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Hugh Mulleneux Walmsley

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## Preface.

No one ever reads prefaces now-a-days; why, therefore, should I write one? may be fairly asked. Simply, I reply, to tell the reader that the tale imperfectly related in these volumes is not a mere work of fiction. It is based on a document sent to me by my brother, to whom I have dedicated this work, and who has for many years been a resident of the frontiers of Zulu Land.

The paper alluded to was transmitted by me, according to my brother's desire, to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of the French, together with a map of Zulu Land, which had been exhibited in the Natal section of the great Paris Exhibition of 1867. Both were graciously accepted and acknowledged by His Imperial Majesty.

The country traversed by the daring men, whose adventures are related in the following pages, is still to be explored. The ruins of the Fort of Sofala, even now, lie buried in the sand, on the beach of the far away Indian Ocean. The Arabs still search there for the smelted lumps of gold, buried or lost by those of whose existence no other trace remains.

The mysterious slabs still exist, encrusted with the dirt and grime of ages, on the mountain land of Gorongoza, and should my tale induce any adventurous spirit to make an attempt to clear away the veil of mystery which yet shrouds the remains of the Ruined Cities of Zulu Land, I can only refer him to Captain Walmsley, from whom the primary information contained herein was first gleaned, before whom the Missionary's depositions were made, and who, for more than fifteen years of his life, has well and honourably filled the difficult and dangerous position of Government Agent, Magistrate, and Resident on the wild frontier of savage Zulu Land.

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### Bellary Fort.

There are few hotter places, and few more unhealthy ones, among our Indian up-country stations than Bellary, in the Madras Presidency, garrisoned in the year 1856 by Her Majesty's 150th Regiment of Infantry. Let the reader imagine the lines of a fort drawn round a bare sugar-loaf hill, on which an Indian sun pours its rays for months. Thoroughly heated by this process of roasting, the arid rock gives out all night the caloric absorbed during the day, and a three years' residence in the Fort of Bellary, such as had been passed by the officers and men of the 150th Regiment, was about equivalent to the same period in a baker's oven. Years passed, and the English Government had at last perceived that it was madness to keep troops within the lines of the old fort when a rich and well-timbered plain lay around it. Barracks had been built outside; and about three-quarters of a mile distant from the main gate of Bellary, white bungalows, with their green verandahs and their well-kept compounds, lay scattered here and there among the trees, while far away, under the moon's rays, on the night when our tale opens, a beautiful one in December, stretched the rich plain, with its piles of rock rising like huge black molehills here and there, giving welcome shelter to the wild-cats, jackals, and hyenas, whose cries might be heard from time to time ringing over the plain. The mess-house of the regiment consisted of the usual large commodious building, with its many outhouses or godowns, the whole surrounded by a low wall, and that again protected by a strong hedge of the prickly pear. A broad verandah ran round the main building, and a flight of steps led up to the house, where some half-dozen of the officers of the corps, dressed in white, with nothing to distinguish them except the forage-cap bearing the number of the regiment, were seated, chatting and smoking. The day had been very hot, but a pleasant breeze was blowing over the plain; the click of the billiard-balls was heard from an adjoining room, whose windows, thrown wide open, cast a stream of light into the compound, and the hum of voices from the messroom told of the dinner only just finished, and of the party of seasoned old soldiers who were even then loth to quit the pleasures of the table and the bottle of Madeira which had crossed the line four times, and for which particular wine the 150th had long been justly famous.

"I am half sorry that my leave has arrived, just as we are expecting the route," said an officer, puffing out a long spiral wreath of smoke as he spoke, and reaching out his hand towards the tumbler of weak brandy pawnee standing on a small table by his side.

"Hear him, the impostor!" laughed a second. "Two years of leave, after nearly nine of foreign service, and he talks of regret."

The first speaker was rather a slight figure, but withal strongly built; thin and wiry, he showed no superfluous flesh.

The rather prominent forehead was tanned to a deep brown, save where the line of the forage-cap showed the white skin of the European; the cheeks were sunken, and bore the sallow tinge of sickness, while the aquiline nose, the well-cut mouth, and the rather heavy under jaw, spoke of determination and vigour of character. Nearly six feet in height, he lay languidly back in his chair, the dark masses of hair curling under the forage-cap, and the large black eyes giving a still more marked appearance of illness to his features.

“If I could shake off this feeling of illness, Harris,” he replied, “get rid of this terrible Bellary fever, you may depend upon it. I would throw up my leave. One’s regiment becomes one’s family after nearly twelve years’ service, nine of which have been passed in India.”

“And you are only captain,” replied the other. “A pretty look-out for me, an ensign yet. You had better stop and give me a lift, by making a death vacancy. Do, Hughes, there’s a good fellow.”

Captain Hughes laughed.

“We shall have the route to-morrow; and if the march to Secunderabad be anything like what ours was from Madras, you won’t want for death vacancies.”

“Was it such a terrible one?” asked the other, in a serious tone.

“Terrible,” replied Major Ashley, who had just left the table, and was lighting his third cigar since dinner, “why, a march up-country in India is always terrible work, as you’ll find out before you are many weeks older. There was some dispute about our destination when we were ordered up here three years since,” continued the Major, “and so we were detained until the hot weather set in, and cholera caught us up. The road we took may even yet be traced by the mounds of stones which cover our dead.”

“It was a fearful time,” said Captain Hughes. “When we arrived in sight of the walls of yonder fort, the men were dropping fast, the sentries over the hospital had often to be changed from outside to inside the tent, the surgeon and assistant-surgeon had to be carried to see their sick, so worn were they with fatigue, while round our lines all night long the wailing of the camp followers was to be heard, for they perished by hundreds, the dead being found, when the grey light of morning broke, lying stiff and stark among the tent ropes.”

“But you reached the fort at last?” asked the Ensign.

“Yes, we did reach it at last, didn’t we, Hughes?” answered Major Ashley. “Do you remember the day an orderly rode into our lines, bearing an order from General Black Jack, as we used to call him, forbidding us to enter the fort; and how, for the sake of doing something, we marched short marches daily round yonder walls, until at last our colonel saw that the men were growing mutinous, and told Black Jack that he would storm the fort if not allowed to enter?”

“I remember it well; and he gave way. The gates were thrown open, and the scourge left us. But it’s late; and if we are to have any chance of the tiger, you had better get your rifles, and we will have the sheep picketed. See, they are closing the messroom doors, and putting out the lights.”

“So they are,” returned a third, yawning; “I shall wish you luck, and turn in.”

“I say, Harris, mind you don’t make a vacancy in the Light Company yourself,” said a captain of Grenadiers, as a group of the late billiard-players went laughing and talking down the steps into the moonlight. “I don’t believe you ever saw a tiger, or know anything about a rifle.”

“Never fear for me, Hunt; an ensign’s not worth a tiger’s trouble. If you would consent, now, to be picketed instead of the sheep, Captain—”

“Go to the devil! Good-night, Hughes.” And “Good-night—a pleasant journey,” rang out cheerily from one after another as they crossed the mess-compound, and took their way to their respective quarters.

“You are an old hand, Hughes,” said the Ensign, after a short pause. “Do you remember the Rajah who was a prisoner on the top of Bellary rock?”

“Don’t I!” replied the Captain. “I say, Curtis,” he continued, addressing a lieutenant of his own company, “you relieved the man who so nearly let the old Rajah loose.”

“Ay, poor old fellow; he’s dead now, and can’t ask his old, well-known question.”

“What was it, Curtis? What did he ask, and who was he?”

“Well, wait till I have lit this cigar, and I’ll tell you,” answered Curtis. “We have an hour yet before the moon gets low, and those black palkywallers are making such a row.”

The cigar was lighted, the brandy-and-water carefully mixed and placed on an adjoining table within reach, and comfortably settling himself on his seat, Lieutenant Curtis began his history.

“On the top of yonder sugar-loaf hill, in the centre of Bellary Fort, a prisoner was confined, and the daily duty of the officer of the guard was to visit him. He was an old, worn-out man, whose hair had grown grey a captive, and I can tell you, Harris, it was no joke to have to plod up the steps cut in the face of the rock every morning, to ask the old man the stereotyped question, ‘Did he want anything?’

“He had been a sovereign of some petty State, and our people wanted the land, so they took it, and to keep its former owner quiet, confined him to the top of yon granite rock; so daily the subaltern on guard mounted the steps, and asked the usual question, every time receiving the same reply,—

“‘Yes, I want my liberty and the land you stole from me, nothing else!’”

“And did he ever get it?” asked Harris.

“He very nearly did,” replied Captain Hughes. “But go on with your tale, Curtis.”

The officer addressed took a steady pull at the brandy pawnee by his side, puffed out a heavy cloud of smoke, and continued—

“One day the old man received by stealth a considerable sum of money, and with this and the promise of more he succeeded in bribing an officer of a native regiment, then doing duty with us in the fort. The officer went up with his palky several times pretexting illness, and no notice was taken of it; at last, one day the bearers, who had been also well paid, felt by the weight that the prisoner was inside. They took up the palky, which had been standing near the gate, and lazily followed by the sick officer, who inspected the sergeant’s guard as he passed, took their way down.

“It was well contrived, but old Sergeant Flack of ours noticed the weight of the empty palky, and as soon as he had turned in his guard, went to his prisoner’s quarters to find the bird flown.

“The subaltern and the palanquin with its bearers parted company at the foot of the hill, he taking his way to the main guard, a richer, but dishonoured man; the poor prisoner, his heart beating wildly at the now sure prospect of liberty, was borne along towards the gates of the fort. An armed party of his former subjects waited him; so once outside and mounted he would be safe, and if it had not been for Flack he would have been.

“Just as he neared the gate, the old Sergeant came up breathless, and the loud cry of ‘Guard, turn out!’ was heard, while the next moment the palanquin was surrounded by the bayonets of our fellows, and the poor grey-headed Rajah found himself half-an-hour later once more seated in the quarters assigned him on the top of the rock.”

“Poor fellow! and what became of him?” asked Harris.

“He never again made an attempt to escape, but, native-like, bowed submissively to his fate, and every morning gave the reply I have already repeated to the officer of the guard. It was his only revenge, and until he died this little solace seemed agreeable to him.”

“And the officer who connived at the escape?” asked Curtis.

“It could never be proved against him,” answered the other. “The old Rajah always sternly denied having had any collusion with him. The bearers had bolted in the confusion; and though he was sent down to Madras and tried by court-martial, he was not convicted, for there was no proof.”

“Ay, but he resigned his commission at once, left for England, and from a poor man, rose into one of fair moderate means,” remarked Captain Hughes. “But see, the moon is low now, your fellow has picketed the sheep, and if we are to do any good, silence must be the order of the night.”

A tiger had lately committed some ravages within the lines of the 150th, and the night before had actually entered the mess-compound of the corps. It was a man-eater, too, and when once these ferocious animals take to preying on the human species, they acquire a love for the food, which never leaves them. Lieutenant Curtis and the Ensign had volunteered to kill it, while Captain Hughes, who was to start for Madras on two years’ leave, had gladly joined the party.

Silence now fell on the watchers, the moonlight grew more and more feeble, the red ends of the cigars gleamed under the shadow of the verandah, in one corner of which stood the Captain’s palanquin, its bearers thrown down on the chenam floor beside it, sleeping soundly. The stars were shining brightly, and the cries of the hyenas on the plain beyond were answered from time to time by the bleat of the sheep, picketed in the centre of the yard. Hour passed after hour, and the moon had quite disappeared. The youngest of the party, unused to the long watch, had fallen fast asleep, and his head being thrown back in an uneasy position, was snoring loudly.

“Confound that fellow, he is enough to frighten a Bengal tiger; just prod him up, Hughes, will you!” said Curtis, in an undertone.

The Ensign’s rifle leaned against one of the pillars of the verandah. Those of the other two lay across their knees, and Hughes, giving two or three pokes with the muzzle of his, between the sleeping lad’s ribs, tried to wake him. Worn out with the heat and watching, the boy muttered some unintelligible words, and, turning, was again fast asleep in a moment.

“And you don’t mean to go to England?” continued Curtis, speaking in a guarded tone.

“No, I don’t,” returned Hughes, in the same low voice. “You and I, Curtis, are the crack shots of the regiment, and my rifle at least shall be heard on the plains and by the rivers of South Africa.”

“How I wish I could start with you, old fellow,” said Curtis, with a sigh.

“How I wish you could; but it’s no use wishing, Curtis. You have had so much leave of late that you can’t ask, and if you did, your application would not be forwarded.”

“No, I suppose not. Colonel Desmond’s a good fellow; but I should not like to ask him. Have you any one you know in South Africa?”

“Yes, I’ve a relation who has been for many years Government Agent on the Zulu frontier, and he promises me a fit out, and a letter to Panda, the King of the Zulus.”

“Won’t you have splendid elephant hunting, and, may be, join again with a Kaffir wife.”

Hughes laughed. “How that sheep bleats; and hush, Curtis—there’s a skurry among the jackals. Do you hear? Hush!”

Hardly had he spoken when the sharp click of the rifle-locks was heard, as their owners brought them to full cock, and almost at the same moment, with a loud growl, a dark, massive form topped the low wall, and with one blow of his powerful fore-arm the man-eater struck down its prey. The tiger turned to fly, carrying with it the dead sheep, but the rope by which it was tied to the stake stopped it. With a low growl of anger the brute glanced round, as though not

understanding the reason of the check. The starlight streamed over his painted hide, and the simultaneous reports of the two rifles rang out on the air. Hard hit, the tiger turned, dashed at the wall, clearing it once more, but as he did so received the contents of the two remaining barrels of the rifles, disappearing with a howl of pain and rage.

Harris, worn out by heat he was little accustomed to, had dropped into that dead sleep which invariably overpowers Europeans not broken to an Indian climate. Awoke suddenly by the growl of the tiger, closely followed by the reports of the rifles, it took him some seconds to realise the situation. Even then his faculties seemed confused, for, seizing his rifle, he dashed, without speaking a word, through the gate, in the low compound wall, followed by the loud laughter of his comrades.

“Hallo! stop, you sleepy hunter of tigers!” shouted Curtis, as soon as he could speak for laughter. A fierce growl from the other side of the compound was heard, a long snarl of mingled anger and pain dying away into a deep moan, the report of a rifle ringing loudly on the night air, and all was still.

The two officers looked at each other for a second, then, their emptied pieces in their hands, they also dashed through the gateway, followed at a cautious distance however by the now thoroughly awakened bearers, who had been sleeping beside the palanquin.

The starlight showed the tiger lying dead, and beside it in a half sitting posture, Ensign Harris, with his rifle across his knees.

The wounded brute, after clearing the low wall, had fallen, then dragged itself heavily forward, just passing the gateway, when Harris, at top speed, dashed out, to pitch head foremost over the writhing body in its death struggle. The rifle fell from his hand, and the tiger, though dying, eager for revenge, struck out at the youth’s body, as he rolled over and over, carried on by the speed at which he had been running.

“By Jove you’ve had a narrow escape, my boy. It’s not every fellow clears a tiger that way,” exclaimed Hughes, as the two stood leaning on their rifles by the carcase of the dead animal.

“I haven’t got clear,” replied the Ensign, rising to one knee, and wincing with pain as he did so; “but you will find my ball in the tiger’s head, and so I have fairly earned the skin.”

“Here, you fellows, fetch the palky,” cried Curtis. “It is a question of your own skin, not the tiger’s. Wounds are never so easily cured under the sun of India as at home.”

“Oh, it’s only a scratch, Curtis,” said the brave lad, as the palanquin came up, and his comrades placed him in it.

“I tell you there’s no such thing as only a scratch here. If you will go with him to his quarters, Hughes, I’ll send Chapman.”

The Ensign’s bungalow was close by; Chapman, the assistant-surgeon of the regiment, was soon awoke, the wound found to be a severe but not dangerous one, the tiger, having struck forward like a huge cat, with its powerful fore-arm just catching the youngster’s leg, scoring deeply into the flesh, and tearing off the light shoe. The wounds were bandaged, and Ensign Harris’s name placed on the sick list.

“Good-night, Hughes, and a pleasant journey to you,” said Curtis, as the two shook hands at the entrance of the compound.

The air was fresh and cool, the “Southern Cross” was just dipping towards the distant horizon, the long mournful howl of a far-away hyena came across the plain, and on the white dusty road stood the dark-looking palanquin, with its group of dusky bearers, as, wringing his brother officer’s hand, Captain Hughes stepped into it, and with a sing-song chaunt the palkywallers shouldered their burden, and moved away on the first stage, which was to lead to the broad plains and well-stocked prairies of that Shikaree’s heaven, the hunting-fields of South Africa.

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## The “Halcyon” Brig.

“Sail ho!” shouted the look-out in the foretop of the merchant brig, the “Halcyon,” one fine afternoon, some three months after, the events related in the preceding chapter.

The sun was just setting in the western horizon, tinging the trembling waves with a golden hue. The brig was making good weather of it, and she looked a likely craft to do so. Her long, low, black hull supported a pyramid of white canvas, every sail drawing to a nicety, as, with a fresh breeze right over the quarter, she held her course to the northward and westward, bound for the coast of Africa. Three men only were pacing her quarter-deck. The one, a middle-sized, stout built man, his face tanned to the colour of mahogany, was evidently the master of the brig. The second, much younger, was his first mate; while leaning over the bulwarks, lazily looking into the sea, a solitary passenger, who had been taken on board when the brig lay in Madras roads, completed the trio. Forward, on the forecastle, was a group of sailors, thrown here and there under the weather bulwarks, some asleep, some telling tales of former adventures in the land now a hundred miles away on the brig’s larboard bow, and which they hoped to sight in the morning.

“Sail ho!” shouted the look-out, and Captain Weber stopped suddenly in his walk, turning to windward, his long grey hair streaming out on the breeze as he did so. His was the seaman’s face of the old type. The forehead low and massive; the thick eyebrows overshadowing small piercing eyes; the large good-humoured mouth ever ready to smile, and showing as he did so a range of white teeth; bushy grey whiskers; and a skin tanned to a good standing mahogany colour. His short sturdy frame was clothed in a slop suit of pilot cloth, and a plain cap with a heavy peak completed the picture.

Captain Weber had entered the merchant service as a boy; had been pressed on board a man-of-war; had seen some service, and was now part owner of the brig he commanded. Mr Blount, his first officer, was a man of another school. Taller, and more finely formed, the straight Grecian nose, dark hair, and carefully trimmed whiskers, were adorned by a naval cap having a thin strip of gold lace round it, and the short monkey jacket showed also on the cuffs of the sleeves the same bit of coquetry in the shape of gold lace, it and the waistcoat boasting brass buttons.

“Where away, Smith?—point to her,” replied the latter, as he too stopped in his walk, and looked aloft.

This was a phrase lately introduced into the Royal Navy, and copied by the old captain. In a gale, when the look-out’s voice could hardly be heard above the roar of the wind, the pointing in the given direction supplanted the voice, and was a useful innovation. The man’s hand, on this occasion, was held straight out, pointing to leeward, and there, sure enough, the loftier sails of a full-rigged ship could be seen, standing in the same direction as themselves. The two seamen, shading their eyes from the last gleam of the sun, which was sinking like a ball of red fire into the tumbling waves, gazed at the distant sail, making her out to be a ship lying to, perhaps a whaler.

“It’s a queer thing, that a whaler should be lying to so near land, Blount,” said Captain Weber, after he had looked long and attentively in the direction of the ship. “Hand me the glass.”

At this moment the passenger, waking up from his fit of abstraction, joined the two seamen.

“A ship lying to—and what is there strange in that?” was the question he asked.

“Why, Captain Hughes,” replied the mate (Captain Weber being too busy with the glass to reply), “a merchantman generally makes the best of her way from port to port. With her, time is money, while one of Her Majesty’s cruisers (God bless her!) would be jogging along under easy sail, not caring either for time or money; but certainly not hove to. No; yonder ship must be a whaler; but it’s not often those fellows find their fish in such high latitudes.”

“There,” said Captain Hughes, for it was indeed he who was the “Halcyon’s” solitary passenger. “There—she fills.”

“You have a quick eye for a soldier,” exclaimed Captain Weber. “Yonder ship has indeed filled as you call it; but allow me to tell you, as a general rule, that square-rigged craft brace-up, while fore-and-aft vessels fill, as they have no yards to brace-up.”

“That’s logical, at all events,” answered the soldier.

“Ay, and it’s seamanlike,” replied Captain Weber. “Fore-and-aft vessels, when hauling to the wind, get a pull at the sheets, so as to get their sails to set flatter; but you are not absolutely wrong, for, after lying to, both square-rigged and fore-and-aft vessels may be said to fill and make sail. Correctly speaking, yonder whaler has braced up her yards.”

“We shall near her rapidly then?” inquired the soldier.

