boys rushed into the saloon where he was standing holding up his handbag in which a long slit had been cut with a sharp knife.

"Their audacity passes all bounds!" he went on wrathfully. "They have got it at last."

"What is lost?" asked Jim.

"The chart, the map of the island," replied the professor. "I don't know as it will do any one else much good. Besides the points of the compass it has only mystifying figures on it, but it's a bad loss for all that."

"Are you sure it is gone?" asked Jim.

"Well, it isn't here," replied the professor. "Fortunately, I can remember the latitude and longitude, which is really the important thing."

"What was the paper like?" put in Tom.

"It was just a rude chart," answered the professor. "It was in a flat box. I put it in the box to keep it safe from getting wet or worn out. I got tired of carrying it with me so I put it in the

bag last night, not intending the bag should get out of my sight. And I don't know when it did."

"Looks as if we had spies all around us," said Jim.

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"It certainly does," agreed the professor. "But now that we are on the yacht we will be safe."

"Humph!" muttered Tom, who had just returned to the cabin after a moment's absence, "I'm not so sure about that, but," he continued, "was the box anything like this?" He held up to their gaze a thin oblong tin box.

"Why, it looked like that!" exclaimed the professor, taking the box Tom offered to him. "Why, it is it! What are you doing with it?"

"I found it in my bag this morning," explained Tom. "I thought that it belonged to Jo, and that he had dropped it in by mistake."

"I suspect that is just what I did in an absent-minded spell this morning," said the professor. "The joke is on me, boys. Perhaps it is a lucky thing that I did it, for I think now, seeing this slit in my bag that the best thing I can do is to have you take care of it for me."

"Don't you think you had better keep it?" protested Jim.

"Not after this experience," replied the professor, holding up the cut bag. "Besides, I think it will be decidedly safer with you."

"Very well, then," replied Jo. "We will do our best to take care of it."

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"I know that," said the professor.

Jo and Tom spent the morning going over the yacht getting acquainted with its equipment and with the crew. The latter were mostly Hawaiians with one Irishman, an Englishman and the Mexican steward. Juarez was busy down in the engine room with Berwick, and Jim and the professor were in consultation in the cabin over their plans to outwit Broome.

"The Marjorie of Liverpool," remarked Tom. The speaker was standing on the after deck studying the vessels in the harbor. He read the name he spoke through a pair of binoculars. It was a small steamship anchored not far from the Storm King. They had passed it early in the morning on their way to the yacht, but he had not noticed it particularly until now.

"I wonder where she came from, and where she is going?" went on Tom.

"From Liverpool, I suppose," replied Jim, who had joined them, "and quite likely she is going back again."

"Wonder how she got way out here?" continued Tom.

"You are full of wonder to-day," laughed Jim. "Steamships go anywhere and everywhere. Here comes the captain. We can ask him."

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"What is it you want to know?" inquired the captain, who had overheard Jim's remark.

"We were just talking about that steamship there, the Marjorie, and speculating as to what she is and what she's doing here."

"It's pretty hard to tell that," replied the captain, after taking a look through the glasses. "She's English built and rigged, that's certain, but I don't know what she's doing so far from her home port."

"She has good lines and looks as though she might have speed," criticized Jim.

"Ay, ay, lad, ye're right there," agreed the captain. "She looks like a cross between a yacht and a trader. I suspect that is what she is, a trader."

"She seems to have a big crew for a trader," said Jim, who had been studying the vessel while talking. "And she looks as though she might carry a pretty heavy armament, too."

"Have you noticed that?" observed the captain. "Ye have a good eye, lad, and a quick mind. I was just thinking the same thing myself. I wouldn't wonder if she was doing some contraband trade down the coast. I see she is going out, soon."

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"How do you know?" asked Jo.

"She is getting steam up."

"So is the Sea Eagle," exclaimed Tom. "They have started their fires. She must be going

out, too.”

“Looks like it,” put in Jo. “There is Broome now, with some of his men.”

Pulling along close under the stern of the Marjorie, there was seen a small boat in which was Captain Broome with his chief subordinates.

“See anything of Manuel in their boat?” asked Jo.

“No,” replied Tom. “He isn’t in the boat. They must have left him behind.”

“He must have been drowned,” said Jo.

“I don’t know about that,” replied Tom, “but it is certain he isn’t in the boat; there are four men besides the captain and on top of their other baggage is a big hamper.”

“How’s the engine, Mr. Berwick?” asked the professor of the engineer, calling down into the engine room.

“All right now, sir,” replied the engineer. “We are just going to get up steam.”

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“Very good,” said the professor. “Keep it up, for we may want to start any minute. Keep your eyes on the Sea Eagle, captain, and let us know if she shows signs of getting under way.”

“Ay, ay, sir!” responded the captain.

“Feel any better now, Jo?” asked the professor, with a smile, “it is pretty near time to eat again.”

“I’m all right again now, professor,” responded Jo.

“Better get ready then, for I hear Pedro rattling the dishes down there.”

“I think”—began Tom, when they were down in their staterooms taking a washup before the noon meal.

“That it is time for dinner,” interrupted Jo.

“No, sonny,” replied Tom. “My thoughts are not as your thoughts, always on the gross material, but—” Going to the door, he called Jim into the room. Then, after a look into the saloon, closed the door.

“Hist!” whispered Jo. “The plot thickens.”

“What is it now, Tom?” asked Jim.

“I think”—began Tom, in a low tone.

“You said that before,” interrupted Jo. “But I don’t believe it.”

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“That it would be a good plan,” continued Tom, “to hide the chart in some safe place.”

“Not half a bad idea, don’t you know,” drawled Jo, “but where is that safe place?”

“I have an idea,” went on Tom.

“Clutch it before it gets away,” advised Jo.

“That we can make a secret closet where we can put it.”

“That is a good scheme,” agreed Jim, “if—”

“Hear! Hear!” broke in Jo.

“Here, as well as anywhere,” replied Tom.

“What is your plan?” asked Jim.

“I was thinking of making a secret drawer or closet in this cabin.”

“Do you think we could do it?” asked Jo.

“I don’t know,” replied Jim. “We can tell better after we try. The proof of the—”

“Eating is in the pudding,” interrupted Jo.

“Let’s go ahead and do it.”

“Where do you think is a good place to make it?” asked Tom, looking around the room, which was paneled in mahogany. “We might take up a board in the floor.”

"But some one might get at it from underneath," objected Jo.

"No danger of that," replied Tom. "Who is going to look for it?"

"Well, if there is no danger of anyone looking for it, what is the use of hiding it?" demanded Jo.

"That's right," agreed Jim. "If we are going to do it at all, let's do it thoroughly. If we can take out one of the panels, we can make a dandy place."

"That's the idea," chimed in Tom.

"I think we can take out one of these panels," continued Jim, examining the wainscoating carefully, "but we must first get the professor's permission."

"We will ask him the first thing after dinner," cried Tom.

"And there is dinner, now," said Jo, as the sound of a gong resounded through the air.

The professor was an interesting dinner companion, and even though all felt that serious business was ahead of them, no reference was made thereto. At the conclusion of the meal Jo said:

"Professor Feather—"

"Ingstone," broke in Jim.

"Haughleigh," added Tom.

"I'm all broke up," laughed the professor.

"Can we make a hiding place in one of our staterooms?" asked Jo.

"Why, I suppose so," replied the professor. "What do you want to do, play hide and go seek?"

"In a way," laughed Jim. "We want to make a secret place in which to keep the chart."

"Oh, I see," interrupted the professor quickly. "By all means."

"You see, we can—"

"That will do," returned the professor with another laugh. "If you are going to make a secret place the fewer who know of it the more it is of a secret. Keep it to yourselves."

"Even from you?"

"From every one," said the professor emphatically. "If you need any tools or anything get them quietly."

The brothers lost no time, but at once set about making a place of concealment. Jim, who, of the three had the more genius for mechanics, taking the initiative in the work, studying carefully the artistically constructed paneling to settle upon a plan.

"Do you think it can be done so that it won't be seen?" asked Tom.

"Yes," decided Jim. "I think so. By taking off this moulding, we can saw through the edge of the panel, put on leather hinges, and I can make a spring catch. Then replace the moulding and it will never show."

"That will be easy," asserted Jo.

"Glad you think so," retorted Jim. "It will have to be done as nicely as the original work."

"When are you going to begin?"

"Now," answered Jim. "Only one can work at a time, so you may as well go on deck. I will start the job. I will take one of the panels near the floor. After I have started, we can take turns at the work. When we begin, we want to finish as soon as possible."

"All right," returned Jo. "Let it go."

When the others had gone, Jim secured from the engineer such tools as he needed, and returning to his room, closed the door. He selected a panel, and was about to take off the molding when he heard some one moving in the cabin. Whistling carelessly he opened the door of his room, but there was no one near. The steward Pedro, was busily employed at the far end of the room, and the mate was just entering the cabin.

"Strange," mused Jim. "There doesn't seem to be anyone acting suspiciously. I was sure,

though, that there was some one near the door just now." He then called to Jo, and arranged that he should stay in the cabin on guard.

Jim returned to his task, and with infinite care removed the molding from the panel. Then he called Tom below, and working alternately, in a short time they had made the secret opening to the compartment. As it was between the wall of the stateroom and the planking of the vessel, and being inaccessible from any other point, it seemed absolutely safe. The work under Jim's direction had been so deftly done that it could not be detected. It was opened by pressing a spring made of wire and placed in an adjoining panel.

Fastening the box containing the chart with a strong cord, it was lowered into the aperture and the cord fastened to a hook at one side of the opening.

"There," said Jo, when the box had been lowered, and the place closed. "It will take more than a wizard to find that."

"It looks that way," agreed Tom, "but—"

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"Oh, you're a regular goat with your butts," cried Jo. "What is the matter with it?"

"Nothing," said Tom. "It is all right, but some people can see through a stone wall."

"Of course they can if it has holes in it, but there ain't any holes in this."

This task ended, they went on deck, where they found the professor and the captain intently watching the Sea Eagle, which had steam up and seemed to be about to get under way.

"I was just going to call you," said the professor. "I think that the next act is about to begin."

"Good!" cried Jim. "Let's hope they will find something doing that is not down on the program."

"Isn't it rather late to start?" asked Berwick, who had come out of the engine-room, leaving Juarez in charge.

"Not if you are ready," was the professor's answer.

"I suppose they think they can slip away from us in the dark," chuckled Jim.

"It will be something of a surprise if they find us at the Bay when they come," said Jo.

"Engine all right, Mr. Berwick?" asked the professor.

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"Working splendidly," replied Berwick.

"Very well, then," replied the professor, "we will get off at once. I see that the Sea Eagle is going to start. Will you give the word, captain?"

The captain passed the order to the boatswain, and an instant later, the crew striking into a chant began to wind up the anchor chain, and in a few moments came the call:

"Anchor apeak, sir!"

"Anchor's fast!" called the boatswain.

"Ready at the wheel," directed the captain from the bridge, where he was standing with the professor. The captain rang the bell in the engine room, the propeller revolved, slowly at first, then more quickly, and the Storm King, gathering momentum, was headed through the channel's mouth for the open sea. The voyage had begun. Anticipations and hopes ran high. What would the outcome be?

"My, but it is good to get the smell of the salt again," cried Tom.

He and Jo were standing in the bow of the boat, taking in long breaths of the salt air which blew in their faces. The spray from the waves, as they curled away from the bow, dashed over them.

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"And there is better still to come," added Jo.

"Why, here comes the Marjorie," cried Tom. "We are all moving out at once."

The party on board the Storm King had been so much interested in getting under way and in watching the Sea Eagle, that they had forgotten the other vessel until Tom had noticed it following in their wake about a mile behind. Gaining the open sea, much to the surprise of those on board the Storm King, the Sea Eagle was headed directly to the north under full speed, the heavy volume of smoke from her funnel trailing behind like a cloud.

A PLOT.

It was true that the Marjorie was following in the wake of the other ships, and some word respecting her mission will be of interest to the reader.

Our scene is once more the office of that legal adviser of unsavory reputation, to whom earlier reference has been made.

"I have some work for you to do, Captain Beauchamp."

The lawyer leaned back in his revolving chair and watched the other man with coldly critical eyes.

"Ah'm glad teh hear it, suh," replied the other in a soft southern drawl.

The two men were sitting in the inner sanctum of Attorney Reynolds' office. Unobserved, there was lying in a half opened drawer of the desk, and within easy reach of his hand a fully loaded revolver. There were but few of his clients that the lawyer received with the drawer closed.

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"Ah, what is it like?" the captain went on, after a short pause, shifting his position to a more easy one.

The captain was tall and slender, with a habitual slowness of movement that could be changed on occasion to a tiger-like celerity. His face was thin, with sharply cut features, and dusky brown in color. His eyes were black and deeply set beneath heavy black eyebrows, and a long, sweeping, black moustache hid a thin straight-lipped mouth.

"Do you know the Marjorie?" went on the lawyer.

"Ah regret ah have not the pleasure of the lady's acquaintance," drawled the captain.

"Formerly the Mercury, of nowhere in particular," added the lawyer.

The other man started up with a sudden interest.

"What about her?" he asked.

"I asked if you knew her," the lawyer went on.

"Ah reckon ah do," replied the captain with a sigh. "Ah never sailed a better boat, suh!"

"How would you like to sail her again?"

The captain started up eagerly, and then sank back again. "Ah reckon there's no such luck for me."

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"There may be," returned the lawyer, with emphasis on the may.

"What is it?" demanded the other quickly.

"I have a bit of work I want done," said the lawyer slowly. "If you do it and do it right, the command of the Marjorie is yours."

"Ah'm yoh man," answered the captain. "What is it?"

"Nothing very difficult. Do you know the Senor de Cordova?"

"No. Never heard of him. Who is he?"

"A very wealthy Mexican, the owner of a big sugar plantation in Cuba."

"Ah see. Yoh want me to capture him and hold him foh ransom?"

"You are half right," replied the lawyer. "Listen. Five days ago, his daughter, the Senorita Marie, was captured by Bill Broome. Within the next two or three days she will be surrendered upon the payment of five thousand dollars."

"And Ah'm to crap the five thousand?"

"No, wait. The money is to be paid over at Mendola."

"Ah know the place, on San Matteo Bay."

"That's it. Now, I want you to pick up the Senor and his daughter and take them on board the Marjorie—" [Pg 90]

"What is yoh plan?"

"With a few men of your own choosing you will take the San Matteo trail and meet them as they come back. It should be no great thing to take them."

"Ah reckon not. And what am ah to do with them?"

"Take them on the Marjorie."

"And then?"

"That is for you to decide," replied the lawyer. "Whatever you like. All that is desired is that they do not come back. You understand?"

"Perfectly. Yoh can be shuah they won't trouble anyone any mo'."

"Oh, they don't trouble me any," responded the lawyer. "This is a government matter. He is shipping guns and ammunition into Cuba. We represent the Cuban revolutionists."

"Ah see," the captain laughed. "Yoh represent the government." He was about to say more but thought better of it, but his thought was—the government is looking for that sugar plantation.

"If you do this and make no blunder, the Marjorie may be yours." [Pg 91]

"So," mused the captain. "The plantation is bigger than I thought."

"She is fully provisioned," went on the lawyer, "and the old armament is all aboard, stowed away in the hold. You can pick up a crew I suppose?"

"Ah reckon ah can, if any of the old boys are around. Ah'll take a look down around the Barbary coast."

"Then you understand the first thing you have to do?"

"Ah reckon ah do."

"Now, do you know Professor Featheringstone—?"

"Never mind the rest," the captain broke in. "Yoh mean a mining sharp that was down in the South Seas?"

"That's the man. Broome says that he has a chart of a treasure island which lies down that way, and he is going down to locate it."

"Broome is?"

"No, the professor. Broome has been trying to get hold of the chart, but hasn't been able. Now, the professor is going out to search for the treasure in the Storm King. He has a lot of boys, the Frontier Boys, they call them." [Pg 92]

"Ah have heard of them," said the captain, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps," suggested the lawyer, "after you have captured the senor, you might follow the Storm King and get the chart."

"Ah see," returned the captain, "but," shaking his head, "that will be difficult."

"Not so difficult when you know the arrangements made. There will be on board the Storm King a friend of yours. He is to secure, if he can, the chart. All the particulars of the arrangement you will find in this letter. Read it carefully and follow out every detail."

"Anything more?"

"Yes. Here is the contract. You will read carefully and sign."

The captain laughed, grasping without hesitation a pen. He read not a word, but laboriously penned his name at the point indicated.

"And now?" he said.

"That is all. Here is an order to Samson & Co., to turn the ship over to you. A prosperous future to you, captain."

"And to yoh, suh."

The two men looked each other in the face for a moment, then the captain silently took his departure. [Pg 93]

On leaving the lawyer's office, Captain Beauchamp went at once to the office of Samson & Co., where, on presentation of the order, the *Marjorie* was turned over to him. Thence to the Barbary coast, where he had little difficulty in picking up the crew he needed, including a man of his own type as mate. These he sent on board at once. The engineer was ordered to get everything in readiness for immediate departure. To the mate he gave directions that on the following afternoon he should set out for Playys, a small harbor near San Matteo Bay, and there await his coming.

Selecting two of the crew upon whom he could rely, the captain hired a team of horses and a driver and set out upon the road to San Matteo. They traveled without incident, stopping over night at a hotel on the way, until they came within about a mile of San Matteo. Here the driver with his horses was sent back, they proceeding the rest of the way on foot.

San Matteo Bay is a point at which it will be seen many interests are centering.

CHAPTER X.

[Pg 94]

AT SAN MATTEO BAY.

"I thought you said that the rendezvous was somewhere in the South," drawled Berwick.

He was standing with Jim and the professor on the afterdeck of the *Storm King*, watching away in the north the fast disappearing *Sea Eagle*.

"So I did, and so it is," answered Jim stoutly. "That heading to the north is only a ruse on Broome's part to lead us in the wrong direction."

"Hope you are right, but—" returned Berwick, leaving the sentence significantly unfinished. "I am going down to the engine-room again. Let me know if anything new transpires."

"Which way shall I lay our course, sir?" asked the captain, coming up to where the others were standing.

The professor, before replying, looked at Jim inquiringly.

"To the South!" insisted Jim.

"South it is then," directed the professor.

"South it is," answered the captain, going back to the bridge.

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"We will keep on that course until morning," added the professor. "And as there is a fair breeze blowing we will proceed under sail. Ask Mr. Berwick to bank the fires in the boiler."

It was now dusk. The stars were showing in the sky, and the lights of the *Sea Eagle* were lost in the mist on the horizon.

For awhile the voyagers sat around on the deck listening to the professor's stories of his experiences in the South Seas, but it had been a long and arduous day and they soon began to grow weary.

"I think," began Tom, in a pause in the talk, suppressing a yawn. "I think I shall turn in until time for my watch." It had been arranged that some one of the four should always be on deck.

"A very sensible idea," agreed the professor; "I think we will all be better for a good night's rest."

Without incident of note, all through the night the *Storm King* sped on her way south.

The party were all on deck early the next morning. It seemed on looking around that they were alone on the wide sweep of water. Way off to the west the sails of a vessel showed white like the wings of a bird on the horizon, and far away to the north was a blur from the smoke of a steamer.