“We are running on two converging lines, which at a given point must meet, and if yonder craft wishes to speak us, she will have it in her power to do so,” replied the precise old man. “Here’s the steward to announce dinner. The wind seems falling, Mr Blount. Shake out the reefs in our topsails, and join us. Come, Captain Hughes, if your appetite is as sharp as your eyes, you won’t be sorry to go below.”

The momentary bustle consequent on the making sail followed; the deck was then handed over to the second mate, Mr Lowe (for Captain Weber, contrary to the usual rules of the merchant service, had a first and second mate), and all relapsed into the usual silence; the soughing of the wind through the spars and rigging, and the splash of the waves as they struck against the brig’s bows, alone breaking the silence. The stars peeped out, the wind falling with the setting sun, while, as the brig was running free, the motion was slight. Now and then the ship’s bell rang out on the still night air, marking the passing hours, and the monotonous tread of the officer in charge as he paced the deck, with occasionally a loud laugh from the men forward, was heard.

Mr Lowe’s watch was just ending, and the clear silver tones of the bell had rang out eight times, when the first mate stopped in his walk, looking at the binnacle light, “Have you remarked that red star yonder, Mr Lowe?” asked the old salt at the helm.

“No, Adams; what do you make of it?” replied the officer, turning towards the point indicated.

“Leastways, I don’t think it’s a star. Shouldn’t that whaling chap be down yonder away, sir?”

The second mate took the night-glass, and was in the act of adjusting it, when a bright vivid flame shot up from the sea, and the black hull and spars of a large ship were distinctly seen vomiting forth a volcano of flame; then a low smothered thud came booming over the ocean, and for an instant all was dark and silent. It was but for a few seconds, however, for then a small quivering point of flame danced on the waves; it spread, increasing rapidly in volume; the red light ran up the ropes and rigging of the ship, which was only a few miles to leeward of the “Halcyon.” Her sails, one by one, caught fire, while explosion after explosion followed, and by the lurid glare the crew of the doomed craft might be seen moving about in helpless confusion.

“Starboard—starboard, you may, Adams.” It was Captain Weber who spoke. “Lay her head straight for the wreck. Take a pull at the weather-sheets and haulyards, my lads. Cheerily, so—steady, Adams—steady. Get the royals on her, Mr Lowe. Watch and idlers, make sail.”

It was a splendid but a terrible sight, as the “Halcyon,” under her additional sail, plunged through the long seas, straight for the burning ship. Soon the cries of the men on board her could be heard, and the mainmast fell. The flames rose some two hundred feet into the air, the sea being lighted up all round, while slowly surging through the ocean came the dark hull of the “Halcyon,” all possible sail set, on her mission of mercy.

Nearer and nearer came the brig.

“See,” said Captain Weber, pointing with his hand, “the boats have been blown away, and the poor fellows have no means of leaving the wreck.”

“Ay, and she must have powder on board, for the hatchways are blown off, and the solid timbers of her decks forced up.”

At this moment a fresh and fiercer burst of flame shot up into the air, and the crew of the burning vessel could be seen jumping into the waves. It was but a choice of deaths, the fierce volcano under foot, or the surging waves around.

Captain Weber stamped with impatience; his clipper brig had never seemed to him to move so slowly, and yet every sail drew, and the green water swirled under her counter as she cut her way through the seas.

The ship was a complete wreck, her cargo was on fire, there were not any boats; and a few men, clinging to some spare spars, which had been thrown overboard evidently with the intention of making a raft, were now all that were left to be saved.

Suddenly she gave one heavy lurch, and went down head foremost, leaving what remained of her crew floating on the waste of waters. “See the boats all clear, Mr Lowe; burn a blue light on the forecastle, and have every man at his post ready to hand the royals and heave the brig to.”

Hardly had the words been spoken by Captain Weber when a shriek of anguish rose from the ocean. The cargo of the doomed ship had been composed of naphtha, and now all at once it rose to the surface, spreading over the waves and burning furiously. The sailors on the spars were floating in a sea of fire, and a wail of anguish was given out by the perishing men. It was a fearful sight as the brig rapidly neared the fiery spot on the black ocean, the sharp death-cries ceasing as the fierce flame circled round the unhappy crew. Minutes seemed hours; and discipline was for the moment lost on board, her crew crowding the gangways, and shouting to the perishing men words of encouragement. The oldest sailor there had never before witnessed such a sight as that presented by this red seething sea of flame, with the writhing forms of the crew of the lost ship perishing miserably before their eyes.

“Silence, fore and aft!” shouted Captain Weber. “Heave to, Mr Blount. Stand by to lower away the cutter. Hold on with the blue light, Mr Lowe, until the boat is lowered.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered the mate; and then his voice was heard over the creaking of the tackles, the soughing of the breeze, giving the necessary words of command, and before the cutter was ready to be lowered the bows of the “Halcyon” sheered up into the wind, her royals were let fly, her fore and mainsail hung flapping in the brails, and the brig was rising and falling on the waves under her foretopsail, jib, and boom-mainsail.

“Hush,” said the captain, after the cutter had pulled some distance from the brig’s sides, “hush, I thought I heard a hail.”

The men lay on their oars, the blazing light had gone out as suddenly as it had been kindled, and the long swell of the ocean tossed the small boat to and fro under the starlight as though she were a plaything. The blue light was burning on the “Halcyon’s” forecastle, giving her a ghastly and spectrelike appearance, lighting up her spars, sails, and rigging, and casting a strange glare on the sea around.

“Brig ahoy! brig ahoy!” came from out the darkness.

“Hallo! give way, my lads,” and on went the cutter, the stout ash staves bending as the men forced her through the water.

“Brig ahoy!” came the feeble shout, and giving the cutter a yaw to port her bows, grazed a large spar, while the bowman holding on with his boat-hook, the forms of two men were seen lashed to it. They were soon hauled on board, and the cutter again in motion. For fully an hour did Captain Weber row over the spot, but uselessly. There were remains of wreck, of broken, half-charred planks and shattered timbers; but, with the exception of these, and the two men first met with, not a vestige of the stately ship remained.

“Fill and make sail, Mr Blount,” said the captain, as he once more put his foot on the quarter-deck; “send those two poor fellows below, and let my steward see to their comfort. We will hear their tale presently.”

“Had we not better lie to till morning; may there not yet be some other survivor?”

“Not a chance. I have pulled round the whole spot over and over again. We have done all we can do. Lay her head again for Delagoa Bay,” replied Captain Weber, as he went below, and so the yards were braced round, the courses sheeted home, the royals once more set, and with a fair wind the brig found herself, when morning dawned, seventy miles from the scene of the late disaster. The horizon was clear, not a sail being in sight; the whistling of the wind, the scream of the gulls, which were now wheeling round the brig, showing the proximity to land, those and the whish of the breaking wave being the only noises heard. The decks had been holystoned, the sailors were busy coiling down spare ropes or cleaning the brasswork, which was already as bright as could be, and the regular step of the officer of the watch could be heard as he paced the quarter-deck by those below.

The party in the cabin consisted of Captain Weber, his first officer, his passenger, and the master of the “Argonaut,” the ship which had been burned at sea the previous night. Of the whole crew the captain and one seaman only had been saved.

Sad enough he looked as he sat at the well-furnished breakfast-table, his hair singed with fire, and his right arm in a sling.

“We were bound for England, and our cargo consisted of five hundred barrels of naphtha,” he said, in reply to a question addressed to him by the first officer of the “Halcyon.”

“Why were you lying to when we first sighted you?” asked Captain Weber, “I thought our cargo had shifted a little in the late gale, and I had been overhauling it. That night I was seated with my first mate in the cabin when a furious explosion shook the ship. I was thrown down, and how long I remained insensible I don’t know. When I did come to I found myself surrounded with wreck, everything smashed, the bulkheads driven in, and the ship split in her waterway. Hardly had I realised the extent of the misfortune when the cry of fire was heard. In a moment the remainder of the naphtha was in flames, and I had hardly time to get on deck.”

“And the boats?” asked Captain Hughes.

“Blown to chips,” was the reply. “I ordered the mainmast to be cut away, but the flames were too quick for us, and all we could do was to cut adrift the mainboom. I and Miller managed to reach it. The ship was now burning fore and aft, and presently, as you saw, went down bodily, the whole of the naphtha rising to the surface in a sea of flame. I saw many of my poor fellows swim in this bath of fire. My mate and steward went down beside me. The cook had lashed himself to a

piece of wreck, and for a quarter of an hour I heard his cries, then they ceased suddenly. The rest you know."

A bustle on deck, a loud shout, and then a voice repeating the welcome words, "Land ho!" disturbed the breakfast party, who hurried up the hatchway, the poor, spirit-broken master of the "Argonaut" alone remaining below. What to him was land? He had no ship, no crew to care for. The fierce flame and the seething ocean had brought him ruin.

The wind was now well abaft the beam, and even to those on deck the long cloud-like outline of land was soon, visible, as, every sail set that would draw, the brig worked her way on, rising and falling on the long seas, now rolling heavily to leeward as she sank in the green trough, now lifting on the surging wave and heeling over as her loftier canvas felt the full force of the breeze, until she showed her bright clean copper nearly to her keel, only the next moment to dash her wedge-like bows into the foam, sending the glittering particles high into the air, deluging the forecastle with green water, as she drove onward towards land. Above, the bright clear sky of an African day; the gulls and the Mother Carey's chickens wheeling and circling round the masts. Captain Weber, proud of his brig, felt she was doing her best, while by his side walked the captain of the "Argonaut," sad and dispirited, his one hand thrust deeply into his pocket, the other supported by a sling, his burned hair and scorched face looking melancholy even beneath the bright sunshine. To Captain Hughes, the long cloud-like line of the coast was a promised land, where the mighty elephant, the lordly lion, and the fierce rhinoceros waited him; and so the day wore on, and afternoon came.

"Watch and idlers, shorten sail! In royals, start tacks and sheets!" and soon the fore and main-royals were flying loosely in the wind, and the ready seamen busy securing the flapping canvas.

Broad on the port bow the high land of Cape Colato could be seen, as well as a lower bluff stretching away as it were to meet it, but failing in its object, leaving an opening between the two headlands, thus forming the harbour called Delagoa Bay, for which port the "Halcyon" was bound.

On she flew, the wind freshening and the green waves seeming to lift the brig forward on her ocean path. "Let fly the top-gallant sheets," and soon the yards slowly settled down. "Take the foresail off her, Mr Blount. Forward there, see the anchor all clear." The cheerful "Ay, ay, sir," came back in reply to the loud tone of command from the quarter-deck; for much as a sailor loves his ship, he is always pleased at the sight of the port for which that ship is bound; and now the small island of Inyak, nestled within the bay, and the houses of the town, with their light verandahs and white walls, were seen plainer and plainer, seeming to rise like a mirage from the sea, as the entrance to the bay was opened. The brig's helm being jammed hard down, the graceful craft flew up into the wind with a broad sheer, and soon she rose and fell on the waves under her main-topsail, jib, and boom-mainsail, her foresail hanging in the brails, and her foretopsail still flying loose. A puff of white smoke from her bows followed, and a small flag run up in the shape of a ball, and only breaking when it reached its position aloft, was the signal for the pilot, which was soon answered: a minute black speck, now mounting on the seas, now disappearing in the deep trough, telling of the signal being seen and complied with.

Glad to reach the land he had so long looked forward to, and yet at the same time sorry to leave companions whose life, perils, and pleasures he had shared for two months, Captain Hughes stood watching the shore-boat as it pulled towards the ship.

"You'll be glad to land, Captain," said a voice by his side, and as he turned, he saw close to him, leaning over the bulwarks, the melancholy-looking master of the burned ship.

"Well, yesterday I would have said 'Yes,' and somehow to-day I must say 'No'," replied Hughes.

"Ay, ay," struck in Captain Weber, as he passed in his quarter-deck walk, taking off his seaman's cap and pushing back the long white hair from his weather-tanned forehead, "you are as much a sailor as you are a soldier. Well, I shall work the old bark up the coast, trading here and there, I have still some months to spare, for mine is a three-year voyage, and if you are for a passage home before we leave, look out for the 'Halcyon.'"

"I'll land here, and work my way to London," said the captain of the "Argonaut."

"No, no, old fellow, we must not part so, I picked you up floating on a loose spar, and I am not going to cut you adrift. Take share and share with me, and our return voyage will be all the merrier."

The old man shook his head, for the loss of his ship and the fearful fate of his crew, who had perished before his eyes by a death so terrible and so totally unforeseen, had shaken his intellects, and from a bold, daring seaman, he had in one night become completely changed.

Captain Weber saw this, and with his usual kindness of heart pitied his less fortunate brother, as, taking his arm, he led him away, the two diving below to seek consolation in the seaman's universal panacea—a glass of grog, leaving Captain Hughes gazing over the sea, and wondering why he was not pleased to land.

The creaking of the oars in the rowlocks was soon heard, as the shore-boat, impelled by the efforts of four powerful men, came sweeping up on the brig's quarter. A rope was hove, and a half-naked Malay catching at the lee shrouds, as the "Halcyon" heeled over, swung himself on board, losing as he did so his high conical hat, which, with a scanty covering round the waist, formed his only clothing.

"Up with the helm, ease off the jib sheets, fill the main-topsail," were the words of command given the moment the Malay pilot touched the deck and walked aft. The brig's head paid off, her sails filled, and, gathering headway, she once more surged through the seas, running slowly into the bay, and ultimately dropping her anchor not more than fifty yards from the town, where she was quickly surrounded by a whole fleet of shore-boats, eager to sell fresh vegetables, bread, or anything else saleable.

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## The Lioness of Zoutpansburgh.

It was a glorious April morning, and the scene was pleasant enough on the banks of the Limpolulo, not far from a small kraal of native huts called Origstadt, where a tributary stream runs into the river. A light subaltern's tent, with its single pole, was pitched under a clump of spreading trees; close to it stood a waggon, with a hooped tilt and strong canvas covering, while fourteen powerful oxen were browsing near. Behind the tent two horses were picketed. Seven men were variously employed, some cutting wood for the fire, which blazed up merrily under a tree, some cooking, and others mending the heavy harness, in readiness for the morrow's march. On a branch near, hung the carcase of a fat

eland, from which animal a strongly built Hottentot was employed cutting a large slice with his long sharp knife. In front of the tent, with a couple of Madras cowrie baskets at his feet, busily engaged sponging out a rifle, Captain Hughes was seated. There was not much water in the river, though there had been trouble enough in crossing it the day before with the waggon, on account of the huge boulders of stone rolled down during the rainy season. A rich plain stretched away towards the mountains, which were those of the Drakenburgh range, and the course of the river, as it wound here and there, could be easily marked until it was lost in the thick woods near the hills. Unlike the vast dried up plains of India, this African land was undulating, dotted with clumps of trees and covered with grass, which here and there near the river grew to a great height. A conical hill, called the Silver Mountain, rose about ten miles away, and beyond the Drakenburgh range lay the country ruled by the powerful native chief Mozelkatse. In the trees by the water side the parrots were screaming and chattering, and some beautiful squirrels were playing among the branches or chasing each other in the sunshine.

A deep dead silence reigned around, broken only by the murmur of the water, the occasional scream of the parrots, and the hum of the mosquitoes, which were so numerous on the banks of the Limpolulo as to be nearly unendurable even to the practised Indian. A more peaceful scene could not be imagined, when suddenly the silence was broken, and a long peculiar melancholy cry came floating on the breeze.

Starting up, his rifle in two pieces in his hand, the soldier listened eagerly. The men had evidently heard it too, for their chattering ceased; the tall, powerful Kaffir, who had been cutting up the eland, pausing with the knife between his teeth, a large lump of meat in either hand, and his head bent on one side, in an attitude of deep attention, a perfect bronze statue. An interval of silence intervened, and then once more the same prolonged, tremulous, far distant cry came floating as it were down on the breeze.

“No Zulu cry that, master,” said Luji, dropping, as he spoke, the knife from between his teeth, and his frame relaxing from its stiffened position of intense listening. Again the tremulous cry came, sounding so far away that even in that clear air it seemed as though the final notes of the word coooi, long dwelt upon, alone reached the river bank.

“I have it, Luji!” suddenly exclaimed Hughes. “Put that venison down, get your rifle, and follow me.” The Kaffir obeyed, dropping the two huge lumps of meat into a cauldron, which, half filled with mealies, was destined to make a stew for the twelve o’clock meal, and then deliberately washing his hands in the water, he went to the waggon, disappeared under the tilt for a moment, and soon stood by his master’s side, armed with a heavy rifle.

“What master think the cry?” he asked.

“I think it is the Australian bush cry, which I never heard before, but which I have read of; and if I am right there must be a European, not able to find our camp.”

Luji, as has already been said, was a Hottentot, and a true type of his class. He was not brave to rashness, but was a merry, careless fellow, ever ready for anything, and reckless and improvident to a degree seldom equalled. He was no beauty, his woolly hair surmounting a yellow-black face, ornamented by a mouth large enough to suffice for even his enormous appetite. High cheek-bones, the elongated eyes peculiar to his race set widely apart, a broad powerful chest, and sinewy limbs, complete the portrait.

He was faithful, very idle, and a fair shot. Merry as a child when pleased, but if wronged or annoyed, passionate and revengeful. He spoke the language of the Zulu Kaffirs, had a fair smattering of English, and was a good cook.

Over-readiness with his long knife was a fault in him, and had already given much trouble. The rest of the men were Kaffirs and Bechuanas, one of them named Noti being a good shot, and a well-known hunter; and all were picked men, models of manly beauty cast in bronze.

Restless, active, and unused to control, the whole band were difficult to manage, but far above the average stamp of their class,—waggon, horses, and men having been carefully selected by the Government Agent on the Zulu frontier, one who had enjoyed a long experience in the country.

So long as the way lay across the plain, all was simple enough, and the two followed a sort of rough trampled path made by the antelope. Now dipping into a deep hollow where the grass grew luxuriantly, now topping a gentle rise, and pausing to listen for the direction whence came the guiding cry, they neared the forest-land at the foot of the mountain range of the Drakenburgh. Troops of eland crossed their path from time to time, but their minds being pre-occupied with the thought of some danger abroad, these were not molested. At last, just after having mounted the slope of one of the undulating rises, they entered upon a green plain, where, feeding about a hundred yards away, were a herd of antelope, such as Captain Hughes had not yet met with. They were of a grey colour, while a narrow white line, taking its origin between the shoulders, ran to the base of the tail, following exactly the vertebral column.

From this line seven or eight others of a similar colour ran downwards towards the belly. The horns were beautifully twisted, like corkscrews, and the grey colour of the face was broken by an angular white bar. Shading his eyes with his hand, Hughes gazed at these graceful antelope.

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“They are koodoos, master,” whispered Luji.

The herd was led by a noble buck, and showed no fear, approaching the two strange figures with signs of great curiosity. Advancing to within thirty paces, they stood still and gazed. No sportsman could resist the opportunity, and as they turned to fly the report of the rifle was heard, and the buck, which stood at least four feet high, bounded into the air and fell dead, the ball having entered just behind the shoulder. Leaving it where it lay right in their return path, the remainder of the herd having galloped away at a tremendous pace, the rifle was again loaded, and the two pursued their way. They had advanced about six miles across the plain, hearing the cry from time to time, and replying, when suddenly it ceased, just as their onward path seemed barred by a closely set forest of mahunoo trees, with an undergrowth of dwarf acacia and tangled creepers. It seemed impossible to pass, but at length, after long search, the dry bed of a stream was found, up which there seemed a chance of progressing. Slowly and with much difficulty they made their way on; sometimes crawling on hands and knees, dragging their rifles after them, and winning patiently yard by yard; at others fairly stopped by masses of rock, and forced to cut their way through the spiky branches of the mimosa, bound together with the wild vines and creeping cane-like plants. For fully half a mile did the two thus work their way onwards, their clothes torn and their hands bleeding. The cry had come from the thicket, and yet further progress seemed hopeless, and they were fairly exhausted. Pausing to rest, the deep stillness of the African plain seemed oppressive, when suddenly Luji put his black hand on the Captain’s shoulder, wildly signing to him to listen, his great mouth working convulsively. Nothing was to be seen as they crouched in the bed of the stream, and, for Hughes at least, nothing to be heard. A few seconds passed thus, when, from the tree tops, the long, plaintive, trembling cry peculiar to the Australian bushranger came, quivering and undulating through the air. There was no mistake now; it was close to them, whatever it was; and sounded like the cry of some enormous bird in pain. Luji seemed dreadfully agitated, and then for the first time, his hearing sharpened by his position, the soldier could distinguish sounds the more practised Hottentot had heard before. The noise was that of bones being crunched by powerful teeth. This then was the meaning of the long mournful cry which had come sweeping down to them on the banks of the Limpolulo, and perhaps it was over the remains of a fellow creature some savage animals were holding high carnival. The soldier’s blood ran cold as his imagination pictured the scene passing close to him, while Luji’s eyes seemed to roll in their sockets as he gesticulated wildly and signed to his master to retreat, hoarsely muttering in his ear, “Lions, master; two, three lions!”