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It was well along in the morning when the bold headline of the cliff that marked the entrance to San Matteo Bay came into view, and it was middle afternoon when the yacht glided into the bay and sought an anchorage.

"Broome," said the captain, "knows this harbor as he knows his cabin, but I am not familiar with any part except that near the entrance. It's full of rocks farther in, and I will anchor under the lee of these northern cliffs where I know there is sufficient depth of water."

The harbor covered an area of several square miles, and there was to be seen only one other vessel, a small lugger which lay close to the lower end of the bay.

"Well," remarked Berwick, looking about the harbor. "Our piratical friend Broome doesn't seem to have kept the appointment you made for him, Jim."

"Not yet," replied Jim, "but there is still time enough."

"And you still hold to the opinion this is the place?" asked the professor.

"I may be mistaken," replied Jim, "but I don't believe I am. In any case the morning will determine. I am for going ashore then, and will investigate." [Pg 97]

Watches were set for the night, and for each interval of two hours one of the boys was on duty. Tom was on deck during the darkest period between two and four, and shortly before the latter hour he noted at a distance, although he could not see the ship, the noise of machinery, and felt sure that a newcomer had entered the harbor.

None were surprised at early dawn to observe the Sea Eagle riding quietly at anchor well toward the inner shore of the harbor, and some two and one-half miles distant.

Alongside of the Sea Eagle was a boat of nondescript appearance, the one they had seen the night before, and it was evident that the masters of the two ships had business of importance in hand.

"By Jove, old fellow," cried Berwick, addressing Jim, "you were right after all. It is her, all right. We had better be getting ready."

"Better go fully armed," advised the professor. "You know that they are a pretty tough lot."

"Tough enough," agreed Berwick, "but I think we can take care of ourselves. I am not afraid to tackle anyone except that fiend of a Mexican. He is so little and slippery that I never feel quite safe when he is around." [Pg 98]

"I think we have seen the last of him," put in Tom.

"Perhaps," doubted Berwick, "but I don't believe it. He's got more lives than a score of cats."

"Will you need any help from the crew or myself?" asked the professor.

"No," replied Jim, "I think we can take care of the situation, and beside," he laughed, "someone will have to look after this yacht or Broome will be getting away with her."

"He will have a jolly good time doing it," asserted the professor. "By the way, Mr. Berwick, you might attach a hose to the boiler so we can give them a warm reception if they try to come on board."

"What are your plans, Jim," the professor asked.

"First and foremost to see that the compact for the surrender of their prisoner, the Senorita, is carried out. Beyond that I must be guided by circumstances."

"While Captain Broome is ashore with his men may be your opportunity to get back your ship." [Pg 99]

"I have that in mind, but any move now before she is free would add to the peril of the young girl."

While they had been talking, the long-boat had been lowered and was now alongside the gangway.

"All aboard," directed Jim.

Each member of the party was armed with a rifle and a revolver. It took but a moment for the five to get into the boat. Jim and Juarez took the oars.

"Where are you going to land, Jim," asked Berwick, who had taken the tiller. "It won't do to venture very close to the Sea Eagle."

"The first point where we can find a landing place on the north shore. They will hardly see us at this distance."

"Just over here is a good place," suggested Tom, indicating a break in the rocky cliff where the land sloped down to the water.

It was only a short pull to the shore, and ten minutes later the boat was run up on a sandy beach, and the comrades disembarked. Making the painter fast to a large rock, the party, under the lead of Jim, set out for the other end of the harbor. [Pg 100]

It was slow moving through the tangled underbrush, and nearly two hours were consumed in a roundabout trip which brought them to a point, where, themselves unobserved, a close and distinct view of the Sea Eagle and the lugger was obtainable.

Everyone on board the two boats was busily engaged in the task of transferring from the lugger's hold numerous boxes, cases and casks, which were being stored aboard the Sea Eagle.

Berwick clutched Jim's arm. "See," he gasped, "on the afterdeck! What did I tell you?"

"Manuel," muttered Jim, with almost a shudder.

"It means trouble," grumbled Berwick.

"Nonsense," responded Jim. But there was lacking the usual tone of assurance in his voice. He looked at his brothers and Juarez. No one spoke. All seemed imbued with the same feeling of inexpressible nervous concern. Was it a foreboding of some impending danger?

Very silently now the party pushed on, and a little later they were able to get a good view of the stretch of land occupying the space between the water's edge and the foot hills, which were a full mile away. [Pg 101]

It was a level plain with a few large eucalyptus trees of considerable growth clustered a short distance from the shore.

One particularly large tree of the group attracted Jim's attention, and indicating this one, he announced:

"That is where the meeting will be held."

The others looked at him in astonishment. To them the trees all looked alike.

"How do you know?" they chorused.

"See the birds flying about?" There were flying through the air a number of birds. Occasionally some of them lit for an interval, but never upon the tree Jim had pointed out.

"But what of that?" asked Tom.

"There is some one in that tree," explained Jim. "That is why, as you will notice, the birds alight on the other trees, but never upon that one."

Observing for a continuous period the actions of the birds their maneuvers seemed to confirm Jim's theory.

"This then," determined Jim, "is our place of observation when it comes to the surrendering of the Senorita and the paying of the ransom. We cannot be seen here, but can get quickly into action and upon the scene if there is need." [Pg 102]

"We have the place of ambush," said Berwick, "and the next thing to find out, if we can, is, when the villains are to complete the transaction."

"For that purpose I am going to attempt to hunt out the senor, and try to secure, if possible, an interview with him."

Jim had noticed that a faintly marked trail led inland from the shore, and a short way up the nearest hill was seen a low bungalow with out-buildings which Jim concluded was a way-house or inn, and the likely stopping place of the Senor.

"What are we to do?" asked Tom.

"You four remain here on guard and fire two shots in quick succession if I am wanted."

Saying this, Jim strode away in the direction of the foot hills, but sheltered the while from observation by the forest and underbrush.

It was as Jim surmised. On the veranda of the inn sat the senor intently reading a book. As Jim approached, no other person was in sight.

"Buena diaz, Senor," called Jim.

Instantly the Senor sprang to his feet, observing Jim for the first time and facing him with a stern, uncompromising look. [Pg 103]

"So you are concerned in this evil venture, you—"

"On the contrary," broke in Jim, himself greatly surprised. "I have come to help you."

"I have no need of help," asserted the Senor, unbending not the least, suspicion in his voice.

Jim was staggered for a moment and at a loss for words. Here was an obstacle he had not thought of. Finally he ventured the inquiry:—

"You have not, however, recovered your daughter, the Senorita?"

"No."

"And until you do, I assure you, there is grave danger."

Something in Jim's tones seemed to impress the Senor with his sincerity, and his future speech indicated the return of confidence.

"My daughter is abducted. By whom, I know not. How did you know of this?"

"Just by chance," replied Jim. "But tell me about the capture?"

"But I know nothing," protested the Senor. "She went out and came not back. Then I got word that these men,—these—" the Senor stopped. "They warned me to say nothing or that they would kill her." [Pg 104]

"Unless you paid them so much money," added Jim.

"And you know that, too. It was much—five thousand dollars—but that is nothing if I have my daughter safe again. You think they will come?"

"I think they will try to get the reward," said Jim, cautiously.

"And if they do not come, you will help me find her?" the Senor asked, looking into Jim's face.

"Assuredly," responded Jim. "But tell me about the arrangements you have made."

The Senor glanced about, then walked with Jim a little distance from the inn. There was no apparent need for the precaution, for there was no one to be seen about the place.

"At five o'clock to-day, at an appointed spot, a tree below here, I am to be met by someone who will receive the money."

"Yes," said Jim, "and you already have your men perched in the branches of the tree."

The Senor made an exclamation of intense

"It is the large eucalyptus on the margin of the grove," continued Jim. [Pg 105]

"Yes. Yes. You seem to know all."

"All I must know to aid you effectively," said Jim, earnestly. "You speak about the money, but your daughter, what of her?"

"That is arranged. She is to be seen by me before the money is given up. She is to be near at hand. I am to see her, it is promised, sitting in a small boat near the shore, and in the care of a good woman who has been her companion."

Jim could not restrain a laugh. The idea of applying any such word as "good woman" to the virago on board the Sea Eagle.

"Captain Broome's sister?" suggested Jim, inquiringly.

"Captain Broome's sister," repeated the Senor. "It is not possible. The captain is a comrade, a friend, engaged by me to carry arms and armament to my confreres in Cuba. Ah, what am I saying to you, James? My secret, in my anxiety for my daughter, my secret I have told, you must not repeat or disclose."

"Your secret is safe, Senor, but your daughter is on board the Sea Eagle now, and Broome, whatever he may be, is not to be trusted."

"I am amazed. It is true the Sea Eagle is in the harbor. So I was told by the innkeeper this morning. But I knew for what purpose, and I was glad to think that someone was near on whom I could rely in case of need. Then I have my trusted man, as you surmised, in the tree to give aid if called upon. But how know you all and so many of these things?" [Pg 106]

"Perhaps I know more. You arranged all the plans through a certain lawyer in San Francisco?"

"Yes. Yes."

"And he sold you out."

"What do you mean?"

"That he plotted with Broome to get your daughter into his hands, that they might wring another five thousand out of you."

"How dare they!" He thought a few moments, his face livid with suppressed rage. Then he continued, "They probably counted on my intense interest in Cuban affairs, of which I told you, to save themselves. But they are mistaken. I will kill them both."

"Just now," interrupted Jim, "we must attend to the business in hand."

"I put the matter in your control."

"At the hour named," suggested Jim, "do you go to the appointed place. I will be in hiding near at hand with the others of my party. There will be five of us." [Pg 107]

"And what am I to do?"

"Do exactly as you have planned. Do not, I beg of you, vary one iota. Let your man in the tree know that he must be ready for quick action."

"You have ever my thanks!" said the Senor.

Very carefully, Jim went over in anticipation every move of the arrangement. When about to take leave, the Senor wrung his hand expressing his gratitude and they parted. Jim rejoined his party and found them eating the lunch they had brought with them from the ship.

During the afternoon Jim scouted around the country to the north of them with a result that had much bearing upon the future, but he was on hand with the others long before the appointed hour.

CHAPTER XI.

[Pg 108]

ON BOARD THE SEA EAGLE.

We must now revert to the afternoon on which the redoubtable Captain Broome sailed from the harbor of San Francisco. It will be recalled that his was the first of the three vessels to leave the harbor. The captain was sitting in the cabin of the Sea Eagle in consultation with the Mexican dwarf whom, concealed in a hamper, he had smuggled on board. It was their purpose to have the boys think that the dwarf had been drowned at the time he had slipped from the professor's grasp and plunged into the waters of the bay.

The captain was sitting in a revolving chair in front of the desk, whose top was strewn with papers and charts over which he had been pouring. His thoughts apparently had not been particularly pleasing, for there was a scowl upon his hard face which looked harder than ever, and there was an ugly glitter in his eye which boded evil for whoever crossed his path. Nevertheless, the dwarf, who was seated, or rather perched, upon the top of a worn and battered sea chest at the opposite side of the room, regarded him with indifference. If there was anything upon the face of the earth or of its waters of which the Mexican was afraid or which had the power to make him blench, he had never met it. [Pg 109]

For a moment or two the captain glared at the dwarf, who returned his look indifferently.

"A nice mess you've made of this business," growled the captain.

"It wasn't my fault," returned the dwarf surlily.

"Then I suppose it was mine," snapped the captain.

The dwarf shrugged his shoulders.

"You wouldn't let me put a knife in him," he snarled venomously. "The sharks would have had him now."

"Bah!" sneered the captain. "Can't you think of anything better than that? Besides, there

are four of them. That's too clumsy, anyway. And," he went on after a moment's pause, "I don't believe you could have done it. Jim Darlington is too smart for you."

If it was the captain's intention to arouse all the malignity and vindictiveness of the hunchback's nature to the utmost, he certainly succeeded. The dwarf's eyes blazed with fire, his form trembled with rage and his voice when he spoke resembled more the hiss of an angry snake than the utterance of a human being. [Pg 110]

"Leave him to me now," he hissed. "I will make an end of this Senor James and his whole tribe."

There was a devilish malignity in the way he spoke that stirred even the captain, callous as he was.

"All right," replied the captain, "if that's the way you feel about them, I guess you'll take care of the matter all right."

Getting upon his feet with an inarticulate growl, the captain lurched across the cabin and up the companion way to the deck, where a quick glance around assured him that there was no one within eavesdropping distance. Returning to the cabin he dropped heavily into the chair again.

"So the professor is back again?"

The dwarf made a surly gesture of assent.

"Why didn't you get the chart?"

"How could I? I paid the porter five dollars to let me handle the bag for a minute, but there was nothing in it." [Pg 111]

"Why didn't you take the bag?"

"What was the good? There was nothing in it, and beside there was no chance."

"Where did he pick up those Darlington boys?"

"Who knows? He came with them on the train—all except Jim."

"What has this Jim been doing?" went on the captain.

"Nothing. He is crazy. Since I saw you, I followed him here, there, everywhere."

"Did he know you were following him?"

"He? No. He is the imbecile."

"Do you think he knows where we are going?"

"No." The dwarf laughed contemptuously. "He knows nothing. They are all of them to hunt for the treasure. He thinks no more of the girl."

"Don't be too sure of that," returned the captain. "I think he is on our trail, but we will give him the slip yet. And we will be rid of her, the day after to-morrow."

"What are you going to do with her?" asked the dwarf.

"Put her ashore at San Matteo. If we don't get rid of her pretty soon he will be bringing the whole pack down on us." [Pg 112]

"Him!" muttered the dwarf, "leave Jim to me. But he thinks more of the gold."

"Why didn't you at least get the papers from him?"

"Carambo!" hissed the dwarf. "Why didn't I? I had the bag and those clumsy gringos were chasing one another in the dark, when the professor, maledictions upon him, came in my way. Who would have looked for him there?"

"And he picked you up and spanked you like a bad little boy," said Broome, maliciously.

"Curses on him!" howled the dwarf. "But I—I, Manuel de Gorgiza," he struck himself on the chest, "will have my revenge on them all. But I fooled them. I swam under the water, and while they waited for me to come up I am under the dock, and I laugh at them all for the fools that they are. They think that I am down at the bottom of the bay, but I will have them yet."

"It is time we were getting under way," said the captain, rising. "You will have to postpone your revenge until we come back."

Going on deck, the captain gave orders to start and in a short time the Sea Eagle was on her course out through the Golden Gate. [Pg 113]

"I wonder if they will follow us," mused the captain.

It need only to be recalled that the Sea Eagle on leaving the harbor headed north, and when the captain was satisfied that he was not followed the ship's course was altered.

"The little Mexican was right. Them boys are looking for the gold," the captain decided, rubbing his gorilla-like hands together with satisfaction.

The next day, however, when the Sea Eagle had entered San Matteo Bay and Captain Broome discovered the Storm King, he almost exploded with wrath. But the dwarf, who had been standing on the afterdeck, and with a spy-glass watching the other boat, had seen the boys go on shore. His crafty mind had even then conceived a plan of revenge worthy of the arch fiend himself.

Having devised his scheme, the dwarf went at once to Captain Broome, who was on the forward deck directing the stowing away of the stuff that was being transferred from the lugger to the Sea Eagle. [Pg 114]

The captain listened attentively as the Mexican unfolded his plan. When the dwarf had concluded, Broome removed his hat and bowed graciously. His only comment was: "I take off my hat to you."

CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 115]

TREACHERY.

The Senor had passed an anxious day. He had at first thought of going on board the Sea Eagle and demand surrender of his daughter. But he feared, after the revelation made by Jim, that he would be but placing in Broome's hands opportunity for further evil.

At four o'clock, therefore, he summoned the innkeeper, who brought from the corral two horses. One the Senor mounted, and leading the other, he started for the arranged place of meeting. Jim and his party were at that moment in hiding, as had been arranged.

The task of loading the Sea Eagle had evidently been completed, and the ship itself, under the influence of the tide which was then running out, was moving very slowly toward the ocean end of the harbor.

With a begrimed and patched sail flapping listlessly, the lugger could be seen riding motionless at anchor.

There was a brief interval of suspense, then there was observed, moving toward the shore from under the lea of the lugger, a small boat. In it were three persons, all well known to Jim. The Senorita sat in the stern, and so was facing them. At the oars was a big fellow with a bristling red moustache, close-cropped hair, and evil looking black eyes. An equally big, red haired woman, Big Annie, the captain's sister, was in the bow. This woman, as Jim knew from sad experience, was as powerful as a man. [Pg 116]

When the boat grounded, Big Annie sprang lightly ashore, and walked rapidly toward the appointed tree under which stood the Senor, holding the bridles of his two horses.

The watching party hidden from observation were not close enough to the Senor to hear what was said by either he or Big Annie when they met. They saw the former take from his saddle bag a heavy package which he gave the woman.

"There is the money!" cried Jim, excitedly.

"Shall we stop them?" asked Juarez.

"No," answered Jim, "but I fear that he is making a mistake. He was not to give up the money till his daughter was on shore."

"But you are not going to let them get away with the money, are you?" asked Berwick disgustedly. [Pg 117]

"It seems we must," returned Jim. "At least we must for the present. But I mean to get that later."

"Huh!" muttered Tom. "There is no time like now."

"All we can do now," protested Jim, "is to see that the Senorita is safe. She is still in these villains' hands, and if we show ourselves, it will be an excuse for them to try to get away with her. That's what I fear, anyway."

"See!" called Jo, "the Senor is walking with the woman toward the boat."

"And he promised me to stay at the tree."

Jim was wild with anxiety, yet dare not make known his presence. But the opportunity to act was close at hand.

Reaching the shore, the Senor and his daughter were exchanging salutations, while the woman Annie sprang lightly into the boat, and it was then swung about, seemingly to allow the girl to land. The man rose from his seat as if to lend aid. Big Annie took the oars, and immediately, with quickly repeated strokes impelled by her powerful arms, the boat shot away. At the same instant the man grasped the Senorita, holding her before him so as to protect himself from harm should the Senor be armed. This all happened far more quickly than it can be described.

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Now, all too late, the party in hiding sprang forward.

"Help! Help!" called the Senorita. "Save me, Senor James!" She had at once recognized him among the party.

It was a desperate situation. The boys were too far away to be of aid. It was impossible to shoot at the man without risking the life of the girl. Twice Jim raised his rifle and let it drop, while the Senorita's call for help rang in his ears.

The Irishman continued to hold the Senorita as a shield, and the woman, knowing the boys would not shoot her, fiercely swung the oars of the boat, which was headed toward the lugger.

In a few moments Jim and his party were at the shore, where the Senor in desperation raged now that it was all too late, bemoaning his over-confidence and its result.

"What shall we do?" cried Tom.

"Get back to the Storm King as quick as we can," cried Jim, in a frenzy. "We will run the yacht down and get her if we have to follow them to the end of the world. Come on!"

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The boys, headed by Jim, started off on the run, when they were halted by a shout from Juarez.

"Here's a boat!" he cried.

Half hidden in the bushes which fringed the shore was the little dinghy of the lugger.

To seize the boat and rush it down to the water was but the work of a moment.

"But we haven't any oars!" cried Tom.