Gently putting aside the brushwood which seemed to bar all onward progress, while he trailed his gun after him, Captain Hughes advanced up the bed of the stream. There was stern resolution in the knit brow and firmly compressed lips. The tangled bushes closed after him, and the great powerful Hottentot turned, to work his way back, leaving his master to face the danger alone. Once the man hesitated, turned again, took two or three paces, as if to follow, and then stopped. At this moment a tremendous roar rang through the thicket. It decided the matter, and Luji never halted until he gained the edge of the mahunoo grove, and, rifle in hand, climbed up a tree, where he sat patiently waiting the *dénouement*.

Foot by foot, yard by yard, the more determined soldier now alone worked his way on, the growlings and snappings growing more and more distinct, until at last he reached the foot of a large “masuku” tree, whose roots ran down the bank into the bed of the stream, the action of running water having bared them. Suddenly a roar which sounded close to him made him crouch down. It was the same which had decided Luji’s retreat. He almost fancied the beating of his own

heart could be heard, mixed with the snarling and snapping of some wild animals, and the rending of flesh. His breath seemed to come quick, as, grasping the tap-root of the tree with the left hand, slowly and cautiously he raised himself to a level with the bank. It was a splendid sight for an African hunter. An open space in the bush lay before him, and at the further end, where a narrow path seemed to lead into the forest, lay the headless and torn carcase of a horse. An English saddle with its broken girths had fallen from its back, while to the right an enormous lioness, turned from him, was gently moving her tail to and fro like a great cat, as she contemplated her two cubs rending the dead horse.

Slowly and with great care bringing up his rifle, the hunter aimed deliberately behind the shoulder, knowing that there the shot must prove mortal, the lioness not being ten paces away as he pulled the trigger. Hearing some noise, the watchful animal sprang up just as the report rang out, and the ball, striking too low, instead of killing, wounded her. The next moment lioness and man were rolling together at the bottom of the gully, the growl of the wounded animal ringing savagely among the rocks and bushes. Gripping the helpless hunter by the shoulder, the lioness sprang with him up the bank. The trusty rifle lay at the bottom of the nullah, but still the man did not lose his presence of mind. The pistols at his belt might yet serve him. Slipping his hand down, he found they were gone, doubtless dropped also in the nullah, and then only a shout of agony came from his lips as he found himself, helpless and defenceless, a prey to the lioness.

THE LIONESS OF ZOUTPANSBURGH.

Her eyes seemed to gleam with fury as she looked into his. Oh, the agony of that moment, as, bleeding and impotent, his head pressed against her shaggy neck, he was dragged up the bank, bodily, the sharp fangs meeting in the flesh of the shoulder. Reaching the open, the great brute for an instant relaxed her hold, probably only to secure a firmer grip, and the unfortunate hunter fell to the ground. Placing her huge paw on the prostrate man’s breast, she looked upwards and growled savagely. The sharp ring of a heavy rifle seemed to mix with the voice of the lioness, and a stream of warm blood deluged the face and breast of the fallen hunter, as the whole weight of the dying animal fell upon and almost crushed him, while consciousness, for the first time in his life, departed.

“Her head was within a foot of you when I fired,” were the first words which greeted his ears as he revived, and saw a stranger standing beside him, endeavouring to drag away the carcass. The cubs had bolted precipitately at the first shot, and presently Luji, who had heard the double report, coming cautiously up, the hunter was freed from the weight of the dead animal, a hole was scooped in the sandy bed of the nullah, some fresh water procured, and, some hours afterwards, the two who had thus strangely met were comfortably seated outside the little tent on the forks of the Limpolulo, discussing the eland and mealie stew which had been prepared for dinner.

“A curious situation for you, a missionary, to be in,” said Hughes, continuing a conversation which the process of dinner-eating had interrupted.

“Curious enough, and not a very pleasant one,” returned the new comer. “I was returning from the country of the Matlokotlopo, where I had been to find the chief Mozelkatse, without whose permission I knew it would be useless for me to attempt penetrating further.”

This new comer was of German origin, though his name smacked more of Polish or Hungarian ancestry. He was a

man evidently past his prime, and his spare muscular frame, his dark hair slightly flecked here and there with grey, his sunken cheeks and high cheek-bones, told of years of care, hardship, and, perhaps, of dangers bravely faced; while the bright, black, restless eyes, the broad, high forehead, the finely chiselled lines of the mouth, and the firm erect carriage, promised intellectual intelligence, combined with a determined spirit, well calculated to cope with the chances of a life such as he was evidently leading.

“Is this, like my own, your first trial of life on the plains of South Africa? If so we have begun well,” asked Hughes.

“Oh, I could tell you of many a tale of life among the savages of the Pacific, and of years passed with the hardly more civilised tribes of North-Western India, and my very object here shows that I am not at my maiden essay,” replied Wyzinski, laughing. “Shall I tell you the history of the land, and my own views at the same time?”

“Let us light our pipes first, and have some more wood thrown on the fire. Hallo what’s all that?” said Hughes, laughing.

What was it, indeed? for on the evening breeze there came sounds of talking and laughter, and soon, over the plain, streamed the missionary’s followers, at once swelling the party to fourteen. With them were Luji and the carcasses of the lioness and the koodoo, flung across a horse, and as evening drew on there was high feasting in the camp on the forks of the Limpolulo. Meat was plentiful, and the new comers gorged themselves with it, singing, laughing, and dancing round the camp fires. The lioness was skinned, and its hide stretched out on the branches of a tree; the stars came out, and as they did so the plains around woke into life. The cries of the jackals, the hyenas, and the deer, came on the night air, and once or twice, too, a far away low rumble told of the lion in the distant mountains, seeking, perhaps, his dead mate. The air was warm and pleasant, as, reclining by the fire in front of the tent, Hughes and the missionary talked on far into the night.

“You are among a strange nation,” continued the latter. “The first history of the Zulus is that, in the year 1810, they conquered the land, but where the nation came from or how it originated no one knows. It sprang suddenly into notice under their King Chaka, who knew something of military training, and brought his army into a high state of discipline. After he had reigned thirteen years, his brother Dingaan murdered him and then ascended the throne. This wily savage at once opened out the country to the European traders and to us missionaries, and the result was that the English annexed that part of the land now called Natal. In 1829 another brother of the murdered Chaka revolted, avenged his death by killing Dingaan, and under the title of King Panda mounted the throne. He is now a very old man, some say one hundred years of age, and a very enlightened monarch, only he won’t let any one penetrate into the interior.”

“And why should you wish so strongly to get into the interior?” asked Hughes. “Is your object to found new missions, or are you seeking a crown of martyrdom?”

“Neither one nor the other,” replied the missionary, “and I must go back some six hundred and thirty years before the birth of our Saviour, to explain my object to you.”

“Go ahead!” said Hughes.

“Well, then, about that period, Pharaoh Necho was king of Egypt, and he collected a large fleet, consisting of one hundred ships, great and small, in the Red Sea, and if he had not done this, you and I would not be talking at this moment on the banks of the Limpolulo.”

“I don’t exactly see what the Egyptian king has to do with the matter. Listen, Wyzinski, there’s the lion again!”

“Well, King Necho’s fleet sailed right into the Southern Ocean, until winter came with its cold and storms, against which the frail ships of that day could not contend. They then ran for the nearest harbour, and the crews landing tilled the soil until the fine season came round again. Then, reaping their crops, with a well-filled hold they made sail for other lands, and thus those adventurous seamen roamed about the then unknown ocean, passing Aden, Zanzibar, and Mozambique, and on one occasion wintering in a beautiful inlet hereaway to the northward, called Santa Lucia Bay.”

“And were none of the ships lost?” asked Hughes.

“Some on this very coast,” replied Wyzinski; “and their crews, unable to return to Egypt, settled in this land, and it is believed by many, by none more firmly than myself, that the present race of Zulus, incontestably the finest in Southern Africa, sprang from the fusion of Pharaoh’s seamen with the then cultivators of the soil. Others go further still, and say that this now almost savage land was the ancient Ophir, discovered by Pharaoh’s fleet, and from which at a later period the ships of Tarshish drew gold, cedar-wood, and precious stones. Some of our brethren who have dwelt long in the land tell of a geological stratum promising great mineral wealth.”

“Then you are in search of gold?” asked Hughes, with a slight curl of the lip, for he could not help, when gazing on the intelligent face of the man before him lighted up by the fitful gleams of the fire, regretting that a missionary should show such a thirst for gold.

“Diamonds, gold, and precious stones are said to exist, as also vast forests of ebony and cedar-trees,” continued the missionary, gazing abstractedly into the fire; “but with these revelations came strange tales as to the existence of ruined cities almost swallowed up by giant forest growth; the remains of a mighty but extinct race, said to lie three weeks’ journey to the north and west of our settlement at Santa Lucia Bay. It is these ruins I seek.”

“And Mozelkatse’s pass is necessary to reach them?” asked Hughes.

“Yes! will you join me in the search?” replied the missionary, eagerly, pausing for a while as the other looked moodily into the embers without replying; and then continuing, “I must not deceive you as to the difficulty and even the danger of the search. Efforts have already been made to reach the ruins, and they have ever failed. The jealous care of the native chiefs surrounds them with attributes of sanctity; the terrible tetse-fly haunts the country; and the waggons must be left behind. There are danger and difficulty in the path, but it is one which has never yet been trodden by European foot. Up to the present moment all efforts made to penetrate the country have failed, and the old temples and palaces of a once glorious race, if indeed they do exist, serve as a den for the beasts of prey, or a refuge for the hardly less savage Kaffir.”

The missionary’s pale face and sunken cheek was lighted up with an enthusiastic glow. The scene was a strange one, the dancing firelight, the blue sky overhead, the far-away ghostlike outline of the mountains, the loud laughter of the

Kaffirs, as they gorged themselves with eland and koodoo meat, the white tent gleaming under the starlight, and the strange cries of the wandering inhabitants of the African plain. Then, too, the words, “difficulty and danger.” Could he refuse to share them with the man who had that day saved his life?

He struck his hand into the missionary’s opened and muscular palm.

“Willingly I will go with you, sharing your danger, your triumph, or your defeat. But what about the pass from Mozelkatse? Did you obtain it?” he asked.

“No. As I told you, I was returning from the country of the Matlokotlopo, where I had been for the purpose. I had left my people at Zoutpansburgh to follow me, and came on alone, intending to camp on the banks of this river. In the grey of the morning I was waylaid by the lioness, and rode for my life. In the open I held my own easily, but once entangled in the bush, was forced to leave my horse, and had barely time to climb a tree, losing everything save my rifle. The lioness pulled down my horse in a moment, and her cubs soon joined her. My rifle was a single one, while all my powder and ball were left in my holsters. I tried the cry used in the Australian bush, reserving my fire until the last moment. The rest you know.”

“But what about Mozelkatse? On your own showing, it is useless to proceed unless you have his protection,” asked Hughes.

“He is to be back in seven days, having left his kraal, on a grand hunting expedition, at the foot of yonder mountains, and he sent me a messenger saying he would be glad to meet me,” replied the missionary.

“Then there are seven days for me to get rid of the marks of that confounded lioness. Good-night, Wyzinski; it is getting late, and my day has been rather an exciting one.”

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**Mozelkatse.**

Thanks to a vigorous constitution and to temperate habits, wounds which might have been troublesome under a warm climate soon closed, and though for days the torn shoulder gave a good deal of pain, yet it rapidly healed. Game was plentiful, and the koodoos easily approached, so that Luji and the Kaffir Noti kept the camp provisioned during the week the tent remained pitched on the banks of the Limpolulo until a runner from Mozelkatse arrived, summoning the travellers to meet him at Zoutpansburgh, then a native kraal of some importance, about twenty miles to the northward and westward, on a spur of the Drakenburgh range. The life was a pleasant one. The breakfast round the remains of the camp fire. The loud shouts of the men as they chased and harnessed the lazy oxen. The cracking of the long whip as the lumbering waggon moved off. The mount and the gallop over the plain, with herds of deer flying before the hunters. The dinner under some spreading tree, the house on wheels, oxen and men around it. The tales told round the blaze, as the difficulties of the day were discussed, and those of the morrow canvassed; and then the sound sleep so well earned by fatigue. The evening of the seventh day after the affair with the lioness, the party outspanned at the foot of the mountain range, close to the native kraal Zoutpansburgh, the morrow being fixed by Mozelkatse for the audience.

The morning came, bright, warm, and glorious, as usual, and the little camp was early astir.

The interview was an important one. The name of Mozelkatse was known all through the land, and his power was great. So implicitly did his people believe in him, that they actually asserted that it was he who had made the moon and the sun, and it was utterly useless to attempt to proceed without his authority. Captain Hughes had been furnished by his relative with a letter to this potentate, and both he and the missionary had resolved that unless the reply given was encouraging they would not go on. It was, therefore, not without some anxiety as to the result, that orders were given to all the men to dress themselves out in any little finery they possessed, an English Union Jack was mounted on a lance, and, the one dressed in the time-stained uniform of the gallant 150th Regiment, the other in his priestly robes, took their way, followed by their men, to the enclosure where the king was to receive them, deeming themselves lucky in that the hunting party had led the chief in their direction to this outlying village, and so spared them a long journey to his capital. They saw but few of Mozelkatse’s personal guards, most of the motley tribe through which they took their way, preceded by Luji as standard-bearer, being natives belonging to the outlying tribe, and as they gained the enclosure, which was at the same time council chamber and reception hall, the gathering seemed a numerous one, for there were upwards of a hundred braves then present, and the number was rapidly increasing. A covering of skins was fastened round the waist of each, and broad rings of copper were worn round the arms and ankles of the chiefs. A plume of feathers adorned the heads of the principal men, while, hanging behind, somewhat after the fashion of a Hungarian pelisse, each warrior wore a panther or other similar skin. The array of dusky savages looked imposing enough, and all were well armed. The left hand supported a shield of tanned buffalo hide, surmounted with plumes of ostrich feathers. The same hand grasped a long spear, while the right firmly held a short stout stick with a heavy knob. Round the neck was a necklace, from which hung a dagger, while the short beard, grizzly black moustache, and clean cut limbs, made Mozelkatse’s braves look formidable as they closed in, forming a circle round the visitors, whose flag waved from the end of an assegai planted in the centre of the circle. The enclosure itself was formed of the branches of the mimosa, strongly and tightly interlaced, and from the height on which it stood, a magnificent view of the plain below, watered by the Limpopo, was obtained. All round were situated the huts of the tribe, looking like beehives, and near each a little walled space, wherein was kept their wealth, in the shape of oxen. No women were permitted to enter the enclosure; and hardly were the new comers arrived when Mozelkatse stalked into the ring. His hut was the only one opening on the enclosure, and a murmur of applause ran through the ranks of his braves as he made his appearance.

In compliment, perhaps, to the tribe, he wore nearly the same dress. Slowly seating himself on a rudely chiselled stone, Mozelkatse glanced around his warriors proudly, without noticing his visitors. He was a man of large size, apparently in the full vigour of his age, and of great muscular development, the colour of his skin alone detracting from his appearance.

There was an air of thought and command in his face, and, unlike his warriors, his hair was thrown back, his broad forehead being encircled with a fillet of ostrich feathers, terminating in a single plume hanging behind.

Heavy rings of highly-polished copper spanned the thick part of the arms, and lighter ones the wrist. The neck was adorned with a necklace, partly formed of bits of gold strung together, from which depended a dagger, and over the broad, hairy, black breast, floated one magnificent ostrich plume. A tawny lion skin was thrown over the stone on which he sat, while a robe of panther skins hung from his waist.

His right hand held the same kind of short stick carried by the warriors, while the left rested on his naked knee. Only

that the forehead was rather low, and the mouth too large, Mozelkatse might have passed muster as a splendid specimen of coloured humanity.

A chief named Masheesh now stepped forward and presented the soldier and the missionary to the king, briefly explaining in his own tongue the object which led the strangers to the country. The missionary next addressed the king, asking his acceptance of the presents, which were laid at his feet by Luji, wrapped in an ox hide, the principal object being a handsome pair of pistols, silver-mounted, which seemed to please Mozelkatse. Bowing his head in token of acceptance, the king waved his hand, and two braves stepping forward took up the hide and its contents, conveying them into the king's hut.

Settling himself in his seat, Mozelkatse looked round the circle, and all at once poured forth a torrent of words, which were those of welcome to the white men who had come to see him, ending with a request that they would settle among and trade with his people. The circle of black warriors applauded, striking their shields with their spears, and as their numbers had greatly increased, there not being less than two hundred and fifty armed men in the enclosure, the applause was noisy enough. As it died away, Wyzinski rose and stood before the chief, his clear silvery voice ringing through the enclosure, "Some years since," said he, "I was travelling with my brethren far away on the banks of the Limpopo. I saw much of the various nations around, and by chance met with intelligent men of the tribe which calls Mozelkatse king."

The savage bent his head in token of acknowledgment of the compliment, glancing round the circle of his braves proudly.

"I began," continued Wyzinski, "to speak their language, and as I did so became aware of strange stories as to a spot far away towards the north, where stone buildings exist. One of these I was told was as large as Mozelkatse's kraal, having an opening about half its height, through which they who desire to see the ruins must pass. My Matlokotlopo brethren told also of strange figures cut in stone, and of curiously carved birds also in stone. These houses must have once been the dwellings of the white man, and the legends our fathers have taught tell us of such white men, who came many thousand years since from the regions of the rising sun, landing on these shores. To reach these ruins, to prove that our fathers spoke the truth, is our object, and in the name of our ancestors we ask thy protection, chief."

Drawing his robes round him, Wyzinski sat down, and for fully a minute there was a dead silence.

"The broken huts exist," at length replied the king, "though none of us have ever seen them, and none know what far-away tribe made them. To reach them my white brethren must pass over the vast plains which lie between the Limpopo and the Zambesi, which the foot of the white man has never yet trod. The elephant and the lion abound there. The savage moohoohoo breed undisturbed, and not less cruel tribes, to whom Mozelkatse's name carries no terror, inhabit them. Let my white brethren stay to hunt, and to trade with us. A party of my braves shall seek the fallen huts and bring back the images."

The rattling sound of the rude applause was once more heard.

"No, chief," replied Wyzinski; "we are not traders. We have turned from our road to ask your aid. Give it, and we shall succeed. The report will go far and wide that through the protection of a great king our fathers' truth has been manifested, and traders will follow in our footsteps. Speed us on our journey, chief."

Mozelkatse did not reply, and for a few moments there was a deep silence. It was broken in a sudden and startling manner. A little man, almost a dwarf, deformed in person and fearfully ugly, leaped into the circle. Executing a wild dance, which he accompanied with shrill screams, he spun round, the warriors crouching down and applauding, not as heretofore with their spears, but by beating on the hard baked ground with their sticks, sometimes altogether, sometimes in an irregular manner.

Stopping as suddenly as he had begun in his mad dance, the sorcerer, for such he was, threw himself violently on the ground at Mozelkatse's feet, breaking as he did so a necklace of bones which he wore round his neck. For the first time the living circle of dusky braves gave way, and all able to do so crowded round the sorcerer, who with fixed and straining eyes was staring at the masses of bones lying here and there, from the position of which the augury was to be drawn. Luckily for the travellers, the omen was tolerably propitious, the seer pronouncing that though there was danger in the path, the white chiefs should return in safety.

The circle was again formed, and a long discussion ensued, in the course of which several of the more noted chiefs joined in, and the result was a mass of evidence as to the existence of ruins somewhere in the neighbourhood of Manica, a country lying to the northward, well watered by tributaries of the Zambesi, all the evidence being however merely hearsay. Eventually the king's aid and protection were promised, and Mozelkatse retired, two braves as he did so advancing, and taking from their sheaths the long glittering knives, performed a curious dance round the strangers, eventually cutting away the grass upon which they had sat, and burying it in a hole under the stone which had served as a throne. This being a ceremony always performed by the chief who wishes to retain the friendship of his visitors, during their temporary absence, was of good augury. The audience was at an end, the king disappearing inside his hut, and the Union Jack being struck, the new comers, escorted by a band of armed braves, singing a monotonous song, and accompanying themselves with the regular but discordant noise of the spears striking against the shields, marched off to the camp, where an ox previously purchased was slaughtered, cut up, and distributed among the braves, the absent but friendly sorcerer not being forgotten.

"A curious interview, Wyzinski and one I am not sorry to have got through," observed Hughes, as the two were seated that evening, near the camp fire.

"At all events, we may look upon the point as gained, and from this day will date our search for the ruined cities of Zulu Land," replied Wyzinski.

The night was dark, and the radius lit up by the blaze was of small extent. Luji and his man had lit their fire under a huge boulder of rock, which had rolled down apparently from the mountain range at whose feet they were encamped. The Matlokotlopo fires could be seen twinkling on the hill-top, and before them lay the plain, watered by the Limpopo, whose sinuous course they had marked, running like a blue thread through the land, from the rude council chamber of the tribe. From the boulder round which the men were squatted came the noise of many tongues, among which that of Luji played a prominent part; away on the plain the jackals and hyenas were to be heard, and the night breeze came rustling the leaves of the tree underneath which the two were talking by the fire.

“How strange,” said Hughes, breaking a long silence, “that a land so beautifully situated and so temperate in its climate should be so sparsely populated, and so utterly uncultivated!”

“It won’t remain so long,” replied the missionary. “Natal is a sugar and coffee producing country, and that of the Zulus must follow. Both possess the inestimable advantage of being perfectly healthy for human beings, the soil is abundantly fertile, and the land is intersected by rivers.”

“You are speaking of Natal, but what about this part of the country?”

“Between the Coastland and the Drakenburgh range every variety of tropical and European productions can be cultivated, from the pine apple to the gooseberry, and I have seen wheat, too, unequalled in size and quality, grown near where we now are.”

“I thought,” replied Hughes, “that wherever the sugar cane prospers the climate is unhealthy?”

“The single exception is that of Natal. The pasture land is eminently adapted for sheep, and nothing but capital is required—capital and labour. As we go more north towards the Zambesi, the nature of the land will alter.”

“And Mozelkatse—will he keep his word, think you?”

“He is known for never breaking it,” replied the missionary, “he is—.” The sentence was not finished, for a black arm and hand seemed to glide out of the darkness, and was laid on the missionary’s shoulder.

Starting up, he seized the intruder by the throat, but instantly released him, laughing. It was Masheesh, the Matabele brave, who had presented them that day to Mozelkatse, and as it may be easily imagined that the king, though able to create the sun and moon, was readier with his spear than his pen; the credentials, which were to make his protection of the party known, assumed the tangible form of the chief who thus unceremoniously startled them, and who soon, squatted beside the blaze, proceeded gravely to light his pipe and smoke in silence. The fire grew low, the two Europeans retired into the tent, but Masheesh smoked on quietly and composedly. One by one the Kaffirs and Hottentots lay down, but still the glow of the chief’s tobacco could be seen by the fire side. Rising at last, he heaped fresh wood on the embers, and calmly taking his place by the tent door and outside, though he had but to lift it to enter, Masheesh rolled himself in his buffalo hide, and, gorged with meat and tobacco, soon slept as soundly as the rest.

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**The Matabele Hunt.**

Masheesh had been deputed by Mozelkatse to accompany them, and there was now nothing to stay their progress northward. The country, too, at the foot of the mountains, was comparatively bare of game, so early the following morning the small party outspanned, and took their way across the plain to strike the banks of the Limpopo.

“How easily the Matabele falls into our ways!” said Wyzinski; as on the morning of the second day after leaving the mountains, the two were riding about half a mile ahead of the waggon, which was coming lumbering along behind them, the shouts of the drivers and the cracking of the long whip reaching their ears.

“It seems strange to see him take the management of our people, and at the same time associate himself with us on a footing of perfect equality,” replied Hughes, “he a half-naked and totally uneducated savage.”

“Turn it the other way, Hughes; he is a chief in the land, known and respected; we are strangers, with nothing but the white man’s prestige placing us at all on the footing of his equal. Masheesh is naturally the leader of our party, and is responsible to his chief for our safety. It is on this I rely.”

The Matabele rode well, and he now came dashing along bestriding a small horse which had been given him. He disdained the use of a saddle, and as he came along at full speed, his ostrich feather streaming on the wind, the loose panther skin floating behind, and his long black legs nearly touching the ground, there was something grotesque and yet striking in his appearance. He held his slender assegai in his hand. Dashing up to the two in front, he checked his horse suddenly, bringing it instantly to a standstill, and sending the ground and grit beneath its hoofs flying into the air. Bending down over its shoulder, the savage pointed with the spear head to some marks on the earth, and then looking up into the soldier’s face, uttered some words in a low guttural tone, and laughed.

“The track of elephants,” said the missionary, who spoke the Zulu tongue, though imperfectly. In a moment Hughes was off his horse, and stooping low as he examined for the first time the footprint of the mighty denizen of the African forests. Masheesh rode on, and in a few moments, a low guttural cry was heard, and the Matabele was seen, halting under a tree, and signing with his spear for the rest to come on. The path had led through a forest, the trees not growing thickly together, but at intervals, and now and then broken by rich undulating plains. Following the direction of the chief’s assegai, the two halting by his side under the shade of the mohunno trees, saw stretched before them the winding silver line of the Limpopo, one of the favourite hunting grounds of the Bazizulu.

Herds of antelope, and of hartebeest, were feeding over the vast plain. They could be counted by thousands, and it was indeed a glorious sight for the hunter’s eye, that vast undulating plain, whose gentle rises concealed the distance, and were covered with rich pasture, over which were feeding great herds of cattle, who owned no master. About five miles distant the line of the Limpopo bordered by trees, was seen glistening through the foliage as it sparkled in the morning sun. To the right and close to them a large snake was curling along the ground like a big black sinuous branch, making off for the shelter of the wood, while a troop of monkeys over head were grinning and chattering at the intruders, and flights of parrots were screaming among the branches.

A sense of wildness and of vastness creeps over those who look upon these wide plains in their native grandeur and stillness—a feeling of freedom, and of liberty, and at the same time of respect and adoration for the great Creator of all. Deeply feeling this for several minutes, the three gazed in silence, then as the distant shout of the drivers came on the breeze, the nearest troops of antelope stopped feeding, raised their heads, sniffed the air, and moved off—the next taking alarm in the same way—until the whole plain, far as the eye could roam, was covered with droves of antelope, galloping here and there, and crossing each other in wild confusion. It looked like an intricate and mazy dance, the performers in the wild ballet on the plains of South Africa being the antelope.

“His are the cattle on a thousand hills,” exclaimed the missionary, breaking silence at last, and reverently uncovering

himself.

“Some of them shall be mine before long,” replied the matter-of-fact soldier; “if you will get the chief to ride back and stop those fellows shouting.”

“I’ll do so myself,” answered the missionary. “I will halt them here, give you an hour’s advance, and then move straight forward for the Limpopo, where we will outspan. We want meat in the camp.”

“And shall have it. Come along, Masheesh,” cried Hughes, elated beyond measure, and letting the Arab he rode feel the spur, he dashed away followed by the Matabele brandishing his assegai. It looked very easy to procure meat among such countless herds, but an hour of violent exertion proved it was not so. The Arab was untrained, could not be brought to a standstill instantly, and was fidgety, so that it was impossible to aim from the saddle. Shy and timid, the hartebeest moved along in herds seldom exceeding ten in number, ever led by some old and cautious buck.

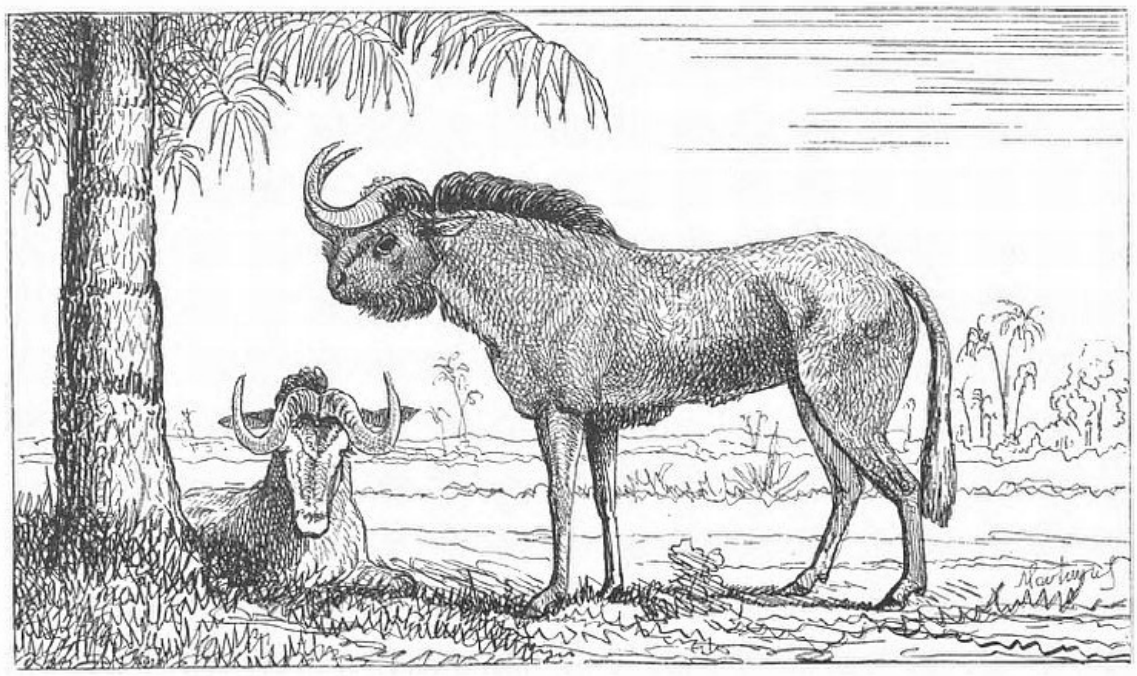
Of a yellowish orange colour, striped with black under the horns and down the forehead, they had seemed heavy, lumbering animals. The thighs and extremities were tinged with black, and the horns most curiously formed, curving at first backward and outward, but subsequently sweeping inwards, the eyes being like most of the antelope tribe, large and full. Ever on the watch, the hunters quite failed to get near them, and just as after long and cautious labour, they would be almost within shot, away would scamper the herd, in Indian file, and clumsy and ungainly as they were in their movements, all attempts to cut them off utterly failed. Convinced at last of the impossibility, Hughes followed the advice given him by the Matabele, and, dismounting, concealed himself behind a clump of trees, Masheesh, Luji, and others of the hunters who had now found them, making a long sweep to drive the antelope towards him. This at last proved successful.

A herd of hartebeest came cantering along, the leader pausing within ten paces of the clump where he lay hid. The moment sufficed, as a ball crashed through his skull, and he fell heavily, stone dead. The herd instantly turned to fly, but not before another shot had bowled over a second deer.

The buck was a noble animal, measuring seven feet ten inches from the nose to the base of the tail, and carrying a splendid pair of horns, one foot ten inches in height; the second being a female, and consequently much smaller in every respect. The deer were slung across the horses and sent to camp, where they proved a most seasonable supply, and after a rest under the trees the hunters prepared to follow. Before them lay a green rise, hardly to be called a hill, and yet high enough to conceal the country beyond. Masheesh, no longer dressed in his savage finery, but quite nude save a hide girded round his loins, was stalking on some paces in advance, the soldier following and looking with a covetous eye at the troops of deer which he could not approach. Suddenly, Masheesh threw himself flat on his face, as though he had been shot, motioning to the other to do the same. Cautiously and noiselessly the two dragged themselves up the rise, and peeping over its crest, saw spread out before them a rich undulating valley, the grass land broken here and there by groves of mimosa trees, a small river wandering through it on its way to join the Limpopo. The country of the Batonga lay mapped before them, while far to the westward rose the hills of the Drakenburgh range.

Feeding, not five hundred yards from the crest of the rise, was a herd of strange animals. The head and breast had the appearance of buffalo on a small scale, the horns of the males being enormous and very dangerous looking. Twisting spirally downwards when starting from the head, they then curved upwards like a hook. The head and chest were covered with dark shaggy hair, the eyes looking fiercely from under the tangled covering. The shoulders and neck carried a mane like that of a horse, while the remainder of the body and hind quarters were those of a pony, except the tail, which was that of a cow, and the legs, which were those of an antelope.

These strange animals seemed full of fun. Tossing their shaggy, fierce looking heads, one would leave the rest, tear round in a ring at full gallop, and then dash into the centre of the herd, pulling up suddenly.



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Captain Hughes seemed lost in contemplation, but Masheesh, laying his hand on his shoulder, signed to him to come away, and both letting themselves slide down the slope, the herd remained quite unconscious of their presence.

The two were silent for some time, but when the savage deemed they were far enough distant to allow of it without

giving the alarm, he spoke rapidly enough. Luji coming up at the moment, Hughes learned that the strange animals were gnus, and a whispered conversation followed, it being agreed that under cover of the crest, or green ridge, Hughes and Masheesh should gain the outlet of the valley, while Luji and Noti were to make a long détour, and coming down the wind, drive the herd before them.

The savage carefully posted his companion, and then pointing to a bend in the valley, about forty paces distant, uttered some sentences volubly, and going away buried himself in a neighbouring thicket. All seemed dead silence, and the watcher soon grew weary of it. A quarter dragged itself on into half an hour, and still nothing save the deep silence of the African plain. Suddenly the soldier who had been watching the serried ranks of the ants as they marched along in countless numbers, ever in a straight line, became conscious of a clump of bushes, at the bend of the valley to which Masheesh had pointed, which certainly was not there a quarter of an hour before. The bush had a curious motion, and Captain Hughes concluded there was some wild animal concealed therein—a lion probably, watching the distant herd, and by its presence hindering the gnus coming. His rifle on full cock, firmly grasped in his hands, he eagerly watched the bush. Yes, it certainly moved, slowly but surely.

Raising the deadly rifle, the hunter took a deliberate aim right into its centre. Just as the finger was about to pull the trigger, the thought flashed over him, that if it concealed a lion and the fire were not fatal, the risk would be great. Lowering the weapon, he watched the bush intently, determining to wait till the lion made its spring, or to fire if he could get a glimpse of the animal. An hour had passed, and the temptation returned in full force.

The dead deep silence weighed upon him, the strange motions of the bush made him nervous. Again the rifle was raised, when a loud trampling noise was heard, as with their heads down and their spiral horns glittering in the sun, the troop of gnus came on at top speed. A more ferocious-looking lot could hardly be imagined, as they headed dead down the valley. Still the hunter's attention was divided, and more engrossed with the bush than with the game. The gnus rapidly neared it, urged on by the shouts of Noti, while Luji's voice was plainly to be heard far away in rear. They were close to it; about to pass in safety, when a piercing yell rang from the bush, and a bright spear glancing in the sunshine struck the leading gnu, while Masheesh, casting his leafy covering, sprang to his feet. The report of the soldier's rifle followed, and one of the herd rolled heavily forward, breaking its horns in the impetus of the fall. The animal struck by the spear halted at once, stamping violently with its forefoot, and lowering its head for the charge. The savage stood awaiting it, his knobstick in his left hand, the long glittering dagger in his right, tall, erect, and fearless, the very picture of a dusky brave. With an angry snort the bull rushed on, but the savage stepped lightly aside, and the steel sank deep into the flesh near the spine. Again the gnu turned to charge, for a moment hesitating, as it lowered its shaggy head, but at that instant a ball from the deadly English rifle struck right between the eyes, and it fell heavily close to Masheesh, the blood gushing from its mouth. It was a much larger one than that first killed, when measured proving fully seven feet four inches from the top of the nose to the base of the tail. The horns were one foot ten inches in length, and the animal stood at least four feet in height at the shoulder. The hoof, as Captain Hughes and the delighted Masheesh stood beside the carcass, seemed too large for the legs, and the knee joints were covered with a hard substance like those of a tame ox. In fact the animal seemed to resemble much the half-wild oxen of India, and, before it charged, the wounded gnu pawed with the forefoot, tossing its head exactly as a wild bull would have done. Hughes now learned that the natives regularly hunt the antelope and zebra in the way Masheesh had done that day, whole herds feeding carelessly up to the supposed bush, but on this occasion the concealed man had run unconsciously a terrible risk.

The sun was sinking towards the west—telling that it was time to strike the river, by whose banks the rest of the party had outspanned; so leaving Luji, Noti, and one of the Kaffirs to cut up and bring in the meat, the two stepped out for the Limpopo. Any fatigue, any privation Masheesh would endure, but even such manual labour as that of cutting up the carcasses of the slain he utterly disdained. It was sunset when the camp was at last reached, and there a messenger from Mozelkatse was found.

"It would appear," said the missionary, who was busy preparing some skins of birds he had shot, "that a strong party of the Matabeles have joined their king."

"Well, all I can say is, a good wash and something to eat are of more importance to me just now than all the kings in the world. You don't know how tired I am, and then nothing to eat besides."

"Look at Masheesh, whom you called an uneducated savage this morning," replied Wyzinski, pointing towards the individual named, who after a drink of water had quietly seated himself, not even noticing the runner of his people, and was smoking, varying the amusement with an occasional pinch of snuff, and waiting calmly until some meat should be cooked by some one, he cared not by whom, provided he had nothing to do with it.

"Well, I suppose you don't want me to smoke and take snuff as proofs of civilisation."

"You have heard of the man, have you not, who thanked God he had at least reached a civilised country on seeing a gibbet? However," continued Wyzinski, "yonder runner brings us an invitation from Mozelkatse, to join a great hunt in which the tribe is taking part on the banks of the Limpopo."

"That will be worth seeing. And when is it to take place?" asked Hughes, forgetting hunger and fatigue.

"To-morrow."

"Accept it, by all manner of means."

Masheesh was interrupted in the tobacco-smoking process. The runner, who since his arrival in camp, had been gorging himself with meat, was sent back; great steaks and collops of venison cut from the hartebeest were grilling on the clear wood fire, and soon the howling of the hyenas, as they tore the bones of what had been left behind of the two gnus, as not worth bringing away, were the only sounds which disturbed the quiet of the little camp on the banks of the Limpopo.

Early morning saw the whole party afoot.

"Had we not better send Luji back to the tent?" said Hughes, as the morning light becoming clearer, they looked back from the crest of a rise, and saw it shining in the early sunbeams.

"We shall need him as an interpreter, perhaps. I can just manage, and that is all, to be understood," replied Wyzinski; "everything is safe. Noti will keep a look-out."

“See, there are a lot of Matabeles,” exclaimed Hughes. “They are quite naked, and have bows and arrows.”

“And there are more. Look in what numbers they are turning out! Yonder fellows have flint musquets: where did they get them, Luji?” asked the missionary.

“The Portuguese on the Zambesi—him sell, Master,” was the answer.

And now detachment after detachment came on, spreading out across the country, like infantry skirmishers, some carrying only spears, others bows and arrows, and a few, a very few, musquets, but always in line: shouting, yelling, and driving everything before them. Soon the antelope came bounding past, endeavouring to escape, but were driven back again, as the long line of savages, throwing forward the two flanks, enclosed them in a crescent miles in length, and drove them back on the river. Herds of koodoos, eland, and hartebeest came scouring along, attempting to break through in vain, while the painted zebra, the graceful leche, with its long tapering horns, were remorselessly driven back by the yells and shouts of the Matabele.

“I suppose we must find Mozelkatse. Tell Masheesh of our wish, Luji,” said the missionary. He alone of the whole party was mounted, being weak from the effects of fever, and as he spoke, they topped the crest of one of the green ridges so common to the undulating plains bordering the Limpopo, and on passing it the whole party were stopped by the presence, right in their path, of a huge rhinoceros.

He was quietly standing under a tree, apparently studying the landscape, and not seeming to think of the distant noise. At the foot of the tree rose one of those curious structures, the nest of the African ant, while a strange little animal, covered with thickly-plated scales of a yellowish tint, the under part of the belly only being undefended, was busy feeding on the ant-hill. In length the ant-eater was not more than three feet, and it was engaged shooting out its tongue into the heap, which tongue, being covered with some glutinous substance, always returned black with ants. The spot was comparatively quiet, for the time at least, and the rhinoceros did not seem in the least alarmed. He was a huge, heavy, massive creature, of a pale brown colour, carrying two horns, one very long and pointed, the second short, strong, but blunt. The longer one rose just above the tip of the nose, and seemed a most dangerous arm. Above the shoulders was a kind of hump. An uglier brute certainly could not have barred the path which ran towards the river; but the moohoohoo would have been perhaps inoffensive had not Masheesh, confiding, doubtless, in the power of the English rifle, crept towards him, throwing his spear. The weapon struck fairly and well, but glanced from the tough hide as though it had been hurled against a brick wall, and being made of the soft native iron, it literally curled up with the force of the blow. Having thrown his spear, which elicited only a wrathful grunt from the animal, Masheesh bolted, just as the huge mass put itself in motion, advancing straight up the path. Luji and the rest disappeared among the reeds and bushes, but Captain Hughes had just time to fire, the ball glancing from the mailed coat like a child’s marble.