"Here is one. Yes, a pair!" exclaimed Jo, who had been rummaging in the bushes.

"Let me go with you," pleaded the Senor.

"I am sorry," replied Jim, "but the boat will only hold three, and some will have to stay on shore. There is serious work ahead of us. We don't know how many there may be on board the lugger."

"Then let me be of the party, I implore you! I am an expert marksman, and can hit the eye of the bull at a hundred yards."

"Good!" cried Jim. "Juarez, you are the best long distance runner amongst us. Will you give the Senor your rifle and run as fast as you can back to the ship and tell the professor to come to our aid with the Storm King?"

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Without a word, Juarez handed his rifle to the Senor and was off with a speed that carried him over the ground almost as fast as a horse could gallop.

Leaving Jo and Tom on shore to menace the escaping party with their rifles if there was opportunity, and with Berwick at the oars, the dinghy was headed for the lugger.

Barely had they covered a third the distance when they were surprised to hear a call from the Senorita, and looking in the direction of the sound they discovered her standing alone on board the lugger.

Her captors had disappeared, as they were soon to learn. Having first run under the lee of the lugger, they had aided the Senorita to climb on board, and they themselves keeping the while out of sight of Jim's party, had rapidly rowed the boat around a point of land and were nowhere to be seen.

That they were to board the Sea Eagle, which was still to be observed dropping down the harbor was doubtless their intent, but why had they surrendered the Senorita? Why taken all the trouble and risk to recapture and put her on board the lugger? It was an enigma for which they were later to find a solution.

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Jim and his party lost no time in boarding the lugger. The meeting of father and daughter was affecting, and Jim was covered with confusion by the profuse thanks of the young lady. He beat a hasty retreat to the dinghy, where he was held in conversation for a few minutes by the Senor, then going ashore, he picked up Tom and Jo. He also carried a message to the Senor's man. His presence in the tree had not proved of service through no fault of his own. He was now ordered to take the horses back to the inn.

On Jim's return to the lugger he had a further conference with the Senor and told him that in a scouting trip during the afternoon he had run across a party of three, bandits he took them to be, and listening unobserved to their conversation, he had learned of their intention to capture someone.

"Do you know of a Captain Beauchamp?" Jim asked.

"No."

"May it not be yourself and your daughter that they are after?" Jim asked in conclusion.

The Senor was visibly agitated. "For myself alone I have no fear," he said, "but, alas, my daughter, and she has already suffered so much."

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"If I could go with you—"

"That's it," broke in the Senor, "if you and your brothers will accompany us, we all could be quite safe."

Jim was complimented by this confidence, and was very loath to hesitate, but his obligations to the professor compelled. He must first refer the matter to him. Then an idea occurred to Jim, another course was suggested.

Would the Senor's party go on board the Storm King, and when again at sea seek a transfer to some passing merchant ship bound for San Francisco?

The plan well appealed to the Senor, and now the best method of getting on board the Storm King was considered.

While they were talking, as the darkening atmosphere indicated, a storm was brewing, and appeared likely to break very shortly over the hills and bay. The trip by land would be tedious indeed, particularly for the Senorita. The dinghy would carry but three, and Jim thought, too, that every minute lost would prejudice his chances for the recovery of the Sea Eagle. One object of his trip had been accomplished, the rescue of the Senorita. Now his thoughts turned to the Sea Eagle which at that moment was doubtless upon the ocean and headed for Cuba. At least he knew its destination.

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The thought occurred to Jim. Why not make use of the lugger on which they now were? Suggestion was promptly followed by action. Under Jim's direction the anchor was quickly raised, the patchwork sail was trimmed and made secure. If the approaching storm held off a bit they could make the run to the Storm King in short order.

With the relaxation from the intense anxiety of the hours just passed through, the party was indeed a happy one. Even their Nemesis, the villainous Mexican, was forgotten. The Senor and Berwick—the latter was at the helm—found subjects to discuss of mutual interest.

The Senorita, meantime, told Jim of her experience on board the Sea Eagle, where she had been for some time a prisoner, and he related very modestly some of the efforts he had made to rescue her.

It was beyond the dinner hour, but that fact was forgotten. The Senorita, however, was thirsty.

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"Was there possibly water on board to drink?"

Jim offered to investigate. He had seen through the hatchway in the dim region of the hold a cask or two. He climbed down a broken ladder to institute a search. The first cask when struck with his boot gave out a sound indicating that it was empty. But there was dimly

seen another cask farther aft. Even near the open hatchway it was dark indeed, and the approaching storm made the gloom almost impenetrable.

The second cask was open, the head was out. This fact he determined by feeling about, and reaching down his hand encountered a dry, powdery ingredient. He noted now that there was a dividing partition just aft, on which his hand rested. The partition, he discovered, was hot with an unnatural heat, while the air about him was cool. What was the powdery stuff in the cask? He could not see, but a little held in his hand by sense of smell he recognized. And now a crackling sound beyond the partition wall reached his ear.

The whole picture of their awful position at once flashed upon his mind. The lugger was a veritable trap. They had been beguiled aboard with but one horrible purpose in view. There were people Captain Broome wished to annihilate. The Senor was surely one, Jim and his party the others. The substance in the cask was powder. Doubtless there was more of the same stuff about. The boat was on fire. [Pg 125]

With one bound Jim was back to the ladder, and was quickly on deck. The deep intonation of a crash of thunder reverberated through the air, drowning for the moment his voice. Jo saw his blanched face and knew that something unusual had happened.

There was no uncertainty in Jim's commands.

"Quick! Instantly, Senor! Your daughter and Berwick into the dinghy! Ask no questions. We have not a moment to lose!"

Even as he spoke he was drawing the dinghy alongside, Jo springing to his aid.

"Tom, put into the boat the guns and the Senorita's handbag! Now, quick, Berwick, man the oars! Row with all your might away from this boat!"

No one had uttered a sound. Jim's white face showed there must be motive back of his command, and instant action followed. Quickly those ordered to do so had taken their place in the boat. [Pg 126]

"You are not going to stay and face the danger, whatever it is, alone?" questioned Berwick. The oars were even then bending to the first stroke of his powerful effort. Jim deigned no reply.

"Tom, Jo, into the water both of you, and swim with the boat!"

Such is the value of quick obedience to command. With no explanation and without a single question both sprang into the waters of the bay, followed by Jim himself.

"What's it all about?" Jo finally gasped.

"Not yet. Not yet," repeated Jim, but even as he spoke there came from the lugger the sound of a most terrible scream. Human voice could not give utterance to sound more horrible. All the party in the boat and the swimmers in the water turned toward the direction from which it came to note the cause.

At the cabin window in the stern of the abandoned vessel was a face distorted by agony. The person's arms were flung wildly about. It was the Mexican dwarf. He it was who had planned the trap in which he now found himself caught. He had set fire to the lugger and was intending to make his escape in the dinghy. The scream had come when he realized that his one avenue of escape was cut off, that his plot had miscarried. [Pg 127]

Even as the horrified observers noted the conditions there came an appalling, thunderous crash. Debris filled the air. The old lugger and the evil face at the window were gone—gone, forever.

The storm so long delayed broke now in all its fury. Jim's party were safe, and thankful for their preservation, but in a rather dubious predicament, although it was really no more wet in the water than in the boat. Each of the boys rested a hand on the gunwale of the little craft and discussed their next move. The problem was soon solved for them. Juarez, together with the steward from the ship, rowing the long boat was seen approaching.

On board the Storm King, the rescued party when they arrived were made comfortable. Jim learned that the Sea Eagle had been quietly maneuvered down the harbor, and under close reefed sail had disappeared into the obscurity of the storm.

Jim's disappointment was keen, but he felt that he had much to be thankful for, and was not the Senorita, herself, a member of the party for a time at least? [Pg 128]

"Besides," said the professor, offering consolation, "mayhap you will make enough from the recovered treasure to buy half a dozen Sea Eagles." But there was another possibility which

the professor did not foresee.

The storm lasted well into the night, but the Storm King was riding meanwhile safely at anchor. The following morning saw them once more upon the ocean every sail set and southbound.

CHAPTER XIII.

[Pg 129]

AN ADVENTURE.

There were unvarying, placid seas and happy hours during the next two days. One item was occasionally commented upon. There could be seen at a distance, which seemed never to change, a steam yacht. But doubtless this was only a coincidence.

To Jim especially, and perhaps to the Senorita, the hours were brief indeed, and when on deck they were always in each other's company.

All the party, with the professor as principal spokesman, were assembled after the evening meal, and details were given of experiences in hunting and other activities. The professor's journeying had not been confined to the South Seas, and having mentioned the then scarcely known great country in the Canadian Rockies, he was asked to tell about his adventures there.

"It's a far cry from here to Saskatchewan, but I recall," said the professor, "a trip that I made a good many years ago, when I first went out to deal with the fur traders.

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"At the time I speak of our brigade of four boats lay moored on the banks of the great Saskatchewan, which river, you know, takes its rise amid the rugged steps of the Rocky Mountains, flows through the great prairies and woodlands of the interior of Rupert's Land, and discharges into Lake Winnipeg.

"On this morning the men were ashore at breakfast. On a low gravelly point that jutted out into the stream smoked three large fires, over which stood three rudely constructed tripods, from which depended three enormous tin kettles. Robbiboo was the delectable substance contained in these kettles. Pemmican is a compound of dried buffalo meat, melted fat, and hair—the latter being an accidental ingredient. Mix pemmican with flour and water, boil and stir till it thickens, and the result will be 'robbiboo.'

"Around these kettles stood, and sat, and reclined, and smoked, about thirty of the wildest and heartiest fellows that ever trod the wilderness. Most of them were French Canadians; many were half-breeds; some were Orkney-men; and one or two were the copper-colored natives of the soil. But Canadians, Scotch, and savages they were all employed by the Hudson's Bay Fur Company; they were all burned to the same degree of brownness by the summer sun; they all laughed and talked, and ate robbiboo more or less—generally more; and they were all clad in the dress of the northwest *voyageur*. A loose-fitting capote, with a hood hanging down the back; a broad scarlet or parti-colored worsted sash round the waist; a pair of cloth leggings, sometimes blue, sometimes scarlet, occasionally ornamented with bright silk or bead work, and gartered at the knees a pair of chamois leather-like moccasins made of deer skin; a round bonnet or a red nightcap, or a nondescript hat, or nothing.

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"'Ho! ho!' shouted the gruff voice of the guide, as the men, having emptied the kettles, were hastily filling and lighting their pipes—'embark, my lads, embark.'

"In five minutes the boats were afloat, and the crews were about to shove off, when the cry was raised, 'Mr. Berry! hold on—where's Mr. Berry?'

"Poor Berry! I must tell you about him. He was one of those people that are always late, always missing, always in the wrong place at the right time, and in the right place at the wrong time. His companions—of whom there were two in charge of the boats along with himself—called him an 'old wife,' but qualified the title with the remark that he was a 'good soul,' nevertheless. And so he was—a beardless youth of twenty-two, with a strong tendency to scientific pursuits, but woefully incompetent to use his muscles aright. He was forever falling into the water, constantly cutting his fingers with his knife, and frequently breaking the trigger of his fowling-piece in his attempts to discharge it at half-cock. Yet he was incomparably superior to his more 'knowing' comrades in all the higher qualities of manhood.

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"At the moment his name was called, he sprang from the bushes, laden with botanical specimens, and crying, 'Stop! stop! I'm coming,' he rushed down to the boat of which he

had the special charge, and leaped in. Five minutes more, and the brigade was sweeping down the Saskatchewan, while the men bent hastily to their oars, and filled the shrubbery on the river's bank and the wide prairies beyond with the ringing tones of one of their characteristic and beautiful canoe songs.

"The sun was flooding the horizon with gold as it sank to rest. The chorus of the boatmen had ceased, and the only sound that broke the stillness of the quiet evening was the slow and regular stroke of the heavy oars, which the men plied unceasingly. On turning one of the bends of the river, which disclosed a somewhat extended vista ahead, several black objects were observed near the water's edge.

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"Hist!" exclaimed the foremost guide, 'they are buffaloes.'

"A terre, a terre!" cried the men, in a hoarse whisper.

"A powerful sweep of the steering oar sent the boat into a little bay, where it was quickly joined by the others.

"Now, then, let the crack shots be off into the bush," cried the man in charge of the brigade. 'Away with you, Gaspard, Antoine, Jacques. Mind you don't waste powder and shoot only old bulls. Hallo! Mr. Berry, not so fast; let the hunters to the front.'

"Ah! Misser Berry him berry bad shot," remarked a middle-aged Indian, regarding the youth somewhat contemptuously. Berry armed for the chase with frantic haste, dashing about and tumbling over everything in search of his powder-horn and shot-pouch, which were always mislaid, and moving the muzzle of his gun hither and thither in such a way as to place the lives of his men in constant and deadly peril. He started at last, with the speed of a hunted deer, and made a bold sweep into the woods in order to head the buffaloes. Here he squatted down behind a bush, to await their coming.

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"A short time sufficed to bring the stealthy hunters within range. Three shots were fired, and two animals fell to the ground; while a third staggered with difficulty after its companions, as they bounded through the woods towards the prairies, headed by the patriarchal bull of the herd. This majestic animal had a magnificently shaggy mane and a pair of wild glittering eyes, that would have struck terror into the stoutest heart; but Berry was short-sighted; moreover, he had concealed himself behind a shrub, through which, as he afterwards remarked, he 'could see nicely.' No doubt of it; but the bush was such a scraggy and ill-conditioned shrub that the buffalo bull could see through it just as nicely, and charged, with a hideous bellow, at the unfortunate youth as it came up the hill.

"Berry prepared to receive him. For once he remembered to cock his piece; for once his aim was true, and he hit the huge animal on the forehead at a distance of ten yards; but he might as well have fired against the side of a house; the thick skull, covered with its dense matting of coarse hair, was thoroughly ball-proof.

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"The bull still came on. Just at this moment another shot was fired, and the animal hurled forward in a complete somersault; the bush was crushed to atoms, and Berry was knocked head-over-heels to the ground, where he lay extended at full length beside his slaughtered foe.

"Ah! pauvre enfant," cried Antoine, running up and lifting Berry's head from the ground. 'Is you hurt ver' moch? Dat bull him break de ribs I 'fraid.'

"Antoine's fears were groundless. In half an hour the youth was as well as ever, though somewhat shaken by the fall. The choice morsels of the dead buffalo were cut off by the men with an adroit celerity that was quite marvelous, and in a very short time the boats were again rapidly descending the stream.

"The bivouac that night resounded with more vigorous mirth than usual. The camp fires blazed with unwonted power and brilliancy. The cook's office—no sinecure at any time—became a post of absolute slavery; for there was a glorious feast held beneath the spreading trees of the forest, and the bill of fare was 'buffalo-steaks and marrow-bones.' But if the feast was noisy, the hours that succeeded it were steeped in profound silence. Each man, having smoked his pipe, selected for his couch the softest spot of ground he could find, and, wrapping himself in his blanket, laid him down to rest. The deep breathing of untroubled slumber was the only sound that floated from the land and mingled with the rippling of the river; and not a hand or foot was moved until, at day-break, the loud halloo of the guide aroused the sleepers to their daily toil.

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"A week or two passed, and we had left the lands of the buffalo far behind us, and were sailing over the broad bosom of Lake Winnipeg. It was calm and polished as a sheet of glass when we entered it, but it did not remain long thus. A breeze arose, the sails were hoisted,

and away we went out into the wide ocean of fresh water. Lake Winnipeg is a veritable ocean. Its waves rival those of the salt sea in magnitude, and they break upon a shore composed in many places of sand and pebbles. If we sail straight out upon it, the shore behind us sinks in the horizon; but no opposite shore rises to view, and the unbroken circle of sky and water is presented to our gaze, as it appears on the great ocean itself.

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“The wind rose almost to a gale as we careered over the billows, but the men had to keep up incessant bailing. It was almost too much for us; but no one murmured, for, had the wind been ahead, we might have been obliged to put ashore and remain there inactive for many days. As it was, we made a rapid run across the lake and entered the river, or rather the system of lakes and rivers, which convey its waters to the ocean. Hudson’s Bay was our goal. To this point we were conveying our furs for shipment to England.

“Many days passed, and we were still pushing onward towards the sea-coast; but not so rapidly now. The character of the navigation had changed very considerably, and our progress was much slower. Now we were sweeping over a small lake, anon dashing down the course of a turbulent stream, and at other times dragging boats and cargoes over the land.

“One afternoon we came to a part of the river which presented a very terrible appearance. As far as the eye could reach, the entire stream was a boiling turmoil of rocks and rapids, down which a boat could have gone with as much safety as it could have leaped over the Falls of Niagara. Our advance was most effectually stopped, as far as appearance went. But nothing checks the onward progress of a northwest *voyageur* except the want of food.

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“The boats were run successively into a small bay, the men leaped out, the bales of furs were tossed upon the banks of the river, and the boats hauled up. Then every man produced a long leathern strap, with which he fastened a bale weighing upwards of 90 lbs. to his back; above this he placed a bale of similar weight, and trotted off into the woods as lightly as if he had only been laden with two pillows. The second bale is placed above the first by a sleight-of-hand movement which is difficult to acquire. Poor Berry well nigh broke his back several times in attempting this feat, and eventually gave it up in despair.

“In an hour the packs were carried over the ‘portage,’ and deposited beside the still water at the foot of the rapids. Then the men returned for the boats. One was taken in hand at a time. The united crews seized the heavy craft with their strong hands, and shoved against it with their lusty shoulders; a merry song was struck up, and thus the boat was dragged through the forest for nearly a mile. The others quickly followed, and before evening all was carried over, and we were again rowing down stream.

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“Not long after this we came to a rapid, in the midst of which was a slight waterfall. The water was deep here, and the rocks not numerous, and it was the custom to run the boats down the rapids and over the fall, in order to save the labor of a portage. Three of the boats ran down in grand style, and reached the foot in safety. Berry and I were in the last boat. The steersman stood up in the stern with his hands resting on the long heavy sweep, while his gaze was directed anxiously towards the boiling flood into which we were just entering. The bowman, an immensely powerful man, stood up in front, with a long strong pole grasped in both hands, ready to fend off from the sunken rocks. The men sat in their places, with their oars ready for action.

“‘Now, boys, look out,’ cried the guide, as we plunged into the first billow of the rapids. The boat flew like an arrow straight towards a rock, which was crested with white as the water burst against its ragged front. To all appearances our doom was sealed. The bowman regarded it with a complacent smile, and stood quite motionless, merely casting a glance backward. The steersman acknowledged the glance with a nod; one long stroke of the great oar—the boat turned sharply aside, and swept past in safety. There was no danger in such a big blustering rock as that!

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“‘Prenez garde!’ cried the bowman, in a warning tone, pointing to a spot where lay a sunken rock. The steersman’s quick hand turned the boat aside; but the bowman had to lend his aid, and the strong pole bent like a willow as he forced the boat’s head away from the hidden danger. And now the fall appeared. It was not high, perhaps four feet, but there was a mighty gush of water there, and it was a bold leap for a heavy boat.