“Look out!” shouted the missionary; but it was too late, and the next moment the unlucky soldier was lying on the ground, with the enormous bulk of the rhinoceros standing over him.

“Lie still, for God’s sake,” cried Wyzinski, as he unslung the heavy rifle, seeing that the animal did not strike at the fallen man. He was just in the act of raising it to his shoulder, when, attracted by the horse, the moohoohoo suddenly charged, the long pointed horn literally burying itself in the pony’s flank, just behind the rider’s leg, the rifle harmlessly exploding as horse and rider rolled over. Not pausing for a second blow, the enraged brute drove on, eventually shambling through the line of natives, who opened their ranks gladly to let him pass.

Rising unwounded, but sorely shaken, Hughes extricated the missionary.

“Are you hurt, Wyzinski?” he asked, anxiously.

“Not a bit,” was the reply; “but look at the poor grey.”

“He is past saving,” answered Hughes; and it was evident it was so, for so frightfully had the sharp horn done its work, that the entrails were hanging out, and the animal fast bleeding to death.

Placing his revolver to the pony’s head, the report rang out; a few convulsive movements, and the carcase of the horse lay still.

“Where is Masheesh?” enquired Hughes, as he returned the smoking weapon to his belt. “If it had not been for his nonsense, that pistol-shot would have been saved.”

Wyzinski had seated himself on the grass, for the whole thing had passed so quickly, that it was difficult to realise the danger.

Slowly stalking out of the bushes, Masheesh, as though nothing had happened, gravely walked to the foot of the tree, took up the ant-eater which, alarmed at the noise, had rolled itself up like a hedgehog, and brought it to where the missionary was seated.

“What on earth does he want with that hedgehog?” asked Hughes. The Matabele, speaking quickly, and in an excited voice, looked up at the missionary as he did so, pointing to the little animal.

“He says it is a great prize,” returned the other, “and consoles him for the loss of his spear. It appears that these ant-eaters are scarce, and the possession of one guarantees its owner against loss or sickness among his cattle.”

“The loss of his cattle! He nearly lost our lives for us, confound him,” replied Hughes, with some show of humour. “He don’t seem to think of that.”

“A native never does, it is not in their nature, and life is held very cheap. Look at yonder group moving over the plain in a line with that stunted acacia. The king Mozelkatse must be among them.”

“Can you walk, do you think, Wyzinski?”

“Oh, yes. I’m a good deal shaken, but that will wear away. Let us join the king.”

The rifles were loaded, and the whole party moved off once more, leaving the carcase of the grey pony lying in a pool of blood where it had fallen, to become a prey to the jackals and hyenas, those scavengers of the African plains.

Mozelkatse, in a state of nudity nearly as complete as that of his subjects, was in high good humour, and welcomed them warmly. The hunt, he told them, promised well, and a vast number of deer of all kinds were hemmed in between the horns of the living crescent. He motioned them to take their places by the side of the trap, or barricade, into which the herds were to be forced. Masheesh temporarily left them to place his prize, the ant-eater, in safety; and as the line of beaters was still far distant, there was ample time to examine the stockade.

The whole was something like a lobster-trap without a top, or like one of the salmon weirs to be found running out into the sea on the Welsh coast. It was made of stout branches driven deeply into the ground, with lighter ones interlaced horizontally between the upright poles. The opening was at least fifty paces in breadth, gradually narrowing, and as the horns of the living crescent drew inwards, it was the only outlet for the frightened game. It led to a deep square pit, which must have taken the tribe long to dig, whose sides were quite smooth and perfectly steep. Once in it, the deer could not get out, and towards this all the game was being driven. The process was a slow one, and it was afternoon before the long line of the Matabele approached. It was a curious sight. The shouts, screams, and yells of the men as they drove before them antelopes of all kinds, and then the excitement of those near the trap, as herd after herd would come down, find the barricade, and, suspecting danger, turn back. At first the different animals kept to themselves, but as the circle narrowed, quaggas, zebras, antelope of various forms would become mixed together, while the Matabele would rush among them, brandishing their long spears, and frantically striking their ox-hide shields, shrieking, howling, and spearing right and left, until the affrighted wretches, surrounded on every side by the yelling savages, took the only outlet left them, and dashing madly down the path between the stockades, leaped wildly into the pit, falling pell mell in. On they came, quaggas, koodoos, springbok, hartebeest, the shouting and spearing becoming wilder. Hundreds turned, and forced their way through the ever narrowing circle of yelling Matabele, the spears sticking in their bloody hides, while fuller and fuller became the pit, until it was heaped with the dead, dying, and maimed. There was the ferocious-looking gnu, the painted hide of the zebra, the graceful-limbed springbok, the long spiral horned leche, all heaped together in one boiling, seething mass of pain and suffering, the Matabele above, with savage cries, spearing those who in their agony tried to climb the sides of the pit, while still the yelling savages continued driving herd after herd, until, like the fire worshippers' trap, in Moore's beautiful poem, the pit was full and would hold no more. There was high feasting in the Matabele camp that night, for the hunt had been most successful, and the slaughter immense; but it was with feelings of pleasure the travellers had a farewell interview with Mozelkatse, and then passing among the dancing, singing savages, took their way across the plain, lighted by a brilliant moon, to their quiet camp by the side of the Limpopo.

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## A Narrow Escape.

Two days after the Matabele hunt the vast plains were once more silent, Mozelkatse, at the head of his gorged hunters, having left Zoutpansburgh for his own kraal, and the party of which the white men were the chiefs, having resumed their march northward. The waggon and horses had not yet been sent back, but the onward march was slow and tedious, and passing through the country of the Batonga, it took five days' toilsome march before the tent was pitched on a bend of the Suave river. The weather had gradually increased in heat, the native kraals were few and small, and what was worse, the natives themselves seemed more and more unsociable, if not actually unfriendly.

The white man appeared known among them, but as the distance from the English frontier daily increased, this knowledge seemed only drawn from that of the Portuguese traders on the Zambesi, a degenerate race, who were looked down upon by the blacks. The plains swarmed with game of every kind, and fruits of different sorts were to be found near the rivers; but as the little party advanced, the forest-land became more frequent and more dense. The tall palmyra and the stately moshanna trees grew luxuriantly. Squirrels of various sorts haunted the groves and thickets, more particularly one species of a pale yellow colour, touched up with black, about eight inches long in the body, and being remarkable for its magnificent tail, also pale yellow, barred with black, and fully as long as the body. This beautiful little animal seemed to look for its food among the stones, and was quite fearless. The pitfalls dug by the natives were so artfully concealed as to be very annoying, and even dangerous. On one occasion a Kaffir fell into one, and was released with some difficulty. One was found close to the banks of the Suave river, and into it a splendid panther had fallen. It must have been days since it had been there, for the sides of the pit were scored with its claws: however, a pistol-shot killed it, and its skin was a most beautiful one. The mosquitos and the soldier ants were another source of trouble; and what with the heat, and the too constant meat diet, sores attacked the whole party, breaking out on all parts of the body.

Night had closed round the little camp on the Suave river; the day had been hot and sultry, and the route had lain over plains covered with wild cotton, and among groves of trees closely resembling the orange, but at that time of the year not bearing fruit. Masheesh, who had been a day's journey to the eastward of north, in order to strike a large native kraal and obtain information, had just rejoined the camp, but his tidings were of a very mixed description. The tent was pitched under the spreading branches of a mashonga tree. A huge fire was lighted; a good supper had closed the fatigues of the day, and the men were fast asleep round the blaze, having gorged themselves with eland meat Captain Hughes was engaged sponging out a rifle, and near him, in the full blaze of the fire, Luji was skinning a small animal shot that day. It was a beautiful little creature of the squirrel tribe, about a foot long, of a bright yellowish red, barred here and there with black. The tail was at least three inches longer than the animal itself, and glossy black at the end. Wyzinski was earnestly studying a piece of broken stone, on which appeared some rude and defaced carvings; while, squatted on the ground, looking up into the missionary's face, quite naked and his head ornamented with the waving ostrich plume, the firelight danced over Hasheesh's black face and quick intelligent eyes.

"The Batonga tell," said he, "of a range of mountains to the northward and eastward, called 'Gorongoza.'"

"It is not the place we seek. Gorongoza is known to the Portuguese."

"The white chief seeks the broken stone huts," replied Masheesh, "and the Batonga tell of graves marked by stones lying on the mountain range of Gorongoza."

"And do not they know of others?" asked the missionary.

"Yes," replied the chief; "far to the eastward. Near the mouth of the river lie ruins, looking over the big water; it is from these that the stone which my father holds in his hand came."

Wyzinski stooped over the fire and carefully examined the fragment. That it had been carved was evident, but it was so broken and defaced that he could make nothing of it. The chief continued—

“These ruins by the big water the Batonga call ‘Sofala,’ but to the northward and westward lies a large kraal. It is some days’ journey from Sofala and Gorongoza. Near Manica lie great forests of strange trees, and among those trees lie broken stone huts. In the mountains are caves, where the leopards and the lions hide. The white chief may leave his life there, but he will not see them. The broken huts are sacred, and if the stranger saw them no rain would fall in the country for three years.”

The voices of the speakers as they conversed eagerly together, with the wail of the jackals and hyenas, the barking of the foxes, the snort of the hippopotami on the river bank, broke the silence of the starlight night. The blaze occasionally flared up, and then died away, lighting up all to within a certain radius.

Luji was just finishing his squirrel, and Hughes had put his rifle together and was trying the lock, when a tremendous roar, apparently close to, startled all, and the flickering blaze of the firelight danced for an instant on the dark hide of a lion, as he dashed past, the next moment passing through the midst of the astonished group, bearing with him the carcass of an eland that day shot.

The night was dark, the country unknown; dense thickets existed on the banks of the river,—and so heaping fresh wood on the fire, the whole camp was soon fast asleep, the task of following up the spoor of the lion being deferred till the next morning.

The day’s march it was determined should be a short one, for Masheesh, who was down on the river side before daylight, had fallen on the remains of the eland some way off, just where the Suave discharged its meagre waters into another and larger stream, “It would seem,” said Hughes, when relating the matter to Wyzinski, “that the lion must have been actuated by a spirit of fun, for he certainly was not hungry. The greater part of the eland lies in the brush near the river side.”

“We will move on a few miles, and camp on the mountain slope,” replied the missionary. “The lion is sure to return for the remains of the eland. You have but to watch for him; and if you don’t, the chances are he follows the camp and pays us another visit.”

“More than that,” returned the soldier, “the grass is very much trampled near the pool formed by the junction of the two rivers. Many wild animals must frequent it, and perhaps elephants; but first we must replace the stolen meat,” he continued, shouldering his rifle and moving off, followed by the others across the plain, for eland were very numerous at the foot of the mountain range. Bounding along in single file, led by some old antelope, they looked very pretty, the herds made up into parties of from six to ten, having many young ones among them.

The colour of the males is a rusty yellow, with a brownish tinge here and there, giving place to reddish tufts of hair running down the face. The head small in proportion to the body, which is heavily and powerfully built. The eyes full, large, and soft, and the horns sloping backwards and twisted spirally. Taught by former experience, the hunter lay concealed behind the rocks. Masheesh, Luji, and Noti making a long circuit, came upon the rear of the eland, who were quietly grazing like tame deer in a park. The old buck, who generally led the herd, would soon take the alarm, and, raising his head, gaze around. Uttering a whistling cry, the rest would gather round him, as they moved away in single file for the hill-side. The alarm would spread, and at one moment there could not have been less than a hundred and fifty eland moving near them across the plain. Still the hunter’s rifle was not heard, for the deer had taken a wrong direction. At length, a troop of ten headed straight for the rock where Captain Hughes lay; the loud report of his rifle rang out, still more startling the flying antelope, while a deer, bounding several feet into the air, fell stone dead, shot through the heart. The eland was a female, easily distinguished as such from the very great difference of colour, being of a light pale yellow, with a splendid pair of spirally-twisted horns. Without moving, the hunter waited, hoping that some of the herds, now wildly scouring the plain, would come within shot. Trotting jauntily along, his little feet hardly seeming to touch the ground, a young eland came to the side of the dead mother. It was of a different colour to the female. Of a pale orange tint, the horns were short, and not twisted. There were many mouths to feed in camp, and the child eland was three parts grown. Again the sharp crack of the rifle was heard ringing across the plain, and the young antelope fell dead close to the mother, just as a herd of seven came bounding along at top speed within fifteen paces of the ambush. Seizing a spare rifle, the hunter sighted the leader of the troop, and a third sharp report woke up the echoes of the rocks. His foreleg broken, the eland still galloped on, his speed much diminished but yet considerable. Dashing after them came Masheesh, his long straight spear in his hand, his ostrich plume streaming backwards in the wind, his limbs naked save the usual ox hide round the waist. Singling out the wounded buck, the Matabele brave followed it. Its foreleg hanging useless, still the antelope struggled on, bidding fair to get away, but Noti headed it, and the animal came struggling along, in a direction which would lead it to within ten paces of the savage chief. Poising the long bright assegai, Masheesh stood for a moment motionless, while a gleam of light seemed to traverse the air, and the antelope fell heavily forward. The next, Masheesh bent over the struggling deer, the sharp curved knife flashed across the throat, a stream of blood followed, a few convulsive efforts, and all was still. This was a noble buck, measuring nine feet from the horns to the base of the tail, while the length of the horns was fully three, the deer standing nine feet high measured at the shoulder.

Sending the eland meat to camp, the hunters took their way to the river bank, searching for the spoor of the lion. Right opposite the spot where the remains of the deer lay, the river running between, a deep hole was dug, so deep that only the head and neck of a man standing in it would appear above the level ground. Between it and the remains of the deer, the stream formed a kind of pool. To the right ran the chain of mountains, while in front the plain was clear, the water a little lower down, pouring over a ledge of rock, so as to form a miniature cataract. Heavy timber grew right down to the river’s edge, the branches of some of the trees dipping into the water. The hole was dug at the foot of a tree, and all round it grew long, rank grass, and tangled brushwood, save where it was cleared away in front.

About nine o’clock that night, Captain Hughes, accompanied by Luji, who carried a spare rifle, took his way down to the river.

“I climb in tree?” asked Luji. “Master hid away in hole?” His English was plain enough, but not very grammatical.

“No, thank you, Luji,” replied the soldier, laughing; “remember the lioness of Zoutpansburgh.”

“Three lions there,” replied the other; “and Luji not know missionary in tree.”

“Well, well, just you bundle off to camp, Luji, and go to sleep. If I am not back directly after daybreak, send to look for me.”

“Luji come himself,” said the man, with the air of a hero. “Good-night, master.”

“Good-night, Luji.”

The cracking of the brush was heard, then a monotonous chaunt, as the careless fellow took his way back to camp. Both sounds died away in the distance, and the hunter felt himself alone, dependent only on himself, in the middle of the African plain. The moon was in her second quarter, but would not rise before eleven o’clock, and the darkness grew dense. The silence of the day was gradually broken into, the jackals and hyenas began their nightly music, and the watcher, though he could see nothing, became aware that animals of some kind were splashing and drinking in the water close to him. He strained his eyes, but could not make out anything. Soon the jackals scented the carrion, their peculiar wailing cry coming nearer and nearer. Time wore on, the position in the cramped-up hole, without the possibility of seeing anything, was an irksome one, and the hunter, after the fatigues of the day, felt sleep creeping over him.

He heard the jackals quarrelling and snarling over the carrion; he heard the sound of the water as it flowed, falling over the neighbouring ledge, with a continued monotonous noise; he was with the 150th, telling many a tale of African adventure; in a word, he had fallen asleep, when a soft, cold, hairy hand was laid on the back of his neck, and a thrill of horror passed through his frame, as he saw two large eyes looking through the darkness into his. At this moment the lion roared on the mountain-side, and the jackals heard it, for they left the carrion, giving a long mournful howl as they scurried away, and, taking up a position about half a mile off, filled the air with their plaintive music. Slowly the upper limb of the moon rose above the mountains, when again the cold, hairy touch was felt by the watcher, followed by a twitch at the fur cap he wore, and now by the feeble light he could distinguish an enormous monkey. It did not seem to have the slightest fear, but clutched at the sealskin cap, clashing its long teeth together, and grimacing hideously. Again the lion roared, this time much nearer, as taking up a broken branch, the hunter struck at the troublesome baboon, who, chattering with fear, dashed into the tangled brush. The lion was evidently coming up very cautiously, but presently the snapping sound of breaking branches was heard, as the animal forced its way onwards. Raising his head to see that the rifles were in position, the startled hunter received the soft, warm breeze right in his face, becoming at once aware that the wind had changed, and was bearing the scent straight down on the lion, who was advancing up the wind, perfectly aware of the presence of some enemy, while the brushwood on that side extended for miles, right up to the mouth of the pit. Another roar, this time close to. What would the ambushed man have given had even Luji been within range? The perspiration rolled down his face as he prepared to get out and meet the “lord of the mountain” on the open. It was too late, for a heavy bank of clouds rose, overshadowing the moon, and the hoarse mutterings of distant thunder came on his ear. The cracking of the brushwood, too, sounded close to the mouth of the pit, as making himself as small as possible, the unfortunate hunter crouched down at the bottom of the hole, and, a cocked revolver in his hand, prepared to meet his fate. A thrill of disgust shook him, for, with a shrill cry, the baboon, startled by the lion’s approach, leaped into the pit, alighting on the hunter’s back, clasping him round the neck. It seemed to him like a horrible nightmare, the long wail of the jackals taking the place of the cry of the fabled Banshee over the living dead. To add to the terror of the situation, the thunder was heard, peal on peal, and the lightning flashed, while the heavy rain-drops spattered on the leaves. He heard, too, the brushwood part, and a deep, hoarse growl told him the lion was looking into the ambush; he fancied he could feel his breath; and then came a shriek of pain from the baboon, as his teeth met in the back of his neck. Lying down at the mouth of the hole, like a huge Newfoundland dog, the lion had reached down with his powerful paw, endeavouring to get at the monkey. In this he had so nearly succeeded, that his long claws had scored the creature’s back, and its warm blood was pouring down the hunter’s neck. A second time the lion made the attempt, when, with a scream of agony, using the recumbent figure for its spring, the baboon leaped out of the pit. The lion was nearly as active, as, with a fierce growl and a tremendous bound, it also cleared the mouth of the hole. The hunter was saved. Covered with blood, stained with dirt, and sorely frightened, Captain Hughes arose just in time to see the animal, chattering with delight, swing himself from branch to branch of a mowanna tree. The lion having unearthed one, had not suspected the existence of another animal in the same place, and, roaring once more loudly, it took its way towards the carrion, where it began tearing and rending the flesh, the wounded ape, now in safety, moaning bitterly, as the clouds cleared away slowly to the southward, the storm passing along the mountain range. At length the lion rose, and, with a low growl as he passed the tree where the noisy baboon was seated, walked down to the river to drink. He was a very large one, his mane and tail being unusually dark. Slowly and deliberately the magnificent animal walked into the pool. The report of the heavy rifle rang out, the ball striking him right between the eyes, as he stooped his head to drink. With a wild convulsive bound, the lion cleared the stream, falling heavily into the brushwood beyond. Sounds somewhat between a moan of pain and a growl of rage followed, one or two heavy sobs, the breaking of the brushwood, as the huge carcass fell over on its side, and then, save the cry of the jackals and hyenas, the moaning of the ape, and the distant rattle of the thunder, all was still.