“‘Prenez garde,—hurrah!—lads, give way!—well done!’ The boat plunged almost bows under, but she rose again like a duck on the foaming water. The worst of it was past now; but there was still a ticklish bit below—a bend in the river, where the sunken rocks were numerous, and the surface of the water so white with foam, that it was difficult to detect the channel.

“The bowman’s duty now became more arduous. With knitted brows and compressed lips

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he stood, every nerve and muscle strung for instant action. The steersman watched his movements with intense earnestness, in order to second them promptly. Ever and anon the stout pole was plunged into the flood, first on one side, then on the other; the two guides acted as if they had been one man, and the obedient craft sprang from surge to surge in safety. Suddenly the bowman uttered a loud shout, as the pole jammed between two rocks, and was wrenched from his grasp.

“Another! another vite! vite!”

“One of the crew thrust a fresh pole into his hand. Plunging it into the water, he exerted his giant strength with such violence as nearly to upset the boat, but it was too late. The planks crashed like an egg-shell as the boat dashed upon the rock, and the water began to rush in, while the stern was swept round, and the blade of the steering oar was smashed to atoms. Almost before we had time to think we were swept down, stern foremost, and floated safely into an eddy at the foot of the rapids. A few strokes of the oars brought us to the land; but, short although the interval was between our striking the rock and running ashore, it was sufficient to half-fill the boat with water.

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“The danger was barely past, and the intense feeling of it was still strong upon my mind, yet these lighthearted *voyageurs* were jesting and laughing loudly as they tossed the packs of furs out of the water-logged boat; so little did they realize the imminence of the peril from which they had been delivered.

“The remainder of that day was spent in drying the furs that had been wetted, and in repairing the damaged boat. Afterwards we continued our voyage, which, without further accident, terminated at length on the shores of Hudson’s Bay.”

CHAPTER XIV.

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THE PURSUIT.

The morning of the third day was an epoch in the lives of the passengers on board the Storm King, for a passing vessel was signaled. It hove to, and the captain quite willingly accepted as passengers to his next port of call, San Francisco, the Senor and his daughter.

It is needless to say that Jim gazed long and intently after the Lotus which bore away the Senorita and her father, and equally long and intently, although Jim did not know it, did the young lady watch the Storm King until it had become but a speck on the horizon.

For several hours Jim was seen no more on deck, and many a merry quip was bandied at his expense. What Jim was doing will appear later.

“It is certainly out of the ordinary,” admitted Becket. He had just come aft to where the professor was consulting with Jo and Tom. They had been discussing the action of the Marjorie, the ship which had taken its departure from San Francisco on the same day and very hour that they had sailed, and which had again been sighted when they left San Matteo. She was trailing about a mile astern of them, and here it was the third day since they had sailed.

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“She has been following us right along,” observed Tom. “Do you think she is going the same way we are?”

“A man might be justified in thinking so,” replied Berwick, dryly.

“I mean,” corrected Tom, “to the island?”

“I don’t know what to think,” admitted the professor, “but I don’t like it somehow.”

“It is queer,” reiterated the engineer.

“Let us run away from him,” suggested Jim, who now joined them.

“I have tried to outsail him, but it’s no use,” returned the captain. “She is burning up the coal, yet only traveling as fast as we do under sail.”

“Suppose we try again and see if she is really following us.”

“Let us radically change our course, captain, and see if they follow us,” said the professor.

“That isn’t a bad idea,” agreed the captain. “It won’t do any harm to try it. We will have her head put due west. I see that we are running about S. S. W. now. If they change their

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course it will be pretty conclusive evidence that it is purpose and not chance that keeps them in our wake."

"Mr. Berwick," said the professor, "the wind is light and fitful, suppose we add steam to our propelling force. Give us all the speed you can, and we will see if we can't shake them off."

"All right, sir," replied the engineer, going toward the engine room. "I will do my very best to get all the speed there is in her."

An hour later the throbbing of the engine, as the pressure was gradually increased, was felt throughout the vessel. Like a spirited steed with a bit in her teeth, and at the snap of the whip the vessel darted forward, plunging through the long rolling waves, and leaving behind her a white wake that curved like a bow as her prow was turned to the west.

The group on the after deck of the Storm King watched with interest the course of the other vessel, which was now being rapidly distanced, would pursue.

"Hurrah!" cried Tom. "We are leaving her behind."

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"But she is getting up more steam," observed Jo, as a thickening volume of smoke poured from her funnel.

"She is following us, too," cried Tom a little later. "She evidently likes company."

It was evident from the change in her course that the Marjorie was bent on keeping near the Storm King.

"She is just like some people," went on Tom. "She doesn't wait for an invitation, she is coming along, too."

The Storm King, under a full head of steam was rolling off the knots, and increasing the distance from the Marjorie.

"If we can keep this up," said Tom, joyfully, "she will soon be hull down."

"If we had a nigger to put on the safety valve," said the professor.

"A nigger on the safety valve," questioned Tom, "I don't understand."

"Why they say that on the Mississippi river when they have a race on, they put a negro on the safety valve to keep it down when the pressure gets so high as to blow it off at the regular set weight."

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"But that must be dangerous," objected Tom.

"Of course, it is," laughed the professor, "but nobody cared for danger where there was a race on."

But in the meantime the Marjorie was once more picking up the distance and growing more distinct. For three or more hours the race went on, but the Marjorie regained and then maintained her relative distance, and the professor reluctantly directed the captain to slow down.

"It is no use," he said. "We cannot shake her off that way. We might as well resume our regular course."

The following morning the same conditions were found to prevail. The distance between the boats seemingly never changed.

"She is a good boat and jolly well sailed, don't you know," remarked the mate, who was a typical English sailor.

"What is that flag for?" asked Tom suddenly.

"What flag is that?" asked the captain in return.

"Why, that one there," replied Tom, pointing to a square of red bunting flying from a davit of their own ship.

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"That," laughed the captain. "Well, you ought to know better than I do."

"Why?" asked Tom.

"Really," said the captain, "didn't some of you boys put it there?"

"Why, of course not," disclaimed Tom. "I thought maybe it was some kind of a signal."

"Well, I'll be blowed," exploded the captain, "if I didn't think you did it for a lark."

"There is one like it on the Marjorie," said Jim, who was using the binocular.

"Well, what do you think of that!" burst out the captain.

"What does it mean?" asked Tom.

"It means that someone on board is exchanging signals with the Marjorie," replied the professor.

"I wish I could catch them at it," muttered the captain, grimly.

"Let us take turns in watching," suggested Jim.

"I am going to do a little watching on my own account," growled the captain, making a dash for the supposed signal.

"Don't pull it down," advised the professor, "perhaps we can see who puts them up."

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"I think you are right."

"They are doing some kind of signaling on the Marjorie now," went on Jim. "I can see some one waving a flag."

"There isn't anyone here who could see it," said the captain, looking over the deck. "Let me have a look," taking the glass. "There is some kind of signaling going on, but who can it be to?" Jo walked quietly to the stern of the boat, and leaning over the rail looked down. The stern windows of the cabin afforded a view of the pursuing vessel, and where the signals could be observed, but he could not see if anyone was there.

Something did attract his attention, however, though it only impressed itself on his mind as an odd chance. A keg was floating in the wake of the Storm King, but most unusual things are sometimes seen on the surface of the ocean, hundreds of miles from land.

"Perhaps there is someone in the cabin," he suggested, as he came back to where the captain was standing.

"By jove!" gasped the captain, making a dash for the companion way, "I believe you have it."

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At this moment the steward came on deck.

"See here!" roared the captain, "What is the meaning of this?"

The steward smiled complacently, and said, "Why, sir, I know nothing about the flag. I have finished my tasks in the pantry, and came on deck for a breath of air."

The captain, debating the matter in his mind, concluded he would say no more at that time, and turned his attention again to the others. The steward went about his duties.

"They have quit signaling," reported Tom.

"What do you make of that other ship's continued interest in us, captain?" asked the professor.

"I'm blessed if I know," he replied. "It's too deep for me. They have been following us ever since we left the bay, and I'm blessed if I don't think they are after us. But I cannot imagine for what purpose."

"I suspect," said the professor, "that they have some knowledge of the fact that we are after a treasure."

"Oh," said the captain, "but they can't expect to keep us under observation for a long trip like this. It would be ridiculous."

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"What they want most likely is the chart. Only with its aid can anyone locate the island or the treasure."

The captain sat for a few moments in thought. "There must have been somebody on board getting the signals. Now who could it be?"

"One of the crew," suggested Tom.

"Quite likely," agreed the captain, "unless—"

"What?" said the professor.

"It was the steward."

"No," said the professor. "You can leave him out. He has been with me for years."

"All the more reason," returned the captain. "He'll jolly well stand watching. What we have got to do is to watch out, and perhaps we can trap them."

"I think—" he added. With a sudden thought he got up and went to the companion way, returning slowly to his seat. "I may have a clue."

"What is it?" cried Tom.

"It is only an idea, don't you know, and I won't say anything until I work it out. You say the chart is aboard?"

"Yes."

The captain whistled softly for a minute. "Better put it away somewhere."

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"That has already been done," admitted the professor, looking at the boys. "It is hidden away, and I don't think anyone can find it."

"Even if they could find it, how could they get away with it?" inquired Tom.

"That's easily done," explained the captain, "when they find it."

"When!" interrupted Tom.

"Maybe only a matter of days," returned the captain. "They will signal to the other ship, put it in a keg, drop it over and the others will pick it up."

"A keg," queried Jo. "I saw a keg floating in the wake of our ship just a little while ago."

CHAPTER XV.

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THE CHART.

"Indeed! Then you had better investigate your hiding place and see if your chart is secure."

Jo acted immediately upon the suggestion, and went below. Closing the door of his room, he pressed the spring that should open the adjoining panel. It did not respond readily to the pressure of his hand. Evidently it had been tampered with. With feverish haste he tried again and again, and finally his efforts were rewarded with success. The door flew open. The box was raised, but the chart was not within.

Jo had so long been detained that the others had meantime descended to the cabin.

"The chart is gone," cried Jo.

Unobserved by all but Jim, the steward had entered the cabin from the aft companionway. There were exclamations of astonishment, but the steward gave not the slightest heed, going about his duties without apparent interest.

The captain now noticed his presence, and questioned him closely, but with no result. Meantime, Jim took the professor aside, and together they went to the deck above, and then climbed quite away up into the ship's rigging.

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When they were absolutely alone, Jim said, "Whom do you suspect, professor?"

"I can think of only one person," was the answer. "Beside you boys and myself, only four people have access to the cabin. I do not suspect the captain or the steward. Berwick you have confidence in. May it not be the mate?"

"I know who it was that took the chart," said Jim, "and I called you up here where no one could possibly overhear, to tell you."

"Then it is not lost beyond recovery?"

"On the contrary, it is safe, and you and I will be the only ones knowing where it is."

"I am all anxiety."

"It is here in my pocket."

"You certainly surprise me. What prompted this move on your part?"

"I felt that someone was after the chart, and I thought of a way to mislead them."

"Go on. I am all interest."

"I made a copy of your chart and substituted it for the original, then I put the copy in the hiding place." [Pg 155]

"And the copy was stolen?" the professor inquired ruefully. "What about that? Won't it disclose our secret?"

"The copy, if you may call it such, that I made," laughed Jim, "had the descriptions and instructions altered so that it will be misleading rather than helpful."

"Good!" said the professor. "You are an assistant after my own heart. Our chances of searching undisturbed are greatly improved."

"If we keep this secret to ourselves," continued Jim, "the others will be constantly on the lookout, and we may yet run down the one guilty of the theft."

"Yes, even if they only get a fictitious chart, we would like to know who it is and for what purpose it was taken."

Their conference over they returned now to the deck.

The day passed without event worthy of record, and it was growing dark when the captain again joined the others.

"Going to have a blow," he said, looking to the west where a mass of dark clouds were piling up. "The barometer is falling. It is just the time to try a little experiment." [Pg 156]

"What is that?" asked Tom.

"I am going to try and give our friends the slip," replied the captain. "There are no other ships in sight," sweeping the horizon with his glass.

"How are you going to do it?" asked Tom.

"Wait and see," replied the captain.

In the west it was growing darker. The storm brewing clouds, as they piled up blotted out the stars. There was scarcely a breath of air. The sea rose and fell in long, slow undulations. Away in the distance the roar of the storm was audible.

"Double reef the sails," the captain commanded at the same time changing the course so as to steer directly toward the approaching storm.

The party at the captain's suggestion had donned their oilskins and were now crouched in the shelter of the cabin top watching with fascinated interest the coming of the storm.

"Better get a good strong hold," advised Tom, "It's going to blow great guns."

Higher and higher rose the clouds until all of the west was of inky blackness through which there ran, now and again, a streak of light that was blinding in its intensity. The storm broke now with a flash as if the whole firmament was aflame, and with a roar that drowned the thunder a solid wall of blackness enveloped them, blotting out everything except the ship's lights, and there came down apparently a deluge of water. [Pg 157]

"Put out the lights," commanded the captain, in the first lull of the storm. The vessel was still rolling and pitching, and the wind was howling through the shrouds.

In total darkness, now, the ship plunged forward through the angry waves that crashed against her bow with a force that shook her from stem to stern, while the wind played weird tunes overhead.

"We will keep her on the course she is running a half hour," determined the captain. By that time the storm had about blown out, and when the command was turned over to the mate the ship's regular course was resumed.

"I think," began the captain, the next morning when the boys came on deck, "that we have seen the last of the Marjorie."

"I hope so," replied the professor, who was scanning the horizon with a glass. "It is almost too good to be true, but they do not seem to be in sight." [Pg 158]

It was a beautifully clear day after the storm. The wind had blown all the clouds away, and the sky was a deep transparent blue. The air was crisp, and for the latitude, cool, and the sea rose and fell in long broken swells through which the yacht was racing at the rate of a dozen knots. They were alone on the vast expanse of water; no other vessel was in sight, although way to the southwest a faint trail-like smoke showed on the horizon against the

deep blue of the sky.

"Is that the Marjorie off there, do you think?" asked Tom.

"Cannot say, I'm sure," replied the captain. "But we will just hold to our course and see if she raises. I doubt if they see us, and the Marjorie will have a hunt to pick us up again."

"I can't see anything of them," said the captain, an hour later, sweeping the horizon with his glass. "We can lay over course direct for the island of Bohoola."

Relieved of the shadow of impending trouble which the persistent trailing of the yacht by the mysterious vessel had cast over them, the spirits of all rose perceptibly and as nothing was seen of her for the next two or three days some began to think that it was only a coincident of their sailing upon the same course, and that their fears had been unfounded. [Pg 159]

Several days of steady progress under full spread of sail carried the voyager on beyond the equator. No incident worthy of note transpired. There was, of course, a constantly augmented desire for the sight of land and for the varieties and delicacies of food denied them. Hard tack and salt fish become very monotonous if too long persisted in.

Hopes of an early termination of the journey were beginning to run high when, as the captain determined that they had arrived at a point estimated to be less than three days from their destination. The other boys were now told the story of the chart then in Jim's possession, and one day together with the professor, a careful study of the descriptions and instructions were gone over. They were careful to see that no one was near either cabin door, but they did not observe that both the mate and the steward, who were much in each other's company, were seated on the cabin roof.

The instructions contained in the chart were meagre in the extreme. The location of the island was fairly well given, but after that much seemed to be left to chance. The main and essential feature which all impressed on their memory was "an opening to a cave high up and difficult of access." A blue stone marked in some way the entrance. [Pg 160]

The next morning the sun rose hot almost beyond endurance to greet an atmosphere of perfect calm. Not a ripple stirred the surface of the great southern sea. The Storm King, master in a turmoil, was conquered and helpless when denied a breeze, and lay with drooping canvas, motionless.

So passed that day and the next with discomfort to the voyagers and without progress.

"There is only one thing to do," determined the professor. "Mr. Berwick, will you start up the engine, and we will end our trip under steam?"

Everything being in readiness, the fires were lit and the generation of steam gotten under way. At a signal the engine's mechanism responded to the movement of a lever. Almost immediately there was a crash that shook the ship from stem to stern. It was at once apparent to all on board that something serious had happened. Everyone was at the moment on deck, except those engaged in the engine room, and to that spot all ran to investigate. [Pg 161]

Berwick was found with a wounded hand, resulting from his efforts to stop the machinery. Juarez had accomplished this, but to the gaze of all there was offered a badly wrecked mechanism. Berwick was livid with rage and more concerned by the mishap to the engine than by the pain in his injured hand.

Someone, it was found, had tampered with the machinery. Who was the culprit?

"How serious is the injury?" inquired the professor.

Berwick shook his head and looked at his injured member, about which Jim was skilfully applying a bandage.

"I fear it will be several days," was the gloomy response. "But we will get right at it."

Even Berwick, however, was disappointed with the progress he could make toward repairing the distorted machinery, although he had the helpful aid of all the boys. There were exasperating delays. Essential parts of the machinery were not to be found and substitutes had to be made.

The unvarying calm and sultry heat persisted.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ISLAND OF BOHOOLA.

But there is an end to all things, and at last the long wished for breeze sprang up. The sails filled once more, the ship sped on and hope revived.

A welcome sound at noon the next day brought everyone on deck.

"Land, ho!" called the forward watch.

"Where away!" shouted the mate who was on duty.

"Off the starboard bow!"

The captain had just finished his task of determining their location, and had recognized the fact that the island they sought might be near at hand.

The hours went by more swiftly now, all watching interestedly the new field of their endeavor, the Treasure Isle. Would they find fortune and a successful ending to their venture? Oddly enough the thought uppermost in the minds of all was the possible abundant supply, not of treasure, but of fresh water and something good to eat.

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The land which they were rapidly approaching appeared to be of considerable extent. Headlands, it was seen, rose somewhat abruptly from the sea. At their base they could see a line of white caused by the incessant action of the waves as they broke upon the shore.

"It doesn't seem as if there was any place to make a landing," said the professor, looking at the long line of breakers and the spray that was flung in the air.

"Can't tell until you are close in," replied the captain. "We'll run along the shore a ways."

Continuing thus till within half a mile of the coast, the yacht was brought about, and with sails close hauled, followed its contour for quite some time without success.

"Looks like a bit of smooth water over there," said the captain, indicating a place in the near distance. "Bring her up to the wind," he ordered. "We will take a look into it."

The yacht had now been brought about and with sheets eased off she was drifting slowly on the tide.

"Who will compose the first landing party?" asked the captain.

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"Jim, Juarez and myself," answered the professor. "The steward and one of the crew to row."

The boat was launched and equipped. One empty water cask and a bucket was carried along. Was the island inhabited? From the ship's deck no sign of life was discernible to the naked eye or indeed by careful search with the spy glass. The party went, however, fully armed and prepared for any emergency.

There was, they found, a recession in the shore several hundred feet in width through which the waves extended their course, later to break in foam on submerged rocks a hundred yards beyond.

The boat shot rapidly forward, and readily passed through the opening between the cliffs. On each side, the rocks, jagged and rough, rose threateningly, but a further recess to the right afforded shelter, and the water became comparatively smooth. Passing through the channel and rounding the obstructing rocks they found another passage of similar extent which led further inland and brought them into a little crescent shaped bay of something like a half mile in length by a quarter of a mile in width. At several points were observed small strips of sandy beach, and strange wading birds of the stork species were seen, but not a suggestion or sign of a habitation.

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"Crescent Bay!" cried Jim, noting the shape. "Isn't it fine here!"

"It's fine!" exclaimed the professor. "Who would think of such a place as this hidden away in the fastness of these hills. It's like some of the secret haunts of the buccaneers."

"It would be a nice bit of seamanship to bring a craft through that channel, though," said Juarez.

"But I believe it could be done," said Jim.

The scenery grew wilder and more beautiful with every stroke of the oars. From caverns of

leafy shade came the gleam and flicker of many colored plumage.

Few readers but are familiar with the glowing color in which voyagers have painted the beautiful islands of the South Pacific. Nature has lavished upon them her rarest gifts; deep shadowy groves, valleys musical with murmuring streams, lofty mountains rising into the sapphire heaven out of a girdle of eternal foliage; wonderous visions of color in shrub and flower, the golden-yellow of the low-growing chinquapins, and the blood red osiers; a bright fresh air, redolent of fragrance, and a sea dimpling in cloudless sunshine.

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But this fairy region, where Shakespeare might have fitly placed his Oberon and Titania, was inhabited by a race unworthy of its charms; a race enervated and corrupted, and abandoned to all those vices which usually accompany or originate in a degrading and sanguinary idolatry.

The Tahitians were not cannibals, but they sacrificed human victims in frightful numbers on the shrines of their hideous divinities.

Intoxication and theft were their predominant vices; continual wars decimated the population so that in some cases great islands were left absolutely without an inhabitant; infanticide was a universally prevalent custom, and that fully two-thirds of the young were cruelly murdered is a fact vouched for by the missionary Williams, one of the most intelligent, persevering, and successful of the pioneers of the true religion in Polynesia. This beautiful Tahitian group of islands was, therefore, a sink of vice and crime.

CHAPTER XVII.

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THE HURRICANE.

"I see a cascade or waterfall on the hillside yonder," cried Juarez.

"Then we will make a landing somewhere along the beach in that direction," ordered the professor.

Slowly they approached the shore, and landing carefully reconnoitered, but nothing was observed to warrant their caution.

A spring, pouring forth a constant stream of limpid, cool water, was readily located, and here each found satisfying refreshment. About them everywhere were luxuriant growths, and tropical fruits of many varieties were within reach of the extended hand.

Water was conveyed to the boat, and the cask filled to transport a supply to the ship. A quantity of yams were gathered for the party on board while they themselves ate of the fruit to their heart's content. As they walked inland they came upon charming glens and defiles well up the mountain side, and still above them rose great castleated turrets, all draped in mosses and flowering shrubs forming the abode of many a bird of prey that on their approach rose screaming to the sky.

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"But this is a vast space that we have got to examine," said Jim, speaking in a low voice to the professor. "I wonder where," quoting from the chart, "we are to find the cave opening—the opening high up and hard to reach, with a blue rock somewhere about?"

"We shall go about it systematically, as soon as we find travel safe. If there are inhabitants we must conduct our exploitations in groups. If otherwise we can spread out and cover the ground much more rapidly."

On the return trip toward the boat, a strong odor of sulphur attracted their attention, and a mineral spring was located. Here for the first time they found indications that others had visited the spot, but how recently could not be determined.

"Seemingly," suggested the professor, "this is a remedial water, the virtues of which may be known to the occupants of the other islands hereabouts."

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Farther on, near the shore, Jim came upon a rude shack, or shelter, built of boughs, and the roof thatched with leaves resembling palms, and further on at the shore Juarez dropped upon his knees examining a mark upon the sand.

"A foot print," he said, "but not very recently made."

The return to the ship was without incident, and by the following day all except the captain and Tom, the latter was not feeling well, made trips to the shore. Jo and Juarez made a long

detour inland and on their return reported many interesting sights, but no sign did they find of inhabitants. They had climbed to a high altitude, reaching the uppermost point by a circuitous route, but descending again by a rugged route much shorter but very difficult to negotiate.

"Phew!" exclaimed Tom, on coming on deck the following morning as the sun like a ball of fire was showing in the eastern horizon. "It is going to be a corker to-day, all right. Why, even the ocean is sizzling."

"Feel all right to-day?" asked Jo.

"Yes, or I would if it was only cool."

The yacht was still lying to, about a half mile off shore. The sails hung loosely with not enough air to stir them. [Pg 170]

"It's a nice morning for a row," suggested Jo. "The water is as smooth as oil. You are the only one who has not been ashore. Want to go?"

"No rowing for me," groaned Tom. "I'm not a phoenix. I'm going to sit in the shade and fish."

"Fish!" cried Jo. "What do you expect to catch here?"

"I don't know," replied Tom. "Maybe I might catch a boiled cod or something like that."

"Don't you want to go on shore, then?" asked Jo.

"Not bad enough to row there," answered Tom. "Glad to go if you will do the rowing."

"We will have to take the long boat. The steward went ashore in the yawl early this morning."

"Early!" cried Tom. "What do you call this? I guess it was late last night."

"Well, he's gone, anyhow. We want to get off pretty soon if we are going before the sun gets hot."

"Before!" cried Tom. "Say, if you wanted to do that you ought to have gotten away last week." [Pg 171]

"Say, fellows," cried Juarez at this moment, "what do you think that means?"

The party were soon gathered on the after deck and were looking with interest at the land.

"What is that?" asked Tom in turn.

"That smoke over there."

"Smoke! Where?"

"See the top of that hill," Juarez indicated with his outstretched arm. There was an elevation which must have been miles inland, and from which a thin column of smoke was rising into the still air.

"It is a signal of some kind," said Jim. "I didn't notice it before."

"It has just started," replied Juarez. "It wasn't there a moment ago. I wonder what it means, and who is making it?"

"It is a common signal among uncivilized people," replied Jim. "Savages the world over use smoke for signaling. They use it especially as a warning against the approach of an enemy or of strangers."

"Well, what do you find of interest?" asked Berwick, joining them, the captain following a moment later.

"We were just looking at that column of smoke over there," replied Tom. "Do you think it is a signal of some kind?" [Pg 172]

"What is that?" asked the captain.

"That column of smoke on the hill over there," repeated Tom.

"Eh, what! Start my plates!" exclaimed the captain. "We will have to look into that a little later."

"See how straight it goes up," commented Jim. "There doesn't seem to be a bit of air stirring."

"Not a bit, anywhere," assented Berwick. "Not enough for steerage way."

"I'm thinking we'll have all the wind we want and some to spare afore ye know it," said the captain. "There's a hurricane abrewing or I miss my guess."

"What? On this clear day?" asked the professor. "I don't see how you can tell unless you feel it in your bones."

"No, but the barometer indicates something unusual. It is falling very rapidly." Then scanning the horizon in all directions, he added, "I wonder which way it is coming. That barometer is going down too fast for comfort." Saying this, he called all hands and set about preparations for a storm, concerning the coming of which there was not the slightest apparent and visible indication. [Pg 173]

"There it comes, now," cried the captain as a puff of wind from out of the east filled the double reefed sails, and a little later a mist blotted out the sun. "It is coming out of the east."

"Is there any danger?" asked the professor?

"Well," replied the captain, slowly, "lying off the lea shore, in a hurricane isn't exactly the place I should pick out for safety."

"Can't you beat to windward?" suggested the professor.

"That's what we can try," returned the captain. "Hard down with the helm! Pull in the sheets!" A heavier blast struck the sails now, and heeled the yacht well over. "Steady as you are!"

Under the impulse of the wind, the yacht sprang forward with sails close hauled, beating up into it.

"It's no use," admitted the captain, as the strength of the wind increased. "We haven't gained an inch. Something must be done quickly."

"What?" asked the professor.

"How is that channel into the harbor which you told me about?" asked the captain, turning to Jim. "Do you think we can get through it?" [Pg 174]

"If the day were fair, and the engine was working it might be done," replied Jim. "But under sail in this wind it will be a hazard, sir."

"You are not thinking of attempting that passage in a storm, are you?" asked the professor, in evident alarm.

"I don't think there is much choice in the matter," confessed the captain. "We may go to pieces if we try it, and we are pretty certain to go to pieces if we don't."

The yacht was now rolling and pitching on the heavy seas, and the blasts of wind were becoming stronger and more angry, whistling through the rigging with the shrill sound of a gigantic fife.

"Shall we take in another reef?" shouted the mate.

"No. Put two men at the wheel and tell them to work lively! Jim, a few words with you."

A brief conference followed, then taking his station amidship, with Jim well forward, the captain shouted his orders to the sailors and helmsmen. Jim signaled by means of a pocket handkerchief in his hand, facing first the course of the channel, and at intervals looking toward the captain. Every motion was correctly interpreted by the commander. [Pg 175]

"The helm to the port side! Port your helm! Jam it down hard! Haul in the main sheet; haul close! Quick now! In with the lugger and jib!" The captain was hurling his orders so quickly that his words tripped over one another.

The men sprang to obey the commands. The yacht meanwhile entered the channel between the cliffs and was driving headlong for the rocks ahead which presaged a certain end to its career. But just as the fatal crash seemed imminent and unavoidable, the bow swung around, and with the end of the boom buried in the foam of the breaking waves the Storm King glided into the deeper waters that opened to the right.

"My goodness!" cried Tom, drawing a long breath, "but that was a close shave. I thought we were gone for sure. I don't mind things that happen on land, but that's the worst experience I've been through yet."

"Oh, cheer up," cried Jo. "There is plenty more to come."

"It's a good thing we had a good captain," said Jim. "That was a nice bit of work."

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"Worthy of one of the oldtime pirates," added the reassured professor. "I'll have to bring that in."

The captain awarded full credit to Jim's skill as a pilot. It was another instance where close observation had brought worth while results.

While they were talking, the yacht had run into the inner harbor, and here even with the fierce wind playing havoc in the tree tops and out at sea, the high hills afforded good and safe shelter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

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A MYSTERIOUS HAPPENING.

The barometer rose shortly and climbed up as rapidly as it had earlier fallen. In a brief time the skies had cleared and the wind settled to a steady breeze.

"It seems to me," said the professor, looking about him, "that it was a difficult thing to get in here, but to get out is going to be a more difficult one."

"It will be all right," replied the captain, "if Berwick will fix up that old tea kettle of his and give us some steam." Then addressing the engineer, "Can't you do this while we are in here?"

"Maybe I can," replied the engineer, "if there is no more of the devil's handiwork. There would not be much the matter with the machinery, if there was not somebody undoing things."

"The sailors will have few duties, now, and we will have a double watch set over the engine room," said the captain.

The distance to shore was now so short that getting back and forth was a simple task, and as security was so seemingly assured, permission was given for any outside of those on duty, to land and rove about at will.

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"As we have found the island, let's find the cave," suggested Jo, as they were preparing for a trip ashore.

"Then we can go home," added Tom, who, however ready to venture forth, was even more disposed toward the home journey. Whatever desire he may have had toward early home going in this instance was destined by events he could not forecast, to be blotted out.

"There is that column of smoke again," announced Jo, as he grasped the oars. His brothers and Juarez were with him in the boat.

The others once more observed the curious signal, if such it were, but gave no special heed other than to note its distance. On land, however, they bent their footsteps in the direction of the phenomenon although they could no longer see it for a guide.

They found themselves trailing off on a route they had not before taken, and had gone perhaps half the distance which they had estimated as required, when they came upon a curious clearing in the woods. It was about forty yards in diameter, and surrounded by a complete circle of trees, their boughs interlacing about seventy feet above to form a lovely green canopy. So regular were the trees that it seemed as if they had been planted by human hands hundreds of years before.

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At first they did not notice, because of the somewhat dim light, that on the far side of the amphitheatre there rose sheer a wall of rock well covered with vines, and then all of one accord and simultaneously exclaimed.

"There's a cave!"

"Hurrah, we've found it," added Tom.

"Don't go so fast," admonished Jim. "There may be more than one cave on the island."

"But the opening is high up," demurred Tom, "and it looks as if it might be hard to get into. How shall we do it?"

All thought of the column of smoke was blotted from their minds as they surveyed the task before them, so suggestive of sought-for achievement. The opening to the cave was fully forty feet above the level on which they stood. No safe foothold could be discovered on close examination of the face of the rock which rose sheer to the top, perhaps a hundred feet.

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"I'll warrant there is some other entrance," suggested Jim. "Seems to me this place we are in was one time a sort of temple or auditorium, and that opening up there in the rock may have been the pulpit."

"It's sure no easy job to get up there from this level," admitted Jo. "Suppose we deploy around and hunt for the side door."

This they did, that is, Jim went one way, while Jo and Tom sought for an opening in the opposite direction, but without success.

Juarez had meantime studied the face of the vine clad rock below the mouth of the cave, and when his companions returned he undertook the ascent or climb. Mounting first on Jim's stalwart shoulders he found crevasses into which he dug his toes, and with his great knife scooped out fragments at irregular distances, thus by degrees mounting to the cave's mouth.

Once a secure footing gained, he let down his lariat, and one after the other, the boys climbed up, and all stood looking out upon the auditorium below. Surely a more beautiful green bower of exaggerated proportions could not be imagined.

But it was not scenery that had induced them to seek the cave, and at once their thoughts turned to the business at hand.

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The floor of the cave was dry, and the place showed no signs of recent occupancy. It extended into the rock beyond the limit of vision.

Jim had thoughtfully gathered and sent up a bundle of fagots, some dry slow burning sticks, one of which was now lighted. The blaze cast a fitful glare upon walls that shown in places with metallic gleams.

While Jim and Juarez busied themselves near the entrance with the digging into and examination of some mounds of earth which excited their curiosity, Jo and Tom with the burning fagot penetrated deeper into the tunnel, for such it seemed to be. It presented at the start nothing out of the ordinary. It was simply as Jo put it, an enlarged burrow of irregular width and height, varying in width from six to eight feet and in height the same. The sides were of earth with here and there a stone. Whether of natural formation or an artificial construction the boys could not determine.

"Doesn't seem to be anything worth seeing in here," said Tom, who was in the lead and carrying the torch. "We might as well go back."

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"Oh, go on a little further," urged Jo. "Perhaps we shall find something."

"I'll bet, if we do, it's something we don't want," objected Tom.

"Well, we needn't take it if we don't want it," retorted Jo. "Let me go ahead."

As Jo spoke, pressing forward they came to a sudden enlargement along the way, the walls receding on either side. Jo raised his torch for a better view when a grinning skull flashed out of the darkness, nodding and bobbing at them, while a rattling and whirring noise resounded through the cavern.

With a cry of astonishment, Jo let fall the torch which was quenched as it fell upon the floor, and at the same time something big and indescribable struck him full in the face.

So confused were they by the suddenness and unexpectedness of the attack, and encompassed as they were by the absolute blackness, the first thought of the boys was to run to the entrance of the cave, and this they set about to do with the greatest possible promptness.

But both boys as they started were grappled by unseen antagonists with whom they were locked in a deadly embrace, struggling and straining as they wrestled in the darkness, until Tom almost at the point of exhaustion was roused to a frenzy by the rattling of bones and the feel of a skeleton hand on his arm. With a sudden, not to be denied effort, he threw off his adversary and rushed wildly through the cave, followed by Jo, who had bested his opponent.

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In the meantime, Jim and Juarez were still poking in the little mounds near the cave's

mouth and wholly unconscious of the trying experience of the two explorers. The commotion and sound of rapidly moving feet aroused them, and almost immediately Jo and Tom appeared upon the scene. Somewhat breathlessly, both speaking at once, they tried to describe their uncanny experiences.

"Hold on a minute," said Jim. "Let's get the straight of this. We were just about to follow you in, for we found nothing in the little mounds. Let's know what to expect."

"I will have to go back anyway," said Jo. "I dropped my gun."

"Sure. We'll go with you," replied Jim. "Now what was it grabbed you?"

"It?" replied Tom. "I should say there were three or four of them."

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"What were they like?" broke in Juarez. "Spirits?"

"Well, I don't know just what a spirit is like," replied Tom. "But it was a pretty solid kind of thing that he had hold of me."

"Me, too," added Jo. "And it snorted and puffed like a grampus."

"Well, I suppose we are lucky to get off as easy as we did," said Tom, "though I should like to know what they were. I thought the whole lot of skeletons were coming after us, but I don't believe they could do any puffing or snorting. It's time we were getting along."

"We will be ready for them this time, whatever they are," determined Jim, who had been lighting torches so that each could be supplied with one.

"Come on then," said Jo. "We must keep together and be on the lookout."

Arming themselves each with a heavy fagot which made a serviceable club, the four bent their footsteps in the direction of the chamber of weird experiences.

The silence in the cave was profound, the occupants, if any, not betraying their presence by the least sound. Cautiously the boys advanced, pausing now and then as they approached the place where the surprise had occurred, to listen and gaze as far as they could into the heavy darkness; but all was silence.

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"I think they have gone," said Jo at length, in a voice in which there was a tremor of excitement.

"No, there they are," replied Tom in a whisper.

"Where?" asked Jim.

"There!" responded Tom, indicating several suspended skeletons of full length which were held against the walls, and which the light now revealed.

"Oh," said Jo, "it wasn't them."

"Well, one of them was," returned Tom, "for I felt his hand on me."

"Must have been this one, then," said Jim, kicking a group of bones with his foot. "Here is one of them lying on the floor. You must have knocked him out, Tom."

"Here, Jo, is your gun all right," interposed Juarez.

CHAPTER XIX.

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THE CAVE.

The place in which the boys stood was a circular room about thirty feet in diameter, with a height of some twenty feet. There was but one entrance, that by which they had come, but high up on the wall were several small openings or tunnel-like passages. Around the wall of the chamber was a row of skeletons, standing stiffly upright. There was a great roughly hewed stone god or idol on the farther side, while here and there close around it on the surface of the natural stone floor were marks where fires had been built. At either side were pyramidal walls of human skulls, all perfect, though those that formed the bottom rows were black with age.

As the light from the torches flashed into the space several large bats that were in the openings began to fly wildly about.

"I wonder where they have gone?" said Tom, gazing blankly around. "There was certainly something that had hold of me, but there isn't anything here now."

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"What was it like?" asked Jim, suddenly.

"How should I know," returned Tom. "I couldn't see it in the dark."

"But you could feel it, couldn't you?" persisted Jim.

"Why," returned Tom, "I don't know, just like any person I should say."

"And you, Jo," went on Jim. "What was yours like?"

"Why, like anybody, I suppose," was the somewhat indefinite description.

"Now, what is the matter?" demanded Tom, as Jim dropped to the floor in a paroxysm of laughter.

"Oh, ho, ho. It's too funny for anything," returned Jim in intervals of his merriment.

"What is?" demanded Tom.

"The whole business," returned Jim as he struggled to regain control of his feelings.

"Let us in on the funny part," said Tom, a little sourly.

"Well, you see, when you dropped the torch—"

"You mean that's the time we didn't see," put in Tom.

"One of those big bats flopped into your face—"

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"Well?"

"Then you two started to run, and, of course, you ran into each other and thought something had gotten hold of you. Oh, ho, ho!" and once more Jim was doubled up in his paroxysms of merriment.

"I guess you are right, Jim," said Jo, somewhat sheepishly, but joining in the laugh. "I think the joke is on us."