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**The First Elephant.**

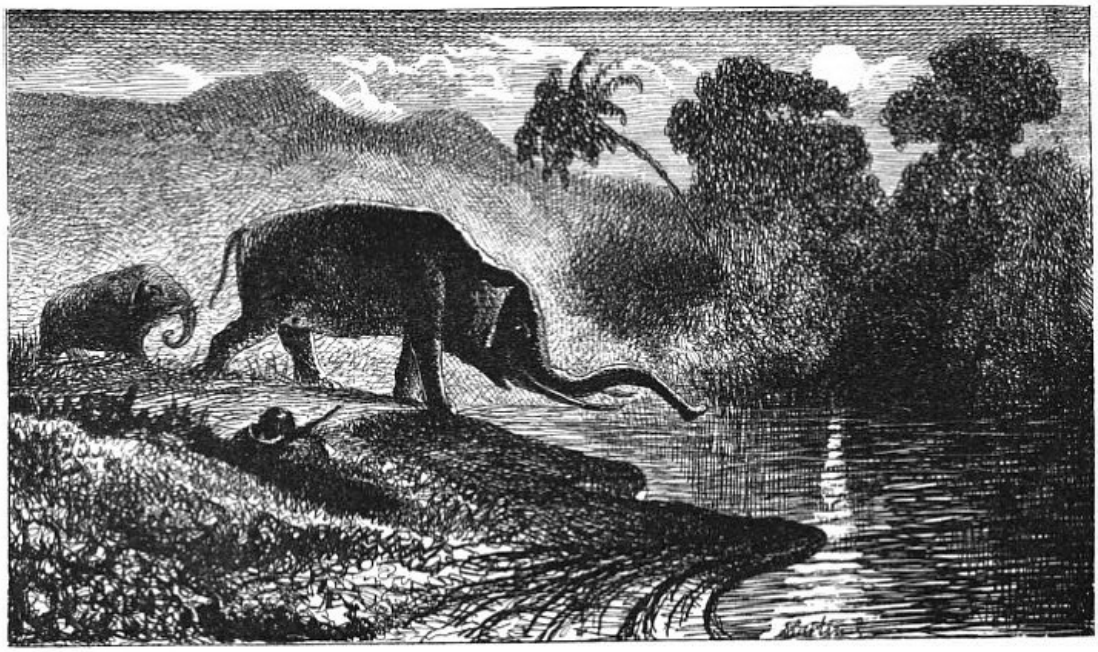
Nearly an hour passed, and the watcher, tired, wet, and worn out, was thinking of the snug fire on the mountain-side, and the tent pitched near it; for certainly he had passed through quite sufficient danger and emotion for one night at least, when several spotted hyenas came down to drink. Some wild boar followed, and it was a strong temptation to the hunter to fire, when a desperate fight took place between two old boars close to him. The storm had quite passed away, cooling the heated air in its passage; the moon and stars were shining brightly, and soon bounding over the plain, with their peculiarly dancing motion, came a herd of springbok. Moving along at a great pace, springing from the ground into the air, and hardly seeming to touch the earth again for the next bound, on came the graceful antelope euchore. Even in the day time the motions of this animal are so quick, that the eye cannot follow its bounds in their details, only realising the pace as a whole, but in the clear, silvery moonlight, they seemed like a troop of fairy elves, to the tired watcher, as they came dancing along over the African plain. Dashing fearlessly into the water, the herd began to drink, with one exception. An old buck, from whose gait the inference might have been drawn that he had been previously wounded, stood sentinel on the bank. There was meat and to spare in the camp, so the hunter only watched the beautiful animals. The sentinel seemed to suspect danger, and was fidgety and impatient. Was it possible he knew of the ambush? Captain Hughes asked himself; and yet from his motions he could not but conclude he did, when all at once a dark object sprang from the bush, and the sentinel springbok was in a moment rolling on the ground, while the rest of the herd were bounding madly over the plain in hurried flight. For a few seconds, there seemed to be one rolling, writhing mass on the bank; then the antelope lay still, and a panther, with its beautiful spotted skin, walked down to the river. Before reaching the water, the animal stopped and began licking and polishing its hide, disarranged in the combat. Again the sharp report of the rifle was heard, and the panther, with a convulsive bound, sprang into the bush, which it could be heard tearing with its powerful jaws and claws in the death agony. Soon all was again still, as scrambling out of the pit, the hunter crossed the river, and advanced cautiously towards the carcass of the springbok, finding it still quivering with muscular excitement, but quite dead. Holding his rifle at full cock, slowly and deliberately he approached the bush. The moonlight streamed over the painted hide of a large panther, lying quite dead.

Leaving the carcass untouched, Captain Hughes managed to drag the deer on one side, covering it in the thick undergrowth, and then once more crossing the river determined never again to leave the brush growing close to the mouth of his hiding-place. That which had been the sentinel springbok’s fate had certainly been his, if the panther had come that side of the river.

The report of the rifle had doubtless frightened the deer around, for fully two hours passed without anything coming to the water. The time seemed very long, and the effect of the unusual excitement passing away, the hunter again became drowsy. The position was a cramped one; the first part of the night, before the thunderstorm had cooled the air, had been hot and sultry; the breeze, heavily laden with the scent of the flowers of the mobala trees, again came in hot puffs, bringing with it the cry of the jackal and the hyena, and the other thousand noises of animal life which so distinguish night from day among the wild plains of Southern Africa. Still nearer to the watcher was to be heard the fall of the water over its ledge of rock, the moaning of the wounded ape, and once or twice, and that very distant, the roar of a lion. Spread out in the moonlight lay the plain, stretching away towards the eastern coast, watered by a small river, while to the right rose the chain of mountain land in which the river took its rise, and whose slopes were dotted here and there by what seemed large black patches of forest, principally composed of trees exactly resembling the cedar. From one of these patches there came every now and then the sound of the splintering of wood, just as though a workman were felling timber. This noise was quite inexplicable; and the baboon, too, was annoying, for not only did it keep up its moaning, but would break off pieces of the branches, and throw them at the hunter, generally with a certain aim. The time wore wearily on, and Captain Hughes had just dozed off, when his attention was suddenly roused by a noise like the bleating of a sheep. No animal of any kind was in sight, and yet there it was, the low, plaintive bleating of a sheep. It seemed to come from the bush, and presently, out of it, came the beautiful painted body of a large snake, some fourteen feet in length, gliding along with a gentle, sinuous motion, and uttering from time to time the strange bleat. Gaining the foot of the tree where the baboon was, it wound itself round the trunk, and crept slowly up it. The moment the monkey caught sight of it dragging its shining length upwards, it evinced a deadly fear. Slowly, but surely, the nogaputsane neared its prey, while the unlucky animal chattering and crying, seemed unable to escape. Moved by its distress, the hunter raised his rifle, but just as he was about to fire the baboon jumped from the tree, and leaping across the stream, seized one of the branches of a young mimosa, swinging himself into it chattering with fright. The large snake paused for a few minutes to look about it, soon slowly descending, and then starting in pursuit, the nogaputsane came to the river, which it did not like, and returned into the bush.

Time wore on; the interest of the night seemed past, and morning could not be far off. Fairly tired out, the soldier began making his arrangements for a return to camp, when he was stopped by seeing, or thinking he saw, a black mass moving among the shadows on the hill-side, where the sound of the splintering wood was heard. The cause of the noise was now made evident, for moving along slowly, the watcher saw for the first time the huge bulk of the African wild elephant. It was advancing towards the river. Suddenly it stopped, and for a few moments the hunter’s heart beat quickly, thinking the chance lost, when, trotting along in a lumbering fashion, there came from out of the shade of the cedar and mashunga forests a second, but this time a young elephant. On they came, right for the river, opposite the hiding-place, the young one stopping from time to time, and then coming on at a trot to rejoin its mother. They neared the river, the old elephant evidently carefully examining every yard of ground before putting her huge foot down. They passed under the tree where the baboon was hid, and the spirit of mischief seemed to wake up in the wounded animal, notwithstanding all that had happened to him that night. Breaking off a large bough, jabbering loudly, and making the most diabolical faces, it took aim at the young elephant, the wood hitting it a smart blow on the trunk. The mother stopped dead, uttering a strange trumpeting sound, then circling her trunk round the stem of the young tree, began to shake it violently. The monkey, active as he was, nearly came to the ground, holding on with difficulty, and crying loudly. Then the cracking of the stem was heard, just as the baboon, loosing its hold, dropped on the ground, and with one wild spring clambered into another tree, and swung himself from branch to branch, jabbering and whining with fear.

Casting the sapling from it, the elephant, as if satisfied with the lesson it had given, came down to drink. Coming to the spot where the panther and springbok had struggled, and where the grass and reeds were beaten down, the animal halted, evidently suspecting one of the native traps, and kneeling down on the edge it struck the ground all round with its trunk. It was now within thirty paces, but still the hunter’s rifle remained silent. Hoping to meet with an elephant, the heavier rifle was loaded accordingly, the right-hand barrel with the usual ball, but the left carrying one of Devisme’s explosive cartridges. Not able to detect anything wrong in the trampled ground, still the cautious creature would not tread on it, but circling round, broke her way through the bush, coming, as she did so, on the carcass of the dead panther. This she examined very carefully, turning it over with her trunk, and it was only when she had fully satisfied herself that it was dead, that she called her little one to her side. Standing in the bed of the stream, the two sucked in vast volumes of water, discharging it into their mouths, and having satisfied their thirst, the old one began spouting the water over the back of its young. Ever ready to fire, the hunter watched them, for a quarter of an hour; but now the increasing coldness of the morning warned him that dawn was at hand. The heavier rifle had not yet been used. Taking a deliberate aim, he fired. For a moment the huge mass stood firm and unmoved; the next, turning, the elephant crashed through the bush towards the forest, the young one remaining standing in the river, as though wondering what all the noise was about. Covering him with the second barrel, and dreadfully vexed at his failure, Captain Hughes was about to fire, when the larger elephant, missing its young, stopped, and began calling it. Quickly changing his aim, the report of the rifle rang out, the explosive ball striking the elephant behind the shoulder, and taking an upward direction. Moving heavily forward, the enormous bulk of the animal seemed to waver, and sway from side to side. Once it fell on its knees, recovered itself, and then gained the forest, disappearing with her young under the trees, the crash of breaking wood making itself heard once, and then all was still. The cries of the jackals and hyenas gradually ceased, the air became colder and colder as the dawn appeared, the light of the moon paled, and the noise of the falling water, with the occasional croak of a frog along the river bank, were soon the only sounds disturbing the stillness of the African plain, as, covered with the blood of the wounded baboon, soiled with wet and sand, his limbs stiff with cold and watching, as well as worn out with excitement, the weary hunter took his way up the mountain slopes, to where he knew he should find the camp.



ELEPHANT DRINKING. [ Vol. I. p. 104.

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**The Ruins at Sofala.**

Long before the tired hunter woke, a party headed by the missionary had brought in the carcass of the lion, as well as those of the springbok and panther, and strange to say, the baboon had followed them, refusing to be driven away. It was in vain to pelt it with sticks and stones, for dashing away into the bush it would climb a tree, making the most hideous grimaces, chattering and crying, but the moment all was quiet, back it would come again. Worn out with fatigue and watching, the soldier had slept late, and the sun was high in the heavens when he awoke.

Looking about him, roused by the noise, he was just in time to save the baboon’s life. Luji had been engaged for some time pelting it with sticks and stones, but the agile brute was too much for him. Masheesh stood in the act of poising his assegai, when Hughes stopped him.

“The monkey saved my life, Wyzinski,” said he; “and besides, it would be hard to kill the creature which evidently trusts in us.”

THE BABOON.

[Vol. I. p. 107.

“Trusts in you, it would appear,” replied the other; for at this moment, as if recognising Hughes, it came towards him, showing the wounds on its back, and holding out its bloody hands.

“Fetch me the arnica and some water, Luji; we will soon put those scratches to rights, though they are caused by the lion’s claws.”

“The lion’s claws!” asked the missionary; “why, what had the monkey and lion in common?”

“I’ll tell you when I have had a good wash, and some breakfast,” replied the other.

The baboon was soon caught, and his back freely bathed with the arnica water, when the intense smarting, and the grotesque grimaces and loud chattering consequent on it, caused shouts of laughter.

A good wash in the river, a hearty meal of eland meat, with a dessert of the mobala fruit, strongly resembling in flavour the English strawberry, and then the hunter told his tale. The news as to the wounded elephant soon spread through the little camp, and every one, from the missionary downwards, was eager to follow up the spoor.

They soon found it, leading from the trampled river bank up the slope, and entering the wood, they at once came upon the animal itself, lying quite dead on its side; a young tree having been borne down by the heavy weight, had broken short off and lay under it. Standing near was the young elephant, waiting for its dead mother to wake, and on the approach of the party it struck the carcass several times with its trunk, and failing to rouse it, trotted away in a lumbering fashion, its trunk raised in the air, then turned to look. Like the baboon, it showed no fear, barely refusing to be caught. The men were set to work to cut out the tusks, but being unpractised hands, it took them all day to do it. The best parts of the meat were brought into camp, and then the jackals and hyenas assembled in large numbers, holding high carnival, while the tusks, together with the panther and lion skins, remained as a memento of the night. For two days the party halted on this spot, and each night the one or other watched the pool, with varying success, but not seeing any more elephants, and only hearing the lions in the distance.

Still travelling northwards, they pushed on through a fertile country, which gradually became more and more of forest. Elephants were often seen, but it was useless to encumber their march by carrying the tusks, and Wyzinski’s sole purpose seemed to be the finding of the supposed ruins. Giraffe, buffalo, antelope of all kinds, quaggas, and zebra, were plentiful, while an occasional lion was seen. The hippopotami and rhinoceros were often met with on the river banks.

The natives, who appeared from time to time, yet bore the stamp of the Zulu race, but were not friendly, though guilty of no overt act of enmity. They were men of good stature, well formed, and clean limbed; their woolly hair often surmounted with plumes of ostrich feathers. They were well armed. Vast forests of what appeared to be magnificent cedars, impeded their way. The natives, both men and women, were nearly naked, the latter particularly showing great fear of the white men, so much so as to leave their huts on the approach of the party, carrying with them their children. In some of the huts slabs of stone were seen, evidently having been fashioned by hand, and used in the construction of

some building, but no information could be gathered. Gold was known, and its value appreciated among these tribes. The men, fully armed, would venture into the camp, bringing with them quills filled with gold, sealed at both ends, and offering them for sale, evidently fancying the white men traders, and asking for calico and beads in return. The young elephant actually followed the party for three days, and on the fourth was found dead close to camp, evidently from its inability to supply itself with the food its mother alone could give. The hippopotami were numerous on the rivers, and unlike those more to the south, they showed little fear of man. Shaped like a huge pig, the head massive, and the eyes placed very high in the forehead, these ponderous animals, whose carcass of a brownish-red looks like a great barrel, have thick hanging lips, and such short stumpy legs, that the belly nearly touches the ground. All day long they might be seen feeding on the sweet grasses; and on the approach of strangers would slide off the bank into the water, gradually subsiding until the whole disappeared, and then rising again slowly for air. On the Quissanga river they were very numerous. Heavy and lumbering looking, none would give these animals credit for the intelligence they really possess, and yet they will only feed on the sweetest grasses, and are nearly as cautious and cunning as the elephant, in avoiding the traps and pitfalls of the natives. They display a strong and peculiar affection for their young, and though quiet and peaceable enough, will fight for them.

“See, Wyzinski,” said Hughes one evening, as with their rifles in their hands the two were walking up the banks of the Quissanga river, “look at that unwieldy young hippopotamus feeding alone. I’ll give it a start.”

“Take care what you are doing,” replied the missionary, who was busy watching some birds building near the stream.

“Never fear for me,” exclaimed the soldier, bent on the fun of cutting off the lumbering young animal from the water.

Besting his rifle against a tree, Hughes ran to intercept it, which he easily did, for the ugly little brute did not see him until he was quite close to it, and then it seemed to lose its head, waddling away towards the bush, its pursuer shouting and laughing behind. A loud call from the missionary caused Hughes to turn, and he at once saw that the situation of matters was reversed. Right up the bank came a very large female hippopotamus, in pursuit of him. Unarmed, there was nothing for it but to use his legs, and this he did; but the hippopotamus diverged, and so the pursuer pursued must cross the line of its advance, for the bush was too thick to be entered.

It was a question of speed, as the great animal came on, its enormous mouth wide open and menacing. Slow as its motion appeared, the animal would have cut off the man, but just as they neared one another, a ball from Wyzinski’s rifle struck it in the open mouth. The hippopotamus stopped as the breathless soldier dashed by, and seized his rifle, when a ball hit it right in the eye, and it fell dead.

This animal measured eleven feet six inches in length, add in girth ten feet five inches. No one of the party ever after this attempted any trifling with the hippopotami.

The baboon had grown very tame, and had taken a great fancy to Luji. The two lived together, and seemed inseparable, and whenever it became tired on the march, it would take its place on his shoulders. It was always in mischief. Seated the same night, after the adventure with the hippopotamus, round the camp fire, near the banks of the Quissanga river, Wyzinski was laughing at the morning’s adventure.

“I hadn’t a notion you could run so fast, Hughes,” he continued.

“Hadn’t you,” replied the soldier, not half liking the missionary’s quiet way of chaffing.

“No, indeed I hadn’t,” answered the other. “I see now why they gave you the Light Company in the gallant 150th.”

Luji’s wide mouth was opened to the fullest possible extent.

“Master no like Quissango hippopotamus? Luji no like Zoutpansburgh lion!”

“I’ll tell you what, Wyzinski,” answered Hughes, “I may live to see you run just as fast yet.”

A cry from Masheesh, at this moment, drew attention for the time from the subject. The baboon darted out of the small tent holding something he had stolen. Luji, with a loud shout, dashed after him. Away went the two round and round, the monkey chattering and screaming, but still firmly grasping the object, which proved to be the captain’s powder-flask.

“You should try your hand, Hughes,” drily remarked the missionary. “Your pace beat that this morning.”

Hardly were the words spoken when, with a scream of delight, the baboon vaulted right over the stooping missionary, using his shoulders for the spring, and alighting close to the fire, dropped the flask just into the centre of the blaze, and then bounding off a few paces, stood jabbering and grimacing.

The tent was only a few yards away.

“Run, Wyzinski,” shouted the soldier, “all our powder is in the tent.” The whole thing was done in a second, and the soldier and missionary scudding down the slope at a tremendous pace the next. Losing his footing, away went Wyzinski, rolling among the stones and bushes, just as the explosion took place.

Luckily, there was little powder in the flask, but the burning embers were blown right and left, and the tent struck by them. The baboon was dreadfully singed, and awfully frightened, and not a beauty before, became literally hideous; but no further harm was done.

“You had better exchange your robes against a subaltern’s epaulettes in the Light Company of the 150th Regiment,” laughed Hughes.

“I’ll think of it,” replied the missionary; “but, Hughes, will you give me a certificate?”

“Most certainly. I can’t hold a candle to you at running away, Wyzinski,” for the soldier thought he had the best of it now.

“Oh, I didn’t mean that sort of a certificate. Will you certify there are no monkeys in your Light Company?” remarked the missionary.

“Good-night, Wyzinski,” was the only answer vouchsafed; and they both turned in laughing.

Passing Quissanga and Goanha, the little caravan kept steadily on to the northward, making short marches daily, until a period of three weeks had elapsed since they had outspanned from the banks of the Limpopo. Their camp was pitched at the foot of the spur of the Nyamonga mountain range called Gorongoza. It was a pleasant spot, and here they determined to rest a while. Several streams of bright, clear, cold water burst from the mountains, and, after wandering about for some distance, threw themselves into a river, which ran away towards the sea. Forests of the cedar-trees clothed the mountain-sides, and to these Wyzinski pointed triumphantly, asserting that they must now be close to the ruins, “There they are,” would he say; “and though there may exist a marked difference between them and the far-famed cedar of Lebanon, though they may have degenerated since the days when Pharaoh Necho’s seamen lived under their shade, yet in those cedar groves lie the fallen ruins of the old cities of Zulu land, and there is enough timber to supply the world.”

“I wonder what we should do without the custard-apples?” said Hughes, the evening of the day when they arrived at Gorongoza.

“But why call it custard-apple, Hughes?”

“Because it is exactly like the custard-apple of the Madras Presidency, black, rough, and repulsive-looking outside, and a white, delicious custard inside, cool as if iced. It grows plentifully, like blackberries, up-country there.”

“Well, I almost prefer the mobala fruit. Under the tropical sun, which, by the way, has tanned you to a mahogany colour, Hughes, it reminds one of the strawberries of England. I shall open a campaign against the wild duck. There seems lots of them.”

“Here comes the Matabele chief; what has he got? Eggs, ducks’ eggs, as I am a sinner. Won’t that be a treat after weeks of venison diet?”

The chief gravely stalked up to the two, and placing his eggs on the ground, squatted down, and looking the missionary full in the face, pointed down the course of the river, merely uttering the word “Sofala,” then changing the direction of his finger, pointed to the north-west, letting fall the dreaded word, “Tetsé.”

The two Europeans looked at each other. A volume could not have better expressed his meaning. Down the stream lay the ruins which had been formerly mentioned. Right in their onward path was the dreaded tetse-fly, sure death to cattle.

“Let us hold a council of war, Wyzinski,” said Hughes, after the two had looked at each other in dead silence. “Here, Luji, come here. We are going to have a palaver.”

“Masheesh, must we send back the waggon?”

The Matabele chief spoke volubly, frequently using the word “Tati,” and then pointing to the river which was running near them, calling it sometimes the Sabe, sometimes the Ouro.

“Do you hear?” asked Wyzinski, eagerly. “The Thati and the Ramaquotan rivers run into the Limpopo, and this river he calls the Ouro, or golden river.”

“Who owns the land, Luji?” asked Hughes.

“Mozelkatse once owned it, master. Now it is the country of Machin, the Batonga, and the Banyai.”

“Can Masheesh procure a canoe? and can we go down the river?” were the next questions.