"What is this place anyhow?" asked Tom, seeking to change the embarrassing subject. "Was it an underground prison?"

"I think it was a burial place of some tribe," replied Jim, when he was able to control his laughter. "You see the skeletons are all standing up in like positions as if they were placed there after death."

"What are the bats doing in here?"

"They must come in through these passages above. Some holes probably let out onto the side of the hill, and the bats go in and out through them at night."

"I think," said Tom, as they made their way back to the entrance, "that taking all together, that was the worst scare I ever had."

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"Shake on that, Tom," said Jo.

A further search through the cave was fruitless of results, so far as looked for treasure was concerned, and their original plan of investigating the smoke signal was taken up.

A walk of another mile brought them to the spot they sought. They had thus far encountered no one, or any indication of the presence of inhabitants on the island. They gained finally the summit of the hill from which the column of smoke was ascending. They found that this had been made by building a fire in a small chimney of stones and covering it with wet leaves. There was an opening below which gave just sufficient draft to keep the fire smouldering.

But little could be seen of the land from the top of the hill on account of the thick woods, but by climbing one of the taller trees, which they did in turn while the others kept guard, they were enabled to make out that they were on an island of many miles extent, and that another island lay some five or six miles to the southwest. Most unexpected of all their discoveries, they saw in the distance far out upon the ocean a steamer which was apparently approaching the island. The distance was too great to determine with any definiteness anything about her character or probable intentions, and further information on that point would have to be sought at a later time.

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"I can't understand that smoke business," said Tom, once more examining the chimney-like

arrangement curiously. "It was certainly made by someone, yet there doesn't seem to be anyone about."

"They may be on the other side of the island," suggested Jim, "or they may have come from the other island and gone back again."

"But why should they have come over here and made the fire?" persisted Tom.

"You will have to ask them," laughed Jim. "I am sure I don't know, or why they should have lighted it at all. But some of us had better return to the ship or I am afraid that the professor will be getting anxious."

Arriving at the landing place, Tom elected to go on board. He felt that he had had enough of excitement and adventure for one day. Jim accompanied him, while Jo and Juarez, the spirit of investigation awakened, promptly set out on an exploring expedition returning however without incident at nightfall. [Pg 191]

"Well," began the professor that evening when they had gathered on the deck awaiting the supper call, "what did you find out about the island to-day?"

"Not much of importance," replied Jim, "except that it is of very considerable extent, very rugged and mountainous."

"But Jo had an awful scare," broke in Tom.

"You mean you did," protested Jo.

"How was that?" asked the professor.

"Why, we found a cave with the entrance way up in the air. We thought at once that it was the one we were looking for, but it did not turn out to be," explained Tom. "And then we found a lot of skeletons in there, and they got after us."

"The skeletons did?"

"Well, something did," replied Tom with a grin. "Then Jo and I beat a hasty retreat."

"Each got hold of the other in the dark," explained Jim, laughing, "but I guess they had a jolly time of it till they broke away and ran. It sure was funny."

"Are you certain there wasn't anything unnatural in there?"

"We couldn't find anything alive except some bats, when we went back," replied Tom, [Pg 192]
"although we hunted all over."

"What kind of a place is it?"

"The cave?"

"No, the island."

"It seems to be an uninhabited island as far as we could see," answered Jim.

"Didn't you discover any signs of people at all?"

"Yes," replied Jim. "The same sign we saw from this deck. The smoke signal."

"That cave will bear further investigation. It is certainly very curious," mused the professor.

"What is?" queried Tom.

"About that smoke on the mountain."

"What do you think of it?" asked Jim.

"It is a signal of some kind, but if the island is uninhabited, who could have made it?"

"Why couldn't the ones who made it come from some other island?" asked Jim.

"And gone back again," suggested Jo.

"Perhaps so," replied the professor, "but that doesn't make it any clearer."

"You never can see through smoke very well," suggested Jo.

"True," laughed the professor, "but still somehow I don't like it." [Pg 193]

"Then we saw a ship in the distance, apparently headed for this island, but far off the southern shore."

"Six o'clock," broke in Tom, as four bells were struck. "I think I will accept the invitation to dine."

"A good plan," commended the professor, "and Monday we must get an early start and learn, if we can about that ship you saw, and begin a more thorough exploration."

"I think so, too," replied Tom.

"What?" asked Jim.

"Take more 'rations' with us," replied Tom.

"Wake up, boy," cried Jo, giving him a shove and toppling him over on deck. "You think so much about rations that you are getting irrational."

"That gives me an idea," began Juarez, when Jo and Tom had been separated and quiet restored.

"An idea of war?" asked Berwick.

"No," laughed Juarez. "But would it not be a good thing to go on shore and camp there until we had made a complete exploration of the place?"

"Just the thing!" cried Jo and Tom.

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"I am afraid it is hardly wise," demurred the professor.

"Ugh!" sniffed Tom. "I guess we can take care of ourselves."

"Besides, there isn't anyone on the island," added Jo.

"Better not act on that assumption," advised the professor.

"I don't know but what it would be a good plan," said Jim. "We would be able to get over it more quickly if we didn't have come back to the boat every night."

"There is something in that," admitted the professor, "though as far as I can see this doesn't look like the portion of the island shown on the chart."

"No," admitted Jim, "but this may be the opposite end of the island."

"That is true, too. Suppose we go down into the cabin and have another look at it?"

"Do you think it will be safe?" asked Berwick.

"Safe? Why not?"

"You know what happened to the other one," laughed the engineer.

"It probably slipped off the string," replied the professor, "and dropped down into the bilge. Anyway we appoint you watchman to see if anyone is spying about."

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"All right," agreed Berwick, "but I've got a kind of feeling that that little devil of a Mexican ain't far away."

"Booh!" broke in Tom. "Didn't we see him go up into the air with the lugger?"

"Maybe we did," admitted Berwick gloomily, "but I don't believe fire would ever hurt him."

"I don't believe he is fire proof," declared Tom. "And even if he is that isn't any reason why we shouldn't have a look at the map."

It was some time after supper before the matter was again alluded to, then they all went below to further study the chart.

Taking the precious paper from his pocket and spreading it out on the table, Jim and the professor analyzed carefully the various marks and drawings.

"We have got pretty well fixed in mind now the shape and landmarks of the island," said Jim, when they had studied the document carefully. He then folded up the chart, putting it back in his pocket. "We should keep our eyes open when we are on shore. There are two or three landmarks that ought to help us find the cave without much difficulty if this is the place."

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"There cannot be many caves," concluded the professor, "with entrances high above the ground as this one is described to be."

The following morning, the day being Sunday, was spent quietly on shipboard. It had been the custom of the professor since the commencement of the voyage to have such

observances of the day as seemed fitting. There was a service which he himself conducted at eleven o'clock. Thereafter, all who wished were this day allowed to go on shore.

Of the Frontier Boys, Jim and Juarez early in the afternoon availed themselves of the privilege. Juarez was the only one, however, to wander away from the landing beach. Jim spent some time readjusting and oiling his own and his brother's guns, which he had brought with him. Jo and Tom had said that they, with Berwick, would join him later in the afternoon.

CHAPTER XX.

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AN ADVENTURE.

Juarez had intended on going a short distance, but the bright sunlight, the charm of the hills, the luxuriant foliage, the unusual and brilliant wild flowers, all these attractions, coupled with his own exuberant spirits lured him on.

He reached by a roundabout route the top of the mountainous elevation which, in company with his comrade, he had explored the day before.

Willing to rest now in the shade of some bushes he lolled upon the ground, and lulled by the whispering melodies of the trees was about to drop off to sleep.

Suddenly his attention was attracted to some motion in the underbrush at a point a third of the way down the mountain. He watched intently and knew that some person, two, probably, were ascending the slope. In his efforts to secure a better viewpoint, he stretched far forward, too far, it turned out, and catching wildly and ineffectively for a support, greatly to his astonishment, he slipped and fell to a ledge below. The distance was not great, but his head in the descent came in contact with a projecting rock, and although he landed upon a growth of thickly foliated bushes, he was rendered unconscious by the blow he had sustained.

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He was aroused some time later by voices near at hand, one of which he immediately recognized. It was the steward of the Storm King who was speaking.

"I sent you the chart in the keg, but I have learned that the young fellow Jim had a copy of it, which he carries always in a water proof paper in his pocket."

The listener did not move. He was as securely hidden as if by a prearranged plan. He had not been observed, and while he did not see the speakers he knew that those to whom the steward was talking must be of the rival ship's crew, probably it was the leader himself who was present here, and possibly the mate, for he could tell from the voices there were two of the desperadoes.

"Why have you not secured the copy and destroyed it?" came the inquiry.

"I cannot do it. The fellow suspected me. Besides he is a terror, and I dare not."

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"Dare not! What would your life be worth if I told the authorities at home what I know about you?"

There was something said by the other man which Juarez could not hear, but he caught the word captain.

"Dash it, man!" said the one addressed. "I believe you are right!"

Then it was the steward who spoke. "I only know," he said, "that I got the chart out of the secret hiding place into which it was put. I cannot say if it is the original, the right chart."

"Then it is the papers which that fellow you speak of has now that we must have. There is something wrong about the chart we have been working with. We were evidently on the wrong island entirely. Things did not figure out right."

"It's about the original chart that I came to tell you to-day," responded the steward. "Jim is at this moment alone in the little shack on Crescent Bay."

"Well," said the captain, "why don't you get it?"

"It cannot be gotten unless you kill the fellow."

"Well," drawled the captain, "and why not? You have done—"

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"Don't! Don't! I had been drinking then," was the plaintive protest.

"So you want to turn the pleasant task over to me, eh? Well, I guess between the two of us we can manage one young cub, eh mate Marion?"

There was no reply, but doubtless the mate acquiesced by a motion of the head.

"I warn you, Captain Beauchamp, that although he is young, Jim Darlington is a difficult one to handle," cautioned the steward.

"Jim Darlington!" gasped the captain. It was his turn to be surprised. "I thought he was dead."

"On the contrary, he is very much alive, as are the other Frontier Boys."

"Well, I'll be blessed," said the captain, "the old innkeeper and the Senor's man told me all the party had gone up with the old hulk."

Amid frequent expressions of astonishment the steward told the story, as he had learned it, of the affair at San Matteo Bay, ending with the rescue of the entire party.

"Poor Reynolds," laughed Captain Beauchamp. "He must have had a jolly meeting with the Senor. I wrote to Reynolds that everybody had been blown sky high, and that the slate was clean."

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The mate, whose voice was a low grumble, made some remark which Juarez could not hear.

"Yes, about that Jim," the captain was saying. "What we want to do is to surprise him, take him unawares."

Again the murmur of the mate's voice, but he spoke too low for his words to be heard.

"It's near dusk," resumed the captain. "In half an hour it will be pitch dark. We'll jog along towards the bay and take some observations."

The listener heard no more.

Some bird flitted into a branch close beside Juarez and uttered a gentle chirp. He knew that he was alone. He knew, too, that a serious task was cut out for him. To descend the mountain by the route he had come and reach the shack or shelter at the landing place would necessitate his passing the villainous pair he had overheard. This they would likely prevent. The feat was well nigh impossible.

It seemed right good fortune that he had overheard their plans, but how could he circumvent them? He had it. A sudden inspiration burned into his soul. He must descend by the precipitous route on the side toward the sea down which he and Jo had traveled the day before. They had made the descent for pleasure, then, helping each other, and in broad daylight. Could he do the trick alone and in the dark?

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He tried to scramble to his feet. The effort sent a paralyzing pain through his head and neck, and he relaxed again with a stifled moan. After a moment he tried again, more slowly now, and in spite of the terrible pain, soon staggered to his feet.

He looked about. Directly above him was an overhanging boulder. It was upon its jagged edge he had struck when falling. Below was the stone turreted, bushy mountain side. Supporting himself with his hands he crept around the base of the boulder and soon got a broader outlook. His gun, as too great a handicap to carry on his trip, he discarded, carefully secreting it.

A considerable interval must have elapsed since he received that paralyzing abrasure from the rock against which he had struck, for the sun was gone and a melancholy gloom was settling over the wild landscape. Assuredly he must be moving. Those unscrupulous cutthroats would stop at nothing. And was not Jim, his dearest and most admired friend, in danger? It was an agonizing thought that gripped his mind.

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He sprang forward with a spasmodic intake of the breath, and sped like a wild faun along the rugged hillside. He did not know that his face and head were caked with clotted blood. He even forgot the throbbing pain. He would climb down the cliffs by the difficult and undetermined route he had traversed the day before.

Bursting through thickets and stumbling across darkening ravines he reached the point from which the perilous descent of the cliff side could be undertaken. Gloomy crags towered above him, and below, the almost unknown forbidding way, crowded with tragic uncertainties.

But not a moment could be spared. Without hesitation he plunged recklessly into the abyss and in a moment was hugging the cold rocks, clutching at supporting twigs and undergrowths, sliding, slipping, almost falling down a frightful precipice.

Once he lost his hold entirely and felt himself whirling through the darkness, but he writhed himself upright in his fall and brought up with a smash and a crash in the dense foliage of a quertel nut tree. He did not feel the torn skin on face and hands, nor know that a fresh torrent of blood burst from the abrasure on his head. He groped blindly for the splintered rocks at the trees' base, felt their resisting force and lunged forward once more.

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Soon he found himself on a sloping bench or shelf whose surface was on a level with the tops of some trees below, and he remembered the spot. Here Jo and he had enjoyed a grand view of the ocean, enveloped in mystery and obscurity. Owing to the absence of shrubbery it was lighter here, and out of pure necessity he was compelled to halt for breath. He leaned against the wall of rock for a moment before commencing the next stage of the journey.

He remembered that his former passage had led him for a hundred feet or more before bringing him to another drop. Straining his eyes along the stretch of shelf he suddenly beheld an object emerge from the darkness and grow larger as it approached. Then appeared another and another till he had counted six, all in regular Indian file and moving in absolute silence.

There was a moment of dreadful uncertainty. Clearly these were the natives of this or some nearby island, and the first that he or any of his party had seen. The only weapon that Juarez possessed was a hunting knife. He pressed himself against the rock and held his hand to throttle the beating of his heart. They approached. Now he heard the soft shuffle of their feet. Closer, and the first was nearly abreast of him. Closer still, and the man glided by not three yards away, as—happy relief—did his followers.

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They passed, and still he moved not. The subdued twinkling of the falling gravel, the swish and rattle of the boughs and he was alone. Then his breath came back with a spurt, and he realized that he had been near to suffocation. It was not that he feared for himself. But that awful responsibility, the warning of Jim. He must do nothing, attempt nothing, that would involve the possibility of delay.

But there was no time for musing. The half of his dangerous descent was before him. He hurried forward again, almost running along the shelving bench although he knew that a perpendicular drop of many yards was but a few inches from his nimble feet. He knew where to make the next plunge downward for the shelf pinched out, and there was no other way of advancing.

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Down he went among insecure boulders, fragments of the upper cliff thrown off by some convulsion of nature, and again he had a dangerous fall. He struck upon his side and slid for a rod not unlike a log, bringing up with a serious injury against a boulder. Below were dwarf compametos trees, and beneath them he squirmed, the meager light shut out entirely by their dense foliage. Soon a bed of prickly leaves and ferns told him that he was over the worst of the road.

Still there was much treacherous footing ahead and he stumbled and tripped more than once. But now he was nearing the shack, and he must exercise all his caution taught by long experience with the Indians. Noiseless and as stealthy as a cat he squirmed through the tangled underbrush till he reached the sandy margin of Crescent Bay. Still keeping within the shadow of the forest growth, he advanced rapidly, fearing every moment that some overt act would advise him that he had not been swift enough.

Now he was within call of the shelter, and he gave a peculiar signal, a note of warning for Jim if he were awake. There was no response. None when the call was again repeated louder. Horrible thought! Was he too late?

CHAPTER XXI.

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THE CAPTURE.

Selecting a convenient resting place, Jim had sat down, and for the second time, taking up his rifle, went over it carefully, testing the lock and cleaning and oiling the various parts. He gave the same attention to the other guns. When this was done, he went over the ammunition to see that it was all in order.

Then, having no further task to engage his attention, a drowsy spell appealing, he lay down upon a moss covered bed of nature's fashioning, and was soon fast asleep. When he awoke he knew that a considerable interval had elapsed, and that the day was waning.

He looked toward the ship, but all was quiet there.

"It is time that Juarez was getting back," he thought. "I hope that he hasn't got into any trouble. And the boys, too, were coming ashore. But I suppose," he added whimsically, "they had to wait till Berwick was satisfied that Manuel wasn't anywhere around. I don't see any signs of their coming," again looking toward the yacht, "I think I will see if I can find Juarez."

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He had little difficulty in following Juarez's trail as he had gone straight forward in the direction of the valley which skirted the peak or elevation for which he had started.

Although he was not apprehensive of an attack, Jim went forward cautiously, looking about him as he proceeded, with his gun ready for use in case of need. He had gone a little more than a quarter of the way to the cliff when the ground became rugged with large rocks and occasional deep crevices.

He became impressed at this point with the fancy that someone was about. He stood motionless, and himself hidden discovered that someone was in fact approaching. The man was moving slowly and seemingly without special caution. In the shadow of the underbrush Jim did not at first recognize that it was the steward whose movements he was observing. Then he knew that it was that individual.

Here was an opportunity perhaps to learn something of this suspected person, and intent on this object Jim stealthily followed in the other's footsteps. He was mystified by his actions, for the steward seemed to have no definite motive in view. He moved slowly about in an erratic course, first in one direction then another, without apparent reason.

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The precautions Jim would ordinarily have taken to keep a lookout about him were omitted, and of a sudden he was himself set upon by two muscular individuals who seemed to spring from space, and taken so entirely unawares, before he recognized his danger, his arms were pinioned. Notwithstanding his strenuous struggles he was quickly bound and a helpless captive.

He had had no opportunity even to get a look at his captors before he was blindfolded.

"We want yer company for a period," a soft well modulated voice, with a southern accent, was speaking. "Make no trouble, and I will know that you are a wise young man."

"I do not know you. What do you want?"

"First and foremost the chart you have in your pocket. I will, since your hands are tied, with your kind permission, help myself to that now."

Needless to say, the speaker sought out and took possession of the desired document, carefully bestowing it in his own pocket.

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"Now to introduce ourselves, for you doubtless observed that there are two of us. This is Mate Marion, and I am Captain Beauchamp, at your service."

"By what right, captain, do you detain me, and take from me my possessions?"

"Oh, all is fair in love or war, is it not so?"

Ignoring the question and recognizing the probability that argument was useless, Jim contented himself with an inquiry:

"What do you propose doing with me?"

"I shall be most pleased to entertain you on board my ship."

"For what purpose is my presence wanted there?"

"Just for the pleasure of your company. I hear that you are a fine young fellow, and I may have a proposition to make to you that will be worthy of your consideration. Just now the thing to do is to get back to the Marjorie. I will make this offer now. If you will go along with us without causing any trouble, you shall, as a reward, not be harmed."

"But I am blindfolded."

"That is a condition easily remedied," saying which, the handkerchief was removed from the captive's eyes.

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Jim recognized the fact that he had been trapped, and was in the hands of a wily, adroit villain, but protest or a struggle for freedom would be unavailing under the existing circumstances, and he believed that his wisest plan was to make the best of his fate pending better opportunity to change the conditions of things.

Guided by the captain and mate a long march was undertaken, and at a late hour, with slight knowledge of the locality, Jim was put into a rowboat and conveyed on board a ship riding at anchor in an open bay.

He was soon to learn that he was a prisoner on board that vessel of questionable purpose, the *Marjorie*. So much information the captain himself conveyed to him when releasing the bonds that had held secure his arms. He was placed in a small compartment known as the ship brig, and a securely locked door barred his egress.

CHAPTER XXII.

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THE SEARCH.

Toward dusk on Sunday evening, Tom, after a lazy day, having once more perused the paper bound love story which he invariably carried in his pocket, was reminded of his promise to join Jim and Juarez on shore.

He called to Jo, and, while waiting for him, let down into the long boat at the ship's side some small casks, which were to be filled with fresh water.

"When you get ashore, send the steward on board," said the professor. "It's near supper time, and he should be here."

"What did he go ashore for?" asked Tom.

"He said that he wanted to look for some kind of leaves that he wished for flavoring."

"H'm," drawled Tom. "Hope he hasn't gone to look for something to poison us with."

"What makes you so prejudiced against the steward, Tom?" asked the professor. "There isn't anything against him, except that he is a Mexican, and—"

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"That's enough for one thing," asserted Tom. "I am pretty sure that he is the one that has caused all the trouble here."

"But why?" persisted the professor. "He has been my steward off and on for many years, and he has always been faithful and honest."

"Maybe he has," persisted Tom. "But still I don't trust him."

"All right, Tom," replied the professor, laughingly, "keep your eye on him, but still I think he is all right."

"I say, Tom," broke in Jo, who had climbed down into the small boat, "if you are coming you had better make a start and hurry up Berwick. It will be night before we get away. Say, what did you do with the rowlocks?"

"What would I do with them," retorted Tom. "Left them in their place, of course."

"Well, they are not there now," grumbled Jo. "How do you think we are going to row without any rowlocks?"

"What is that?" asked the professor.

"Somebody has taken the rowlocks out of the boat," complained Tom, "and Jo seems to think I did it."

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"Perhaps some of the crew took them out when they were unloading it last," suggested the professor. But a hasty questioning of the men who had hoisted out the filled casks showed that they had not removed them.

"It is certainly strange," admitted the professor. "Are they all gone?"

"All of them," returned Jo, emphatically.

"Well, you will have to get some out of the storeroom," said the captain, who had been attracted by the discussion. "I think it is likely someone has taken them out and forgotten

them.”

“Now, then,” cried Jo, when the other rowlocks had been put in. “Where’s Berwick? Give him a hail, will you?”

At this instant Berwick came up the ladder from the engine room, excitedly swinging an iron bar.

“Hallo,” called Tom. “What have you got there?”

“What do you think of that!” demanded Berwick as he came toward the others.

“What is it?” asked the professor.

“It is an iron bar that I found wedged in the engine,” replied Berwick. “I thought I would take a look over the engine before I went ashore and I found this.” [Pg 215]

“What was it doing there?” asked the professor.

“Well, it wasn’t doing anything,” replied Berwick, grimly, “but if the engine had been started with that thing in it, it would have made a junk heap of the whole thing in about ten seconds.”

“How did it get there?” asked Tom.

Berwick shrugged his shoulders.

“You know as much about it as I do. Whoever put it there meant mischief. If that infernal little hunchback isn’t around—”

“His first cousin is,” supplemented Tom, “but he has gone ashore now and I don’t believe he will be back.”

“Who are you talking about?” demanded Berwick.

“The steward.”

“I am not quite ready to concede that,” said the professor, “but I think there is a traitor aboard somewhere, and there is mischief brewing. It seems to me that the best thing to do is to get Jim and Juarez on board again until we can clear this thing up. Get over, boys, into the boat. I am going with you.” [Pg 216]

Tom ran down the ladder into the boat, followed by the professor, and in a moment the boat was speeding for the shore as fast as Tom and Jo could pull it.

“Where are your guns?” asked the professor, when they landed.

“We left them with Jim,” replied Jo. “He was to bring them ashore and clean them up.”

“Jim and Juarez were to be somewhere abouts but I don’t see either of them,” put in Tom.

“They certainly are not here now,” exclaimed the professor, anxiously.

“They can’t be far away,” said Tom. “Wait until I give them a call. Ohe-ee! Jim! Juarez! Ohe-ee!” he shouted.

There was no response, however, to their repeated calls.

“It’s strange,” said the professor. “Look around and see if you can find their trails.”

“Here’s the guns,” cried Jo, a moment later, “hid away in these bushes.”

“That’s queer,” commented the professor, “they must have gone off somewhere, but why?”

“Here’s Juarez’s trail,” announced Tom. “I can see, too, that he went off first and that Jim went afterward.” [Pg 217]

“Better take your guns along, boys,” advised the professor. “There is no telling what we may meet.”

Picking up their guns the boys started off on the trail with Tom in the lead. They had not gone very far on the way when Tom stopped and raised his hand.

“There is something or someone coming,” he whispered as the others came up with him. “Get behind or into the bushes until we see who it is, or what.”

Only a person with ears trained by experience in the woods would have detected the approach of someone as Tom had. There was an occasional snapping of a twig or rustling in the bushes as the coming object moved. There was an unevenness about the movements

that puzzled the boys.

With his rifle cocked and ready for instant use, Tom crouched behind the bush ready for quick action if necessary. Then as the figure of someone came into view, moving slowly, and stealthily through the woods, he sprang forward.

"Hallo, Juarez," he called. "Anything the matter? Where have you been?"

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"Where is Jim?" asked Juarez.

"Jim?" echoed Tom. "I don't know. Isn't he with you?"

"Then those pirates have got him!" exclaimed Juarez. "I tried to get back to warn him, but I had a fall, and it took me longer than I expected."

"Come. Sit down and tell us about it," said the professor, fixing, meanwhile a place beneath a tree, "while I see what is the matter with you. Where are you hurt?"

"It is my foot," explained Juarez. "I expect I strained it when I fell. I can hardly walk."

"Hardly!" exclaimed the professor when he examined Juarez's foot. "It's a wonder you walked at all. You have a dislocation. And your head, too?"

"Never mind that," cried Juarez. "Never mind anything. We want to get after the pirates."

"All in good time, Juarez," replied the professor. "The first thing to do is to get you into shape again, for we shall need your help. Here, Tom, you get a hold of this leg. Hold it steady, now, ready." With a little click the bone slipped back into place when the professor gave a pull and a little twist to the foot, but although Juarez's face went white, he did not utter a sound.

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"Now," commanded the professor, "see if you can get some cold water, Jo, and Tom, you find something for a bandage. You'll find some sail cloth among the stuff we brought in the boat."

Tom was off in a second to return presently with a strip of cloth as Jo came up with his cap full of water. Tearing the material into strips and dipping them into the water, the professor soon had both Juarez's head and foot bandaged in a way that gave him comparative relief.

"Now," said the professor, "tell us about Jim."

Whereupon Juarez told briefly of his journey that afternoon, and how, when trying to observe the approach of some strangers, he had fallen, and then he repeated the conversation he had overheard, and told how he had tried to get back to the shore in time to warn Jim of the impending danger. All listened intently and Tom could not avoid an occasional interruption to express his opinion of the steward.

"The villain!" cried Tom between his teeth, in a tone that boded ill for the man.

"You were evidently right," the professor reluctantly admitted, "the man is a traitor."

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"I hope we catch him," cried Jo.

"Come on, now," says Tom, starting up.

"Where are you going?" asked the professor.

"To help Jim. If you will stay with Juarez, Jo and I will follow up his trail," responded Tom.

This seemed feasible and wise and aided by some instructions given by Juarez they were in a measure able to make good progress. They soon came upon a place where there were evidences of a struggle, and here they carefully searched about and called loudly, but got no response.

But one inference was possible, Jim had been overpowered by a superior force and made prisoner; so they reluctantly returned to the professor with this report.

"We can't do anything more to-night," determined the professor. "It is too late. If there are enemies about under cover of darkness they have every advantage. I think our best plan would be to go back to the Storm King and make our plans for to-morrow. With a night's rest, Juarez will be in shape to help us, and we will have Berwick, too."

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"But they may kill Jim before morning," objected Tom.

"I don't think there is any danger of that," replied the professor. "They would not have bothered to take him prisoner if any harm were intended. If we went on now, even if we knew what direction to take, we would only be working in the dark, literally and

figuratively. We will have to reconnoitre a little first and plan accordingly.”

“I don’t know but what you are right,” admitted Tom, very reluctantly, “but it doesn’t seem the right thing to do to leave Jim that way.”

“Festina lenta, Tom,” rejoined the professor. “You remember the old proverb, ‘Make haste slowly.’ We’ll do more by not trying to do things too quickly. We will go back and get ready for to-morrow.”

“What do you know about this Captain Beauchamp, who is evidently the commander of the Marjorie?” Jo inquired.

“He is a buccaneer, a pirate and a slave to do the bidding of anyone who will pay for his service. Still he has the reputation for dealing fairly and is far more likely to hold Jim as hostage for ransom or other advantage than to do him bodily harm.”

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“Have you ever had dealings with the captain?”

“No. I have never seen him. Know of him only by hearsay. He is rather well educated, and, I hear, sometimes speaks with a southern drawl, but he even varies that to suit himself.”

“I shall be better satisfied when I know Jim is safe,” concluded Jo.

“Indeed we all shall,” said the professor, and addressing Juarez, “What do you make out about the natives, whom you observed as you were coming down the cliff side?”

“I knew that they were natives by their dress, or lack of it,” said Juarez. “They had but very little clothing on, and I believe that two of the party were ill, for the other four at times assisted their comrades.”

“Likely you were right,” asserted the professor. “Probably it was a pilgrimage to the sulphur spring.”

With occasional help and the aid of a stick which Jo cut to a proper length and fashioned in the form of a crutch, Juarez was able to get back to the boat with comparative ease, and they were soon rowing toward the yacht.

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Arriving on board they found that the steward had not yet returned.

“A good thing for him,” asserted Tom. An opinion which no one could gainsay.

“Now, boys,” advised the professor when a late supper had been eaten and a short consultation had been held, “you had better get off to your bunks. Even if you don’t feel inclined to sleep, you will get some needed rest, and that is important, as we are likely to have a hard day’s work ahead of us for to-morrow.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

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THE CHIEF OF RARIHUE.

Before dawn of the next morning the party were all on deck ready for a start as soon as it was light enough to see their way through the woods. Hardly had they assembled, however, when there came one of those sudden terrific storms which are so frequent in the southern seas. The downpour lasted about a half hour to the regret of Jo and Tom, who had hoped to readily strike and follow the trail of Jim and his captors. Some other plan would now be necessary.

“I think,” said the professor, who, in the absence of Jim, had tacitly assumed the leadership, “that we had better get prepared for an overnight stay.”

“Why do you think it will take us so long?” questioned Jo.

“That is something we cannot tell,” responded the professor. “We don’t know what we may have to contend with. We have a powerful and wily enemy in Captain Beauchamp, and we will have to accomplish our ends by strategy rather than by force.”

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“Have you got any plan, professor?” asked Tom.

“Only in a general way,” replied the professor. “We shall have to act as seems best as things turn up.”

“What is the first thing to be done?” asked Tom.

"I propose," answered the professor, "that we go to the place where you saw the column of smoke."

"What do you expect to find there that we did not?"

"Nothing, perhaps, but I think that that is the highest point on the island," explained the professor, "and from there we ought to be able to get a fair idea of the size and shape of the place and the character of the country."

"And from that we can plan our campaign," said Berwick.

"Exactly. Now, then," he went on a moment later, "if you are all ready we will get away. Be careful, boys, for it is more than likely that our movements are watched."

The first faint light of the coming day was beginning to show, and the stars were fading before the coming dawn. Away off to the right of the yacht as she swung at her anchor on the incoming tide the shore loomed heavy and black, a thick blot in the inky darkness. There was almost an unnatural stillness over the harbor, the only sound to break the quiet being the soft lap, lap, of the ever restless waves beating against the side of the vessel.

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Their voices sounded so unnaturally loud when they spoke to one another that they all unconsciously dropped their tone to a whisper.

Despite his protests that he was in fit condition to accompany the others, it was decided that Juarez should remain on the yacht.

"You are really not able to travel," insisted Tom.

"And you will be in shape to-morrow when we will need you more," added Jo in an effort at consolation.

"Beside," explained the professor, "you may possibly be of more service here than if you went along. The captain might need your aid, for we cannot tell what may happen, and you are the only one beside Mr. Berwick who knows anything about the engine."

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"If you really think so," reluctantly acquiesced Juarez.

"Most decidedly," affirmed the professor. "I would advise that you get up enough steam in the boiler to sound the whistle if necessary. I don't know that there will be any occasion for it, but if, for any reason, you should want to call us, you can give three blasts upon the whistle, and we will act accordingly."

During this time the boys had been silently taking their positions in the small boat; Tom, by direction of the professor, in the bow, while Jo and Berwick took the oars.

"You need to keep a sharp lookout ahead," advised the professor when they started. "We are liable to run into almost anything, and we don't want to be caught unawares."

"All right," responded Tom. "I've got my eyes and ears wide open."

As silently as a spectral boat, the little craft slipped through the darkness, the rowers dipping their oars almost without a creak or jar. Nevertheless they advanced rapidly toward the shore that loomed up grim and forbidden like a wall of impenetrable darkness.

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It was but a few minutes before the boat was run up on the beach at the foot of the cliffs and the party disembarked. The boat was then carried a sufficient distance on to the shore and hidden in the heavy underbrush.

"Now, boys," began the professor when they had completed their preparations, "you are our scouts and we have to depend upon you to thwart our enemies, if they are about. Tom, you had better take the lead, and Jo will cover the rear. Instead of the long way around that you took when you last sought the smoke signal, I think we will adopt the direct and more rugged climb, as less liable to ambush. When you are ready, go ahead."

Without making any reply, Tom, with his rifle in his hand ready for immediate use, slipped away among the bushes. Berwick followed, then the professor and Jo last. It was light enough at this time for Tom to make his way among the rocks, which at this point were piled up in great masses, covering the ground just as they had fallen from the cliffs above.

There was a semblance of a path or way through the rocky defile which led with many turns and twists along the course of what, in the wet season was apparently the bed of a stream, but although this roadway was less difficult to negotiate, Tom ignored it and kept to the more rugged way, skirting the bed of the water course.

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Pushing on energetically, Tom opened up a gap between himself and the others for whom

the professor set the pace, a less rapid one. Glancing ahead they saw that Tom had halted and was signaling for a cautious advance.

A little farther on the hum of voices broke upon their ears. They were approaching the sulphur spring, and from that direction the sound emanated. There was a babble of tongues, jabbering in some unfamiliar language.

"A party of natives at the spring," concluded the professor.

A cautious approach brought the islanders under observation, though the professor and his party were hidden from the others. There may have been a dozen of the tribe men grouped about the spring. The one, most impressive appearing of the lot, had evidently but just completed a bath and just resumed his scanty garments which he was then adjusting. This person was not as dark of skin as those about him, and from the servile actions of the others it could readily be assumed that he was their king or chief. None of the party were armed.

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The professor viewed the scene for a brief interval, then, without hesitation stepped from behind the barrier of leaves. Instantly the islanders were alert and calls and exclamations filled the air. All were, however, silenced by the chief, who turned now for the first time and faced the visitors. To the latter's great astonishment the chief immediately sprang forward, advancing toward the professor. Jo and Tom quickly raised their rifles, but as quickly lowered them again, when they saw that the approach was without menace.

The onlookers' astonishment was greater still when they heard the chief in the best of English say, "My dear friend, what are you doing here?"

"Rather, may I say," was the prompt reply, "what are you doing here, my dear Jranvin? What in all reason brought you to this end of the world?"

Thus saluted, and with further manifestations of regard, esteem and affection the two men grasped hands, and with the other hand upon each other's shoulders, stood thus for a full minute.

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It was the professor who first bethought himself of the surroundings, and with a recognition that they were not alone upon the scene, he cried:

"Here, boys, and Berwick. Here is my old and well regarded friend. Let me make you acquainted, Jranvin, with Jo Darlington and his brother Tom and Mr. Berwick."

Greetings were exchanged, the islanders indifferently looking on, and the professor undertook to hastily satisfy the curiosity of his friends. There was little he could say, however, and explanations had to come naturally from the chief, for such he announced himself to be.

"It's not a long story," he said, "my being here, and very briefly, in a nutshell, it is this——"

"Why," broke in the professor, "when I last saw you in London, you were ill, had been ill for a long time, and in truth I may say, I never thought to see you again on this earth."

"That's the starting point," said Mr. Jranvin. "I was condemned, given up to die, by slow and harrowing processes, but chance, if there ever be such a thing in this world, started me on a voyage to Japan. That's some years ago. To Japan I never got."

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"Shipwrecked?" questioned the professor.

"You hit it. Shipwrecked, and right upon this island. And over here on our island of Rarihue we have lived ever since. My health is restored and my life is lived among my friends here, who made me their chief," and he waved his hand to the party of islanders grouped about. "My friends they are, and as true as steel."

"Then do you never intend to go back to your home and country?" ventured Jo.

"Home I have none, nor country. This is my world and none other am I likely to seek."

"You do not live then on this island?"

"No, but now and then I send here or come for a supply of the waters of this wonderful mineral spring. It possesses health-giving properties that would be recognizable by any expert. Here is a chance for you, my dear friend, to make a fortune," he said, laughing. "By the way, you have not told me yet what brought you to this far off quarter. Going to settle down and live a life that's worth while?"

"We are looking for a fortune, and a mineral one, but not a mineral spring."

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Mr. Jranvin, or the chief, as they soon learned to call him, glanced quickly at the party and for a moment studied each face.

"All willing to jeopardize your lives for gold, and when gotten what do you do with it?"

"Why, live in comfort," laughed the professor, "as you do."

"Yes, as I do *without* it," returned the other, smilingly.

"Perhaps, though, you can help us in our search, since having no need, we cannot be robbing you."

"You will find no treasure on this island," was the firm response. And then he again looked intently into each of the three faces before him, ignoring only that of the professor.

"You have looked for the treasure yourself," questioned the professor, "and there was none here?"

"There *was*," replied the chief. "But *it is gone*."

"The fortunes of war," said the professor lightly. "Really, though, while we have been talking we may have been devoting to you time we owe to one of our party, for our expedition this morning is one of search of a missing member of our company."

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The chief was then told of Jim's probable capture by the captain of the *Marjorie*.

"Beauchamp, eh? So he is around again. Well, we on Rarihue concern ourselves but little with the outside world. Rarihue has no harbor and only small boats can effect a landing. Excepting for Bohoola the island we are on, and one other uninhabited island, there is no other land within two hundred miles. We are not a fighting people, and have no real need to be. I've taught them to fight only for their homes. But if I can help you in any way, be assured of my willingness."

The professor told of his own ship, and the harbor where it was anchored. The "North" harbor, the chief recognized it to be. Could information be given as to the probable anchorage of the *Marjorie*?