Both were answered satisfactorily. The Batonga were a friendly people, like the Bechuanas, and feared the Matabele Kaffirs, whose chief, Mozelkatse, had more than once punished them; and after a long talk, it was determined to send back the waggons and horses to the nearest mission, that at Santa Lucia Bay, and go down the river to the sea, before breaking up the camp at Gorongoza.

“It is hard to send back our waggon,” exclaimed Hughes, during a pause in the work of packing.

“We should but have to leave it and all it contains on the way, if we met with the tetse-fly. Its sting is sure death to cattle.”

“And does it harm man?” inquired Hughes.

“Singular to say it does not and I do not believe in its existence so near this coast-line; still it’s no use running the risk.”

“We then resolve to strike the Zambesi, somewhere near Tête or Senna?”

“Yes, passing through the kingdom of this same chief, Machin, who seems to be almost a rival to Mozelkatse.”

It was with feelings of great regret the two saw the waggon with its great tilt, lumbering away an hour or two before sunset, under the charge of the missionary’s men, and bound for the station of Saint Lucia Bay,—it had been their home so long, that the cattle and horses seemed to them as friends. It was hard to part with them. The ground was strewed with packages, which were to be made up in the most commodious form for carrying, and the party was reduced to its original number of seven, with the addition of the Matabele and the two Europeans. A smaller tent had been fashioned by Noti and Luji, out of some spare canvas, easily carried, and it was now pitched by the river side, under the thick shade of a group of trees. Just as the last rays of the sun were gilding the river with gold, making it, indeed, look like the Gold River, Masheesh dropped down it in a canoe, and sunrise saw them on their way to Sofala. The crew of the boat consisted

of the missionary, Captain Hughes, Masheesh, and the powerful Kaffir, Noti; Luji being left in charge of the camp at Gorongoza. Floating down the river in a comfortable canoe, between banks whose verdure was most luxuriant, was a pleasant change after the days of toilsome march. The palmyra, the wild date, mohanno, mowanna, and many other tropical trees grew in rich luxuriance, while the thick tangled undergrowth, mixed up with a host of creeping cane-like plants, rendered it impossible to penetrate the forest-land. Long reeds of various kinds hung over the banks, and beautiful water-lilies of gigantic size floated on the water. Wherever a break occurred among the trees, grew grass, or fields of wild maize or wild cotton were to be seen, and now and then the water antelope would dash into the stream and swim across. The party trusted to their rifles for food, and one of these antelopes coming well within range, Wyzinski fired, wounding the animal severely just as he reached the shore. The canoe dashed on to overtake it, which would easily have been done, for the deer was unable to climb the steep bank, and twice failed in the attempt, falling back into the water, when a huge alligator rose, showing his long shovel-shaped snout above the river. A ball struck the alligator, but without penetrating its mail. The deer struggled wildly for a moment, several other dark log-like forms showed on the bank, and the antelope disappeared, the water bubbling crimson for a moment; the next the canoe moved gently over the reddened river, and all was still.

A second deer swam the stream, and this time it was different.

“Let him go, Wyzinski,” whispered Hughes; “the alligators won’t touch him while he is swimming.”

“Take the shot yourself; see, he nears the bank.”

The report of the rifle rang out just as the deer scrambled up it, startling whole flocks of wild duck out of the reeds and rushes. The antelope, with a broken leg, fell, but quickly struggling up again, would have escaped into the bush, when a second ball from Wyzinski’s rifle stopped it. The deer proved to be a fine buck, of an ashy grey, with long horns like a goat, of a yellowish brown colour. The horns at first when starting from the head trended directly backwards, and then curved forwards, the tips being very pointed. The legs were remarkably short for a deer, and it could not be very swift on land, for, added to the shortness of limb, the girth round the carcass was very large. The dead buck measured nearly eleven feet in length, and ten in circumference.

“What a beautiful spot!” remarked Hughes, towards three o’clock in the afternoon. “The green bank slopes down to the water’s edge, and the turf, dotted with its clumps of palmyra, acacia, and date-trees, looks for all the world like a gentleman’s park. Behind rises the forest, where we can suppose the baronial hall to lie, and in the distance the lofty range of the Nyamonga mountains. We only want the lodge gates to complete the picture.”

“You are a bad auctioneer, Hughes,” laughed his comrade; “you have omitted the greatest charm. I mean the river, with its beautiful reeds waving in the breeze, its magnificent water-lilies, and the flocks of wild duck floating in and out.”

“Some of them are really very beautiful, and I never saw any like them. Look at that lot sailing away before us, their necks, backs, and throats a beautiful orange, while the head is glossy black. They must be splendid divers, and what a rate they go at.”

“I never saw ducks before,” replied the more scientific missionary, “possessing the power of partially submerging themselves; only the head and top of the back is above water as they paddle along. Steer the canoe in shore, there are quantities of wild duck there.”

“But not the same sort; see, the head is brown, beautifully pencilled with black,” said Hughes, as they all ceased rowing, and the boat, left to the current, glided among the broad leaves of the water-lilies, “the body and wings the same, while a deep yellow ring runs round the neck. There they go,” he continued, “spattering along the water, just like water-hens, and then diving.”

Floating slowly on, the canoe entered a little bay, where a quantity of drift wood had accumulated. “Only look, Hughes; why there are hundreds of them feeding apparently on insects found on the floating wood,” cried Wyzinski.

“Again another species, for these are of a brownish-red, intermixed with dirty white. What say you to landing in our park, taking possession, and having our dinner there?”

“Agreed; but first of all I must have that bird; I never saw one like it,” replied the missionary. Strange birds of brilliant plumage were flying about; among others, a small one, which hovered over the water like a hawk, espying its finny prey doubtless from its dizzy height; and then, apparently shutting its wings, would drop or dart into the river, like a stone, making the water splash around. A shot gun had been placed in the boat, and the missionary wounded one of these birds. For fully ten minutes the canoe chased it, the bird diving and remaining so long under water that it was almost impossible to tell where it would rise, and eventually it got away.

The day was hot, although a cool breeze was blowing on the river, bending down the long reeds on the banks, as heated with their long chase, and laughing at their failure, the boat was forced through the drift wood into the little bay, and eventually made fast by a rope to the trunk of a tree.

“Here, Noti, help me to haul out the carcass of the water-buck, and we’ll make a fire under yonder clump,” shouted Hughes as he leaped ashore.

The fire was soon blazing merrily, and great collops of venison roasting before it. The monkeys came grinning and chattering among the branches, looking at the intruders, and occasionally pelting pieces of bark at them; strange birds of bright plumage circled round them, and whole flocks of ducks went winding about among the leaves of the water-lilies before their eyes.

Seated under the shade of a splendid tree, the bright knives were soon at work, and a hearty meal made, washed down by clear cool water from the springs of Gorongoza.

“What do you say to making an hour or two of halt here, Wyzinski?” said Hughes, with his mouth full of venison meat. “It’s a sweet spot, and we could pull gently down the river in the cool of the night.”

“I should like very much to secure some specimens of the strange birds I see here,” replied the missionary, “and the moon rises early.”

“Well, then, take Noti with you, and Masheesh and I will be boat-keepers. I shall have a sleep.”

Taking a short gun, and calling to Noti to fetch his rifle and follow him, Wyzinski strolled away leisurely into the bush, having first taken the bearings of the place by means of a small pocket compass he always carried.

Covering up the remains of the buck with green branches to keep it fresh, Hughes took a good pull at the gourd of water, and then lay down, Masheesh strolling towards the boat. The mosquitos were too troublesome, however, so he rose, joined the Matabele in pushing off the canoe, anchored her by means of a rope and stone, lay down, and was soon fast asleep at the bottom of the boat. Half awake at first, the faint report of Wyzinski’s gun came now and then upon his ear, but at last sleep prevailed. The sun was low, and his beams slanting over the forest-land, when, aroused by Masheesh shaking the branches with which he had covered him, Captain Hughes awoke. It is a peculiarity common to those who lead a life of danger and adventure, that the moment of awakening at once restores all their faculties. They begin, as it were, where they left off. Such was the case in the present instance, for one look at the Matabele’s face at once told Hughes that something was wrong. Carefully raising himself in the light canoe, a glance showed the danger. There, on the beautiful green patch where the party had eaten their meal, three splendid lions were walking to and fro, rolling on the grass, growling and playing, and a lioness with one cub had shown herself and retired previously. It was a splendid sight to watch these magnificent animals at their gambols; but what of Wyzinski, what of Noti, the one armed with a shot gun, the other with a rifle he only half understood, and what was worse, both utterly unconscious of the presence of the owners of the land. Presently one of the old lions stopped for a moment, snuffing like a dog with his nose in the air, and then walking deliberately to the travellers’ impromptu, larder, drew forth the remains of the water-buck. A second at once seized it, the third came up, and a tremendous *mêlée* ensued, during which the body of the deer was riven into pieces, and lions and carrion seemed rolling about in one heap. Motioning to the Matabele, and with his help gently lifting the anchor clear of the ground, the boat was suffered to drop down the stream, its occupants using their hands as paddles on the off side. By this means it arrived within fifteen paces of the bank, where the lions were now feeding quietly, when the stone was again dropped, and the canoe swung head to stream. They, thinking it to be an alligator, had not taken the slightest notice of the boat, and went on feeding, tearing and riving the flesh, but stopping now and then to growl savagely at each other. Just then, Hughes caught a faint report, and the noise of the shot gun being even at that distance easily distinguished from the sharper crack of the rifle, it told him that the missionary was as yet safe and far away, the report coming to his ears only as a distant echo.

THE LION.

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Thinking it better to leave the animals to feed, he and Masheesh watched them. Half an hour passed, the flesh being nearly gone, and a few of the larger bones only remaining. The ducks were sailing about the canoe, the birds gliding here and there; but sunset was approaching, and it became absolutely necessary to get rid of them. Leaning his rifle across the slight gunwale, Hughes took a steady aim. Just in front of him sat a great lion, with the last remnants of the buck’s forequarters flung over his paws, crunching at the bones. The report rang out, startling the whole crew, but whether from nervousness, or from some motion of the boat, he knew not, the shot missed; the startled animals, after gazing for a moment, trotted deliberately off, Hughes firing another barrel after them. One of them turned at the second shot, growling fiercely, then the whole disappeared in the cover, while the ring of the shot gun was heard about a mile away, replying to that from the river. The report came from a direction exactly opposite to that in which the lions had disappeared. A quarter of an hour later the long plaintive cry of the Australian bushranger was heard and replied to, and

then Wyzinski made his appearance, breaking his way through the bush, his dress torn, and about thirty different kinds of birds dangling round his waist. To his great surprise, Hughes rushed forward and shook him by the hand.

“Why, what’s the matter?” he asked.

“Matter enough; have you seen any lions?”

“I have not seen anything except these birds, some snakes, and a great many different kinds of monkeys, some of them very large.”

“Where’s Noti?” was the next question, “I’m sure I don’t know,” replied the missionary. “He left me to follow a caracal.”

“Did you hear any lions about?”

“No, nor was I likely; that beast does not ramble during the day. I saw great quantities of monkeys, I repeat.”

Hughes told his tale, and the full danger of Noti’s situation was realised. Night, too, was now falling. The three set to work to collect brushwood, and the shot gun soon procured them some ducks for supper. A roaring fire was lighted, and enough wood got together to keep it up. All night long the lions were heard roaring, the cry of the jackals and hyenas showed that they too were very numerous, and several large snakes, one of them more than eight feet long, came within the light of the fire. The bush swarmed with monkeys, and when the moon rose, silvering the river with her light two lions were seen to cross the open. Still there were no tidings of the missing Noti. The three men watched by turns all night in the canoe, one of them landing from time to time to keep up the fire. Wyzinski’s Australian bush cry rang out at times on the still air of the African night. It was since the affair of the lioness of Zoutpansburgh perfectly well-known to all in camp, but no responsive shout came back, though the night was so still that the watchers often thought they could distinguish the roar of the far distant surf. Morning dawned on the anxious men, the birds woke up and began skimming about, the ducks sailed out from among the reeds and water-lilies, and still no signs of Noti.

“I fear we have lost one of our number,” observed the missionary, as he let fly into a flock of duck, knocking over four. “Let us ask Masheesh to pluck and cook those, and you and I go in search of poor Noti.”

“Agreed,” replied the soldier, who was standing in the water of a small pool, having a good wash. A loud cry from Masheesh, who had just secured the fourth duck, was heard, when a figure was seen staggering out of the wood, into the open. It was Noti, who came on, his gun raised above his head, reeling like a drunken man, and before he had traversed half the space, falling heavily on his face to the ground.

Rising, the black stumbled forward a few paces and again fell heavily. Lifting him gently, the three carried the poor fellow to the canoe, placed him in it, washed the clotted gore from his face, breast, and left side, covering him with branches.

Attracted by the blood, the flow of which it was impossible to stop, the flies came round in myriads, and it was deemed best to paddle down the river, Masheesh tending the dying man, for such he evidently was.

An hour afterwards, Noti was no more; but just before he breathed his last, consciousness returned, and he was able to tell his tale.

He had lost his way following the caracal, had wandered about he knew not where. Had heard the shots fired at the lions, and one of the animals passing not far from him, he had climbed into a tree, knowing he would not be deserted. All night long they had roamed about him, one apparently wounded lying down under the tree where he lay concealed. Towards morning it got up and walked into the bush.

Guided by the Australian bush cry, which he had heard perfectly, Noti had come down from his tree. Trembling with fear, the black moved cautiously on, and suddenly found himself face to face with the wounded lion, who instantly sprang upon him. The rifle exploded, but how, the poor frightened wretch never knew, for beast and man were rolling on the ground together, and doubtless startled by the report, similar to that which preceded his wound, the lion bounded away, leaving the mangled insensible Noti on the ground. Its claws had dreadfully disfigured his face, and the powerful jaws had crushed in the ribs of the right side. The whole had passed in a few seconds, and now at the bottom of the boat lay the corpse of poor Noti.

About one o’clock that day the bar was reached, and the three gazed upon the long blue line of ocean, with its restless waves, tipped with foam. “I had no idea the river was so marshy at its mouth, nor that we should find a bar,” said Hughes.

“There is almost invariably one at the mouth of African rivers; and look at the herons fishing. There are quantities of these birds, and they seem smaller than any I have seen before. What a beautiful dark purple; and the throat, too, streaked with purple lines, only they have no tail,” said Wyzinski. “And the birds’ nests, only see what a number of them; they actually overhang the water, seeming to all but touch the river.”

“That is almost always the case where snakes abound,” replied the missionary. “The birds know that water is their best protector from these reptiles; and these are the nest builders, those bright yellow birds scarce seven inches long. How active they are.”

In truth the river abounded with life. There were hawks and eagles soaring near, birds of beautiful colours darting to and fro. The kingfisher, with its heavy scarlet bill, and its wings of bright blue, came dashing past, while another and even more beautiful bird kept crossing before the canoe as if accompanying it, its head a bright green colour, with wings of purple and green mixed, and long dark purple tail.

“Well, I am not sorry to see the blue waves once more, and to hear the scream of the gulls and Mother Carey’s chickens,” exclaimed Hughes, as they stepped on shore, and hauled the canoe up bodily on the bank.

“Look yonder, under the palm and date-trees, are some Kaffir huts. Let us see what they are,” said Wyzinski.

Telling Masheesh to stop by the boat, which yet contained the body of the dead Noti, the two took their way to the

kraal. There were about twenty huts, and the tribe seemed very poor. The first group they came to was composed of women.

“There, Hughes,” said the missionary, “that smacks of Egyptian customs, anyway.”

“What does?” inquired the other. “I see nothing but some women grinding maize.”

“Just so, but look at the mode of doing it. The old Egyptian hieroglyphics exactly reproduce it.”

This was indeed the case, but the chief of the tribe now advanced to meet them. He was a tall long-limbed man of a deep brown tint, with grey hair and regular features—not in any one respect resembling the Kaffirs, except as to dress, or rather the want of it.

“Well, that is strange,” remarked Hughes. “If I was in India, I should say I saw an Arab. Speak to him, Wyzinski.”

The missionary, using the Zulu dialect, asked his name.

“Achmet Ben Arif,” replied the man. “It is the first time for many years the trader has reached the ruins of Sofala.”

“Ruins!” exclaimed Wyzinski, at once mounting his favourite hobby, “where are they?”

The Arab, for such in effect he was, together with all his tribe, raised his hand, pointing to a spot a few hundred yards distant, where mounds and fragments of fallen masonry were visible.

The missionary was moving away before the chief had done speaking, eager to reach the ruins.

“But how,” asked Hughes, speaking his own tongue, which he had acquired in India, “how comes an Arab tribe settled here?”

“We know not,” replied the chief. “For ages have our fathers lived here, near the ruins of the white man’s fort.”

“And yet you have preserved the Arab language, and the Arab blood.”

“Pure and unchanged, our customs, language and tradition remain as they were; the dress of our people alone is altered. And instead of the bournous of our fathers, we wear skins like the Kaffir. It is our destiny. We have gold if the white chiefs will trade.”

“We are not traders, chief. But what are the ruins yonder? Who built them?”

“The fathers of your own people; the white traders of *Tété* and the Zambesi.”

These, then, were the ruins of the Portuguese fort of Sofala, consequently the river the party had descended, which Masheesh called the Golden River, was once the means of extensive trade with the interior. Leaving the chief, Hughes joined the missionary, communicating to him the result of his conversation. The ruins of a large stone fort were crumbling away before them, the masses of fallen masonry gradually disappearing before the slow but steady action of time, besides being partially buried in the sand drifted up before the winter gales. The Arab chief followed them, after having spoken to the men near him, several of whom started off in different directions, two sauntering lazily down to the boat. The old man seemed puzzled as to what interest could attach to the ruins.

“The stones,” said he, raising his hand as he spoke, and pointing over the ocean, whose waves were rolling in thunder on the bar,—“the stones came from over the big water to build the white man’s fort.”

“That’s nonsense,” exclaimed the missionary, speaking in English, and wandering from mound to mound. “They were taken from some ruins in the interior, and it is those we seek. The mined cities of Zulu land.”

“How firmly you have got that into your head, Wyzinski,” replied his companion.

“Into my head. Do you not see, do you not remember what Masheesh told us this morning?” returned the missionary in an excited tone. “Away yonder to the north and west, running through a territory disputed between Mozelkatse and Machin, are the rivers Thati and Ramaquotan. There lie the gold fields of Solomon somewhere in that neighbourhood; the ruined cities of the mighty old Egyptians, the ancient gold diggers, crumble into dust.”

“You are crazy on the subject, Wyzinski. What has an old Portuguese fort to do with all this?” replied Hughes, seriously.

“You are blind, Hughes, or will not see,” returned the other, in a sharp tone. “Did not Masheesh call yonder river the Golden River—and why?”

“Because gold may have been found in its banks, or on its bar. The thing is simple enough, Wyzinski.”

“It is you that are simple,” said the excited man. “The river brought down the boats with their cargo of gold, dug near the sources of the Limpopo. The Sofala of the Portuguese is the Ophir of Solomon. Here the ships of Tarshish came, and from that trade in gold the river took, and still keeps its name—the Golden River.”

There was nothing for it but to accept the dogma. The Arab chief looked on in grave silence, but no further information could be extracted from him, and except the direct visual evidence that a strong stone fort had existed here, which was known to have been Portuguese, nothing could be discovered. The ruins were nearly buried in sand, but there they still remain on the shores of South Africa, the fort of Sofala being well-known to all the traders on the coast, and the high headland near them being a much-used landmark for mariners. The moon rose, and Masheesh having borrowed a hoe, the whole party set to work to bury their dead. They took it in turns, the Matabele chief at first objecting, but ultimately taking his spell at it. Wyzinski was in the hole, working vigorously and silently, the regular roll of the ocean on the bar being the only sound heard. Masheesh was squatted by the open grave, his knees drawn up and his elbows resting on them, the palms of his hands supporting his head. Hughes stood gazing over the broad expanse of the Indian

Ocean, with his forage-cap in his hand, the cool sea breeze playing amidst the heavy masses of dark hair which waved uncared for over his sun-burnt forehead. Suddenly the vigorous strokes of the hoe ceased, its sharp broad edge had struck something, and the missionary stooping lifted that something, tossed it on the bank, and jumped out of the grave. A piece of massive masonry overshadowed the spot casting a long dark shadow over the Kaffir's resting-place among the ruins of Sofala, as snatching up what looked like a mere stone, Wyzinski stepped into the moonlight and began rubbing away the sand and dust from what proved to be a bar of pure gold, evidently smelted and worked into its present shape. It was a curious sight, the moon shining brightly on the ruined masses of masonry, streaming over the rolling ocean waves, lighting up the date and palmyra trees, with their long fan-like leaves, and showing the group eagerly bending over the gold, while stiff and stark beside them lay the dead body of the Kaffir, Noti. Then came a warning cry from the Matabele warrior, and the next moment a line of dusky savages, armed with their assegais and war-clubs, swept round them.