"Surely. In the South harbor, which is less than a half dozen miles away, on the other side of the island. Wait a moment," added the chief. "I will speak with my men." This he did, and promptly reported. "Yes, there is a ship at anchor there. It is quite certainly your objective point."

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Censuring himself for the long delay, the professor now gave the order to press on. The two old time friends, thus oddly thrown together, grasped hands and made promises to meet once more before the great oceans should separate them again.

"Tell Beauchamp," the chief cried after them, "if you see him, that he too is too late. The treasure is gone."

CHAPTER XXIV.

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ON BOARD THE MARJORIE.

Jim had a restless night. He was sadly disappointed with himself, that he should have so carelessly allowed his enemies to triumph over him. He could not imagine for what purpose he was now detained, and he was very determined upon seeking an early opportunity to escape.

In the circumscribed quarters of the brig in which he was confined, he could move about but little. There was a small porthole, but far too small for any possibility for escape through the opening.

The night was hot and little air astir. He gazed purposelessly through the porthole, dozing anon till far after the middle of the night, he was aroused to active interest by seeing the lights of another ship. From his viewpoint, the harbor's opening toward the sea was visible.

There was commotion now over his head, the running about of sailors, calling the captain to the deck. The mate and others of the crew all assembled on the deck above, and very near Jim's compartment.

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The first exultant thought in Jim's mind was that the professor with the *Storm King* had

come to his rescue. The more logical reasoning determined that it would have been quite impossible to have accomplished any such result in so short a time. Furthermore such a move would have been foolhardy and impractical. No, there must be some other explanation to be sought.

The mysterious arrival was puzzling Captain Beauchamp and his company, who, indeed, took the new arrival to be the Storm King. This Jim readily determined by the talk of those leaning against the deck rail.

"Are you sure that no lights are showing below?" It was Beauchamp's soft voice.

"There are no lights lit on board, sir. Your orders were that none should show in this harbor."

"Then they can't locate us in the dark. Before dawn have all the guns looked over and everything made in readiness for an attack."

"Is that young fellow worth fighting for?" asked the mate.

"I thought to keep him while we looked for the cave, and his party don't know that we have got him." [Pg 238]

"But they will soon find out. Any one of those Frontier Boys can follow even a rabbit trail."

"So? I never thought of that. Well, we will make a dicker with them. If they find the treasure, and divide fairly, we will—-. Say, it's beginning to rain. Let's get under cover. When it rains here it's a deluge."

Jim had listened interestedly to the conversation, and was cognizant now of the heavy downpour.

"It will make the atmosphere a little cooler," he mused, "but it will also wash out the trail."

With the first gleam of light, the storm having ceased, the deck was again peopled with interested spectators, and Jim, listening, was treated to a surprise that, figuratively speaking, nearly took his breath away.

"Say, it looks like—what do you make it out to be, Marion?"

"It looks like—it is, the Sea Eagle."

"The Sea Eagle," gasped Jim, in a barely suppressed voice. "Say, but what queer things do happen," and once more a breath of exultant joy possessed him. Then the misery of his situation reasserted itself. Here was his own ship near at hand, and he a helpless prisoner, and he fairly raged and struck the cabin door with impotent fury. [Pg 239]

Later on, as the light increased, he was able to see his beloved ship clearly outlined against the sky, and, closely observant of all that transpired, he saw Broome himself, giving directions from the bridge.

Signals were evidently exchanged between the two ships, for later, Broome was seen to enter a small boat which was rowed toward the Marjorie.

Jim had nothing to do for a while. He surveyed the surface of the bay for signs of breaking fish, or the splash of a vagrant water bird, dreaming of the possibilities built on the hope of repossessing himself of the Sea Eagle.

Then again came the sound of voices on deck. The two captains were in conference.

"A big storm," Jim heard Captain Broome say. "We weathered it well, but the Swedish bark which we had sighted had been for some time in distress, could not stand the strain and had to be abandoned."

"Then you have all the crew of the lost ship aboard?"

"What could we do but lend a hand?" said Captain Broome in an apologetic tone, as if deploring the necessity for an ordinary humanitarian act. [Pg 240]

"How large a crew, and who is their commander?"

"A dozen of the beggars and blessed with appetites that are insatiable. Captain ter Tofte Luhrensen was in command. He was also the owner of the lost vessel."

"And what do you propose to do with them?"

"Why do you ask?" was Broome's diplomatic response.

"I just thought you might have in mind the leaving of the crowd on this island."

"Well, I might, if you wish me to."

"And I just don't wish it. I have got trouble enough with the professor's crew."

"So Featheringstone is here? Has he located the treasure?"

"Not yet. Well, there's lots of things to talk over, my dear Broome. Let's have a spread, a feast. Get your sister and her husband, and we will discuss the situation over a bowl of punch."

"I'm with you, and send your crew over to the Sea Eagle. Let them have a jollification."

Jim could but faintly hear their voices now, for the speakers had moved aft. He had noticed one point in particular. Beauchamp had never referred to the fact that a prisoner was confined on the deck beneath him. [Pg 241]

Now, to Jim's mind came the insistent need to escape, and very carefully he examined every surface, angle and crevice of his prison. All this was unavailing, however. Surely it was a hard fate that he must sit there so helplessly. His only dependency evidently was upon help to come from the outside. One thing he determined to do, however. When the door of his cabin was opened for any purpose he would make a break for liberty, and fight his way, if need be, single-handed.

But if breakfast was to be brought to him to afford this needed opportunity, it was long deferred. Three hours, he estimated, had passed thus. During this time he had seen Red Annie and her husband rowed to the Marjorie. The Swedes in a long boat were busily occupied in bringing fresh water in casks from the shore to the Sea Eagle, and on board the latter the jollification was decidedly in progress as he could both see and hear.

On board the Marjorie, all was quiet. He could occasionally hear the murmur of voices, but nothing more. Looking just now toward the Sea Eagle he saw that the combined crews of the two ships were manning the long boat. [Pg 242]

There was scarcely a man among them now who could be regarded as moderately sober. The majority were immoderately intoxicated. They were singing ribald songs and the recitative, between the melodies was composed of oaths such as Jim had never heard. The men in the long boat did not succeed in getting clear of the Sea Eagle without some violent altercations, first with the Swedes and then among themselves. The jovial songs were quickly abandoned in favor of yells and shouts and threats, oars were freely and indiscriminately used, and there seemed to be a breaking of heads all around.

"There seems to be a regular melee," thought Jim, as he stood by the porthole, observing the lively scene. He watched the men leap from thwart to thwart of the boat and make for one another like bulldogs. He thought he knew exactly how the fight would end, and it did end precisely as he anticipated.

More than a dozen men cannot carry on a naval engagement of that sort for a long time without an accident of some kind, and no one had reason to be surprised when an unsteady man, balancing himself on an unsteady gunwhale, to strike at a particular "friend" with a heavy oar, failed in his aim, and went headlong into the water; nor was it in any way unnatural or contrary to the laws of gravitation that the bow of the boat on being released of his weight, should jump up, thereby interfering with the man who was balancing himself astern and sending him overboard with equal dispatch. [Pg 243]

Just at that moment, Jim was startled by a voice close beside him, for he had had no intimation that anyone was about. Turning quickly, he discovered that a small panel in his door had been slid aside and a plate of food was pushed through and into his extended hands.

Needless to say, the food was welcome, but the method of serving dashed away the hope and plan of escape he had had, and so ardently counted upon. But the voice! That he recognized as familiar, although he did not at once remember to whom it belonged. Suddenly he knew. It was the steward, Pedro, come probably to mock him in his captivity. He never had liked the man. His unvarying servitude, and now the full knowledge of his treachery to his employer thoroughly awakened all his ire. [Pg 244]

"I have brought you this food."

Jim could not refrain from hissing from between his clenched teeth, "You traitor!"

CONCLUSION.

An arduous tramp of a half hour brought the professor and his party to the base of the steep incline that led to their objective point. Here they halted a moment for a rest and looked about them. The side of the cliff, which was two or three hundred feet in height, was heavily wooded and ran upward at an acute angle, but with several ledges that stretched across the face so that an ascent was possible, but only at the expense of a considerable journey. Steady effort, going from one ledge to another, climbing through crevices and around projecting barriers finally brought them to the summit. Here, on a small open space, they found the remains of the fire which had been the source of the column of smoke, the embers, notwithstanding the wetting they had had, still giving out a little vapor.

"Well, boys, we can go no higher except by the aid of the branches of the trees."

"I was considering which tree to climb," responded Tom. "That one on the point is the highest, but the one nearer us we climbed before and is the easiest to get up." [Pg 246]

"Let it be the highest," determined the professor.

It was not an easy task they had undertaken, as the trees were several feet in diameter, without a branch for eighteen or twenty feet from the base; but the boys, with the aid of Berwick and the professor, by dint of clinging like flies to each little projection in the trunk, managed to get a hold on the lower branches and pull themselves up into the trees; then by degrees to the highest point that could safely be reached.

"Phew," said Tom, who was the first to get to a place where he could look off over the surrounding country, "what do you think of that?"

"What is it?" panted Jo.

"Look there!" answered Tom. "Looks as though we had our work cut out for us."

"It does look interesting," coincided Jo, who had gotten up to where he could see about.

Away off to the south, a distance of about five miles in a small harbor lay two ships, one of which, even at that distance, the boys had no difficulty in recognizing as the Marjorie. They were riding quietly at anchor, but there were small boats passing to and fro between the two vessels and the shore. [Pg 247]

They also noted that the mountains extended to the south, with another range a little farther away, beyond which the ground sloped away again down to a nearly level plain, which ran away to the water's edge. The mountains were heavily wooded, and the plains or more level surfaces, as well. To the east the mountains appeared to extend in an unbroken range to the shore.

"Well," said the professor, when they had climbed down. "What did you find out?"

"The Marjorie is off there," replied Tom.

"And another, vessel, too," added Jo.

"Humph!" ejaculated the professor, "this doesn't seem to be any place for us!"

"But what about Jim?" asked Tom.

"Oh, that's another matter," said the professor, in a whimsical way he had when confronted by a serious problem. "One thing at a time, you know."

"How do you think they know we were here?" asked Berwick.

"I have it!" cried Tom, excitedly, "The smoke!" [Pg 248]

"What about it?" said Jo.

"Why, don't you see," responded Tom. "It was a signal."

"Well, suppose it was, what has that got to do with them?"

"Everything," replied Tom. "That was a sign that the Storm King was here."

"But who did it?" persisted Jo.

"That villain of a steward," asserted Tom. "You know that someone on board was signalling to the Marjorie, and just as soon as we got in here he made some pretense to get ashore."

"Tom is right," agreed Berwick.

"I knew it was him," lamented Tom, "and to think we let him get away."

"I am afraid that that was because of my over-confidence," admitted the professor, "but I was deceived in him. He had been to the South Seas with me, you know."

"Well, it can't be helped now," declared Jo, philosophically. "The question is, what is the next thing to do?"

"Let us make a reconnoitre down by the harbor, and see what we can find out," suggested Berwick. "Perhaps we might get an opportunity to capture a prisoner or two that we could hold as a hostage for Jim."

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"That's a good scheme," agreed the professor.

"I hope we can get a hold on that villain of a steward," cried Tom, vindictively.

"Or that imp, Manuel," added Jo.

"Don't speak of him," remonstrated Berwick. "It is like a premonition of evil whenever I hear his name."

"Come on," said Tom, picking up his rifle. "The sooner we get there, the better."

As they journeyed toward the harbor, the professor related to the others the facts concerning his acquaintance with Mr. Jranvin, now the chief of Rarihue. He spoke of his fine character, and recalled his long struggle with adversity because of inherited pulmonary trouble.

"And do you really believe that he knows about the treasure and that it is gone?" asked Tom.

"I believe that he speaks of what he knows, but I think it not unlikely that he could tell, if he would, where it is gone."

"Then is our venture a failure?"

"Who can tell? Anyway we shall not give up the search."

As there seemed reasonable assurance that they were alone in the forest, they advanced rapidly and exercised no special caution till they were nearing the harbor. Approaching the fringe of wood near the water's edge, they carefully made their way to a point where an unobstructed view was had of the bay. Tom was the first to announce to the others the identity of the other vessel they had seen from the tree top.

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"By all that is wonderful! If there isn't the Sea Eagle just moving out of the harbor!"

"The Sea Eagle? Well, this is hard," said Jo. "Just to arrive in time to see her sailing away."

"And what a row they are having on board the Marjorie; looks like a regular mutiny," cried Berwick.

The panorama on the bay, which was being enacted before them, was one of startling interest. What had happened to have brought the now disappearing Sea Eagle to the harbor they could not determine, but disorder and confusion was apparent on the Marjorie's decks.

"Captain Beauchamp is not to be seen," said the professor. "There seems to be merely a lot of sailors, and it looks as if two factions were contending for the mastery."

"Jim is not there," said Jo, sadly. "I wonder what has become of him?"

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"Probably he is still a prisoner, and we—hush! There is somebody moving through the woods!"

Some one was approaching, but in a slow and hesitating manner, yet making no effort at concealment.

"It is the steward," whispered Jo, after a moment. "Be ready, Tom, we will get him for sure!"

Absolutely motionless they all were until the steward had come to within a dozen feet of where they lay hidden, then, as he turned to move in another direction, Jo and Tom, at a signal from the former, sprang to their feet and with one bound were upon their intended prisoner. They bore him to the earth and held him secure, while Berwick quickly bound his hands behind his back.

Greatly to the surprise of all, the steward offered no resistance and made no effort whatever to escape. He hung his head on seeing whom his captors were and looked like a man suffering abjectly.

"Quick, you villain," cried Jo, grasping his arm. "Where is my brother?"

Without hesitation came the answer, "He is quite safe. He has escaped."

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"How can we know?"

The steward looked only at the professor and for answer said, "May I speak with you alone for a moment?"

"Certainly not. Say openly what you have to say," was the answer.

"I think," interposed Berwick, "I would grant his request. It can do no harm."

The boys and Berwick separated, each taking a few steps in different directions so as to prevent any possible attempt at escape.

The two thus left alone, although under close observation, conversed earnestly for a few moments, and then the professor called the others together.

"It is a deplorable matter," said the professor. "This man is deserving of condemnation and of punishment. He has been a traitor to our cause, but he admits fully his crime and wants to atone in any way he can. Jim, he says, was confined on board the Marjorie, but he himself helped him to escape and he believes that Jim is now safe and sound, probably by this time on board the Storm King."

"How can we be sure of that?" Jo asked.

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"We have only this man's word, and in a sense his word is valueless, but he can go with us and we can deal with him accordingly, if he tells not the truth."

"What's happening on the Marjorie?" asked Berwick.

The steward did not know. He told of liberating Jim, who had gotten into the Sea Eagle's dory, and had ordered the two Swedes who manned the oars, and who of course did not know him, to row him ashore. The steward, filled with remorse for his treachery to the professor, had later swam to the land and, uncertain what to do, now really welcomed his capture.

"We will leave your fate to later consideration," said the professor, "and if Jim is not found on board, it will go hard with you."

The other made no protest to this decision and promptly they undertook the return journey to their ship.

Every precaution was taken to prevent the escape of the steward, but he made no effort in that direction. He walked with bowed head, misery in his face and manner.

Fully two thirds of their return journey had been accomplished when they were startled by the sound of three long blasts from the Storm King whistle. What new danger might portend?

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Onward now they pressed with the utmost speed, and arriving at the water's edge they saw the welcome sight of the Storm King riding safely at anchor, and recognized two familiar figures on the bridge. Jim was one, safe and sound to all appearances, and the other Jranvin, the Rarihue chief.

Another sight greeted their eyes. It was two long, rakish crafts, manned by many dusky islanders which lay peacefully enough along side the big ship.

In a brief interval all were on board and explanations were in order. Jim was uproariously welcomed and quickly told his story, which brought astonishment to the ears of his listeners. Briefly this was his tale: The steward had unlocked his door and paved the way for his escape, but Jim had not rowed ashore. He had observed the contending factions of the two ships, who having rescued from the water those who had fallen overboard from the long boat, for the nonce fraternized and were bent on a visit to the Marjorie for further orgies and libations.

Noting the absence of Broome's men from the decks of the Sea Eagle, Jim had quickly changed his plan. He had ordered his two oarsmen to row him to that vessel. On the deck he had found only the Swedes and their commander, Captain Lahrensen. Boarding the ship, Jim had said: "I am the owner of this boat."

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It was an astonishing declaration, but Jim drew from his pocket papers which bore out his assertion, and he soon won to his standard the ship-wrecked commander, and with him, of course, went his crew. At once the ship had been gotten under way. Broome and his crew were all on board the Marjorie. It was evident that Beauchamp and Broome and other officers were securely imprisoned in the Marjorie cabin while the sailors were discussing with more or less forceful animation their next move.

Jim, with the decks of his beloved Sea Eagle once more beneath his feet, had made all speed under sail and steam to the entrance of the harbor where lay the Storm King, and had come aboard to report his safety and the successful outcome of his venture.

One startling tale had scarcely been assimilated when another was offered for their consideration.

The chief of Rarihue stepped forward and embracing the professor, said: "You remember this morning I told you that the treasure for which you sought had gone? It is gone from the cave in which you hoped to find it. But I will tell you now, I am the present possessor." [Pg 256]

"Then I congratulate you most heartily," responded the professor. "May you live long and enjoy it."

The chief shook his head, smiling the while. "I may find use for a little of this wealth," he said, "and I am going to ask you, my dear friend, to take it back with you."

"I will most gladly do your bidding."

"And fairly rewarded you shall be. I can trust you and I like the looks of your associates." Saying this, he walked to the gunwale and called in their native tongue to the occupants in the boats.

Upon his order, many bags of woven grass, their contents of considerable weight, were hoisted aboard.

"Ten per cent of what this realizes, and I think there is value to a quarter of a million, I want deposited to my credit in the Bank of England. I may never call for it, but *all the remainder is yours.*"

"Hurrah for the chief of Rarihue!" cried Tom, and a right ringing cheer was given. [Pg 257]

"And now," said Jim, "we must not tarry here. Professor, you have won out and do not need me any longer. I have my Sea Eagle and her papers indent her to Cuba. With Captain ter Tofte Luhnrensen as sailing master, to Cuba she shall go."

To Cuba the Sea Eagle did go, as those interested in the fortunes of the Frontier Boys may learn in a volume to follow, "The Frontier Boys in Cuba."

"You are released, albeit with reluctance," slowly answered the professor, "and my thanks for your valued aid. Your share of our success will be deposited in the Bank of America, New York, against your homecoming."

"And whom can you spare to go with me, and who wants to go to fight for freedom's cause?"

Jo and Juarez were quickly by his side and with less alacrity, Tom joined them. All looked at Berwick.

"Mine for a quiet life," said that worthy, laughing. "I shall stay by the professor."

A word more as to the steward. After careful consideration and a talk with Mr. Jranvin, he was left with the islanders. He deserved punishment, but his belated renunciation of his evil ways and his helpfulness to Jim were taken into account. [Pg 258]

As Jim had said, there was no time to be wasted, and within an hour adieux had been said, and the two ships were steaming in absolutely diverse directions, the one to San Francisco and the other to Cuba.

THE END.

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