It was a peculiarity of the missionary's never to lose the quiet calmness of his manner, under any circumstances, however trying. The greater the danger the more quiet, cool, and methodical he seemed to become. Unarmed, for their rifles were in the canoe, and consequently utterly defenceless, the whole party stood among the ruins of Sofala, surrounded by the warriors of the Arab tribe, while Wyzinski, as if nothing more than ordinary had happened, seated himself on a ruined slab, more accurately to examine the bar of gold.

The old chief Achmet advanced, and using the Arab tongue, addressed the soldier, who felt none of the stern coolness of the missionary.

"I thought the white men were not merchants, and refused gold," the old man remarked. "They are then thieves who rob, and not fair traders who barter."

"We found the gold by chance, chief."

The Arab laughed. "The white men came down the river by chance, to the very spot where we find from time to time the gold buried; by chance they dig for it and find it. Let them not laugh at an old man, whose grey hairs will not bear it. Mashallah, let them give back the gold, or my children take it."

"You are welcome, chief," replied the soldier, taking the bar from Wyzinski, who seemed sunk in reverie, and giving it to Achmet. "And now withdraw your warriors, and let us finish what we are about."

"Are the white men murderers as well as gold seekers?" asked Achmet Ben Arif, pointing to the dead body which lay dark and motionless in the moonlight.

"Look for yourself, chief. The wounds will tell their own tale," answered the other.

The old man bent over the corpse, putting his hand on the torn face, and feeling the broken ribs. His fingers followed the wounds for several minutes, then rising, "It is a lion which has done this," he said.

"It is, chief," and Hughes told how the death had occurred.

Achmet turned to his warriors, spoke a few words with them, when they retired, vanishing among the trees as silently as they had appeared, the old chief alone remaining.

"And you say," asked Wyzinski, "that you often find worked and smelted gold here?"

"Yes," replied the chief, "often."

"It is Portuguese, and wherever they have drawn it from is the country we seek, the ancient Ophir of Solomon. There can be no doubt of that."

"Let the white men bury their dead," answered Achmet; "and let them seek Machin, chief of Manica, and the Makoapa."

And so poor Noti was lowered into his grave, and the missionary breathed the white man's prayer over the Kaffir resting-place, among the crumbling ruins of Sofala. Heavy stones were rolled over the spot to baulk the jackals of their prey, and the old chief stood calmly by, finally escorting the party to their canoe. All that night and the following they toiled up the stream, resting during the day, bearing the roar of the lion occasionally, and often startled by the plop of the alligators, as they slid off the bank into the water. The afternoon of the third day only, the camp at Gorongoza was reached, their numbers reduced by one.

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**Gorongoza.**

"I think," said Hughes, as the two sat outside the small tent, pitched by the side of the stream, the morning after their return from Sofala,—"I think we had better remain here for a time."

"I agree with you; and as there is no one to say us No, let it be decided in the affirmative. There are large quantities of wild ducks, and our fellows are so expert in finding their eggs, that the great change to men who have lived so long on nothing but venison must be beneficial."

"We have plenty of fruit, too, and the ground-nuts are not to be despised. These cool streams, which seem to take their rise in yonder mountains, are another inducement. Our lines are at present cast in pleasant places, and what lies beyond seems uncertain. Let us profit by the present."

"I want to go over all our baggage, and put our fellows in light marching order. To look at our little camp now, without waggon or horses, without cattle, and our numbers so reduced, we seem to resemble one of the parties so well painted by Cooper in his Indian tales. Who are those fellows?"

A party of natives were seen approaching, among whom was the Matabele chief. They were almost naked, but came on with a most assured air, squatting down in a half circle before the tent, and employing all their powers in staring

stolidly at the strangers.

“Here, Luji,” shouted Hughes, who was carefully loading his rifle, “just see what these fellows want, will you?”

“Want calico, master,” said Luji, after a great amount of talk, “give gold.”

The Macomb, for such they were, produced from their waist-belts quills closed at each end, which contained gold. Some of the grains were of large size, and one of the natives showed a small lump of the yellow metal. It was quite evident that they knew where to procure it.

“Does not all this go to prove my theory, Hughes; and are we not approaching a gold country?”

“Tell them we are not traders, Luji. That we have not any calico; but ask if there is any large game about.”

The scantily-dressed natives squatted on, looking fixedly at the Europeans, and evidently not believing the assertion. At length one of their number, touching a large piece of canvas, which had been thrown on one side after fashioning the small tent, spoke volubly, often pointing to the mountain. “The Macomb show master caracal for this,” said Luji, laughing.

“What’s a caracal, Wyzinski?” asked Hughes. “Oh, these people call the leopard by that name; but the real caracal is the lynx or wild cat,” answered the missionary.

“Ask him where his caracal is, Luji?” said Hughes. The native pointed to a ledge of rock, high up the mountain-side.

“Well, tell him he shall have it, Luji, if he shows me the leopard. I’ll leave you to the baggage department, Wyzinski, and see whether I can get the caracal’s skin. Take the canvas, Luji, and come along. Tell him you will give it him if I get a shot at the leopard.”

Shouldering his rifle, Hughes moved on, beckoning to the native and Luji to follow him. The former rose and obeyed, while his comrades remained squatted before the tent, steadfastly gazing at Wyzinski, their eyes following his every movement, and so they remained stolidly staring for hours, before they took their departure.

Wending his way among the men, who were busily employed plucking wild ducks, and preparing them for the mid-day dinner, pounding up the manioc flour to make cakes, or looking to the fires, Hughes took his way towards the mountain, the native guide and Luji following. Hardly had they left the outskirts of the camp, when the monkey came bounding after them.

“Let him alone, Luji; you can’t drive him away,” said Hughes, as with a leap the mischievous brute ensconced himself on the man’s shoulders, the Macombé looking at the scene in great astonishment.

Toiling up the face of the hill-side, they reached at last the ledge of rock. It would have been very hazardous to face the leopard with so small a footing; besides, the animal, of course, had a refuge there. Making a wide circuit, the party, accompanied by the monkey, gained a height immediately above the ledge. Posting Luji at a spot where he judged he might prove useful in case the leopard bolted and the Hottentot did not, Captain Hughes, lying flat on his face, leaned over the edge of the precipitous rock, and looked down on to the ledge. It was a very awkward position, and when far enough over to enable the hunter to fire, he found himself nearly overbalanced.

The ledge was empty, but after watching for an hour, and when nearly wearied out, the leopard at last came out of his cave, and began walking up and down the narrow space.

Just as the animal, in one of his turns, arrived under him, the hunter fired. The ball struck obliquely, where the spine joins with the head, and, slanting off, lodged in the brain, death being instantaneous, but the hunter was nearly overbalanced. Just as he struggled to his knees, the baboon, with a tremendous spring, lighted right on his shoulders. The sudden shock destroyed the balance, and clutching at the bushes, which gave way slowly, one by one, Hughes went over the precipice.

They luckily saved him, but, bruised and shaken, he fell on the ledge, close to the dead leopard, the lock of the rifle being broken in the fall. Looking up, he saw the monkey, peering over, and grimacing, for so nimble was it, that it had not shared the fall. Shaking his fist, in return for which he received a shower of stones and dirt, Hughes moved cautiously along the ledge. The leopard was quite dead. A cave lay a little further on, and as he entered it, he was almost driven back by the close smell of decaying flesh. It was heaped with bones, and remains of deer, and must have been used for many years.

The leopard was a male, and the female might be near. Advancing cautiously, his rifle, only one barrel of which was available, in his hand, Hughes was astonished by the great extent of the cavern. To the right, it soon became black as night, and the sound of falling water was to be heard. This might explain the extreme coldness and clearness of the streams of Gorongoza, for doubtless they took their rise in the heart of these mountains, flowing perhaps for miles in darkness among the caverns. The roof was covered with beautiful white stalactites, but the eye could not penetrate the thick darkness in this direction. To the left a kind of corridor led towards an opening giving on the mountain-side, and towards this Hughes turned, glad to get away from the fetid exhalations of the cavern. Two hedgehogs were travelling in the same direction, the quills of which were very curious, being differently coloured, some white, others black, and some brown, the body, where it could be seen, entirely black. The animals rolled themselves up securely, looking just like parti-coloured balls. Emerging into daylight, and stepping from ledge to ledge, Hughes gained the mountain-side, hearing from time to time Luji’s shouts, as the man searched for him, then crossing a deep cut, he gained another spur of the Nyamonga range, higher far than the hill of Gorongoza.

Shading his eyes with his hand, Captain Hughes paused breathless on the mountain-height. The whole country lay spread like a map before him. Far away to the east lay the face of a friend, for the blue line of the ocean was distinctly visible. The mountain range on which he stood ran nearly north and south, while the beautifully wooded plain, across which the party had travelled, was mapped out before his gaze, with Quissanga, Madanda, and the country of the Batonga plainly visible, the rivers looking like silvery threads, and the vast forests like inky spots, on the sunlit plain. To the north, stretched at the foot of the mountains, lay the plains they were yet to traverse, the unknown land of promise. It looked one dense forest, broken at rare intervals with open, and intersected by two rivers, one appearing a considerable sheet of water, while in the far distance, a range of lofty mountains loomed, dim, blue, and ghostlike in their outline.

A deep interest attached itself to the scene, for between him and those mountains the Zambesi must run, and somewhere among the forests must lie the ruined cities of Zulu land, if indeed they existed at all, save in the excited imagination of the missionary. An hour had gone by and still Hughes stood gazing over the scene, when a shout came ringing up the hill-side, and soon a dark speck was seen jumping from ledge to ledge. Recognising his comrade, Hughes answered the cry.

“I was anxious about you,” said Wyzinski, as he stood breathless and panting on the summit. “The whole camp is out in search of you; Luji brought in a report that you had pitched over the cliff.”

“And so I did, thanks to his demon of a monkey.”

“Yes; we found the dead leopard, and when searching, I thought I saw something like a human outline on the mountain.”

“Now, Wyzinski,” asked his comrade, as he leaned on his rifle, “where runs the Zambesi? for I suppose it is between us and yonder mountains.”

“Follow the coast-line,” returned the other. “There lies Sofala, and some forty or fifty miles more to the north the Zambesi must empty itself into the sea at Quillimane.”

“Livingstone came as far south as that, and as far north from the Cape as the Limpopo.”

“He did: but instead of travelling further north as we have done, he turned to the westward, visiting the Bechuanas and Mozelkatse’s country; but see, what on earth can that be?”

The missionary pointed to a kind of cairn on the mountain-side. Beside it lay six slabs of stone, and that they were the work of the white man was evident. Cracked, blackened, and defaced, there was no mistake, the stones were worked into flat slabs, but whose were the hands that fashioned them?

“There seems to be an inscription,” said Wyzinski, as he stooped over them. “I feel deep marks in the stone, but the earth has given way beneath them, and creeping plants have grown over them. All these three are cracked and broken.”

“Here are three out of the six in a better state,” said Hughes. “We can cut away the undergrowth.”

“If we can get at one only that will be sufficient,” said Wyzinski, eagerly, as the two cut away at the masses of weed with their knives. “Should there be any inscription, we may gain some knowledge to guide our future course.”

It took a long time and much labour to clear away the undergrowth, and then but to meet with disappointment.

“The different wandering tribes who have camped here have used the slabs as fire-places,” observed Wyzinski, sighing. “We must have water, and how can we get it here.”

“Oh, easily,” replied Hughes, whose experience of Indian life came to his aid. “With a buffalo hide we can make a bag which will hold water, and can be carried on a man’s back. We call them bheasties in Madras.”

“The black grime and the dirt of ages seems encrusted on the slabs of Gorongoza,” remarked the missionary. “I can feel that there is an inscription, but I can’t make it out. The dirt has become like stone, and will want long softening, before we can scoop it out.”

“It seems to me, as far as fingers can tell, that the cuttings are of European form. This would go against your theory, Wyzinski.”

“We will see that to-morrow,” was the reply, as rising and shutting their knives the two took their way down to the plain, speculating moodily on the probable history of the slabs of Gorongoza.

The night set in wild and stormy, the thunder echoing among the mountains, and the rain falling in torrents, but when morning dawned, waking up the wild ducks among the long reeds, and bringing them out on the clear waters of the Golden River, rousing up the parrots and the monkeys in the neighbouring groves, and hushing the cries of the jackals on the plains, the air was cool and pleasant.

Clothes hung on the branches near, drying in the sunshine; rifles and guns were being cleaned, the fires were lighted, and the never ceasing process of cooking was going on. Luji and one of the Kaffirs were drawing the sides of a buffalo hide together by means of a string, so as to carry water, working under Hughes’s direction. The missionary was busy with a small tool-chest, carefully selecting the objects which would aid in the proposed search. The leopard’s skin, stretched on two sticks, was drying in the morning sunshine, and the baboon dodging here and there, doing all the mischief possible, and stealing everything it could lay its hands upon.

Seizing on a wild duck, just ready for the fire, the incorrigible ape bounded off with it, pursued by one of the Kaffirs. The monkey gained the neighbouring grove, and plunged in, followed by its pursuer. The next moment the animal dashed back, having dropped the bird, evidently terribly alarmed, and chattering its teeth, took refuge with Luji.

“There is something in the bush, Luji,” said Hughes, snatching up his rifle. “Wyzinski, look out, there is something wrong yonder.”

The Kaffir, who had pursued the ape, had halted, and was staring fixedly in the direction of the wood.

“There’s the solution of the mystery,” returned the missionary, calmly, continuing his work as though nothing had happened, while one by one in Indian file, some fifty men, fully armed, and evidently belonging to a tribe not yet met with, stepped out of the wood and advanced towards the little camp. Halting about thirty paces distant, the party squatted on the ground, holding their long assegais in their hands, and having their shields in readiness apparently for attack.

“Do you observe,” remarked the missionary, raising his head from his work, “those men have none of the length of

limb of the Zulu race, but are, on the contrary, small of stature and villainously ugly? There is the chief advancing towards us."

"Well, he is certainly a curious object," replied the soldier, leaning on his rifle. "I never saw a man with so low a forehead, so prominent cheek-bones, or so flat a nose. For all covering a piece of hide round the loins, and what on earth has he on his face? They look like button mushrooms growing out of the flesh. Pah! it's enough to make one sick."

Low of stature, very black, and having the peculiarities named by Hughes, the chief's natural ugliness was greatly heightened by a row of gold buttons, let into the flesh, from the point of the nose to the roots of the hair.

With a firm step and upright bearing, this hideous object advanced into the camp. Masheesh joined the group, and while the dusky braves, with their assegais and shields, remained calmly looking on, a long parley took place before the tent.

The chief of this man's tribe had his kraal near Manica, and was a dependant of the great Machin himself, a rival of Mozelkatse. To him the Arab, Achmet Ben Arif, had sent a runner, telling of what bad passed at Sofala, and also of the travellers' objects in thus seeking the interior. The chief invited the whole party to his kraal at Busi, and under the circumstances, with fifty lance-heads glittering in the sunshine, to enforce the proffered hospitality, it was difficult to say No.

"The direction, too," said the missionary, "is exactly that we wish to take; and if even we could help ourselves, which we can't, it will be better to go."

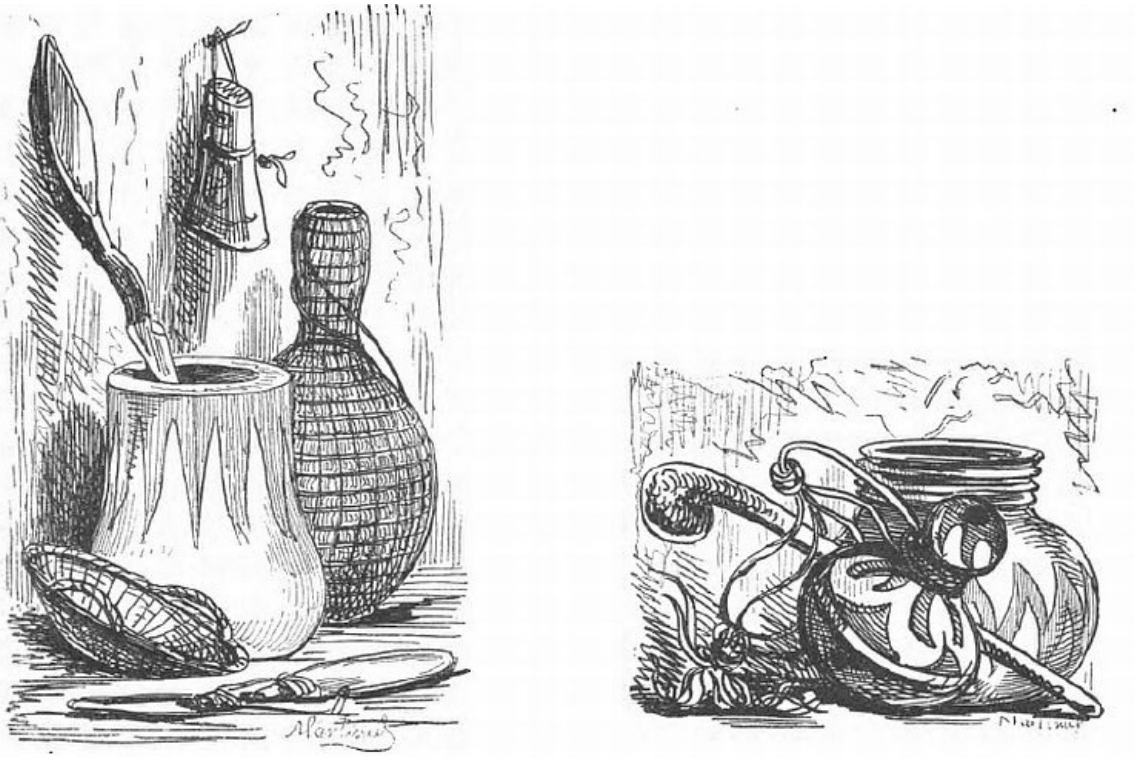
"Then we must leave the mysterious slabs on the top of yonder mountain, with their tales untold."

"Our first object," replied the missionary, "is to discover the ruined cities of Zulu land; we can return any time to Gorongoza; and who so likely to aid our search as this chief of Manica."

"If he is anything like his envoy, I don't care much to see him, for a more villainous lot I never met."

"Tell him we will break ground at daylight to-morrow, Matabele," said Wyzinski, and the interview ended. The armed men lounged lazily about the camp, the baggage was put in order, the slabs of Gorongoza were left behind, and the next day, having followed a northerly direction, with some westing in it, the Mahongo river was passed. With so strong a party it was easy to drive the antelope, so hartebeest and eland meat was plentiful in the camp. The route sometimes led through thick forests, which the travellers would have had some difficulty in threading unguided, and it was only on the tenth day after quitting Gorongoza the party reached the kraal, to find the chief absent, having been called to Manica on a great hunting expedition. Wyzinski wished to proceed to Manica, but they found themselves virtually prisoners though their arms were left, and a hut was assigned to the white men, Luji remaining with them. The baboon gradually gained a great reputation, and the Hottentot was looked upon as the "charmer" of the party, a reputation which pleased his childish nature, and which he added to by teaching the monkey all kind of tricks, and never moving about without it. He was in consequence regarded with some awe, and the baboon, supposed also to possess the secret of "charms," was always respected.

The place itself was curious enough. Three conical hills rose in the plain, the top of one of them being as it were shaved off, most probably by the action of time. This flat and rather inaccessible ground was the residence of the chief, and here too was the usual stockade, where the councils of the tribe were held. At the foot of this hill lay the huts of the kraal, one of which, detached from the rest, was given to the white men. In form it resembled exactly the dome-shaped tent of a subaltern in India, a pole also running up the centre, the whole being made of wood, covered with bark, and having, instead of a door, a small opening constructed like a narrow passage. Skins served as a bed, and the furniture consisted of a large earthen vase made to contain the maize or manioc flour; the cowrie baskets and knapsacks having also been deposited inside. A large tree overshadowed the bark hut, and under it the greater part of the day was spent, and all cooking was carried on, the natives themselves evidently living almost wholly in the open air, and only retiring to their huts during bad weather. The women of this tribe were fully as repulsive as the men, and they too wore the curious buttons, sometimes of brass, sometimes of copper, but always in rows as high as the cheek bone, and occasionally one or two in the chin, the buttons being let into the flesh when young, and thus grown in. One strange peculiarity which struck the Europeans forcibly was that among the women, a slit was made in the skin on each side the hip. The youngest child is carried on the parent's back, and this slit serves it as a stirrup, so that with one arm round the mother's neck, the child is carried easily and safely, the mother having the free use of her hands. This is the more necessary, as much of the labour is done by the women, the maize or manioc being all ground up by them, the instruments used and the mode of using them being exactly that shown forth in the old Egyptian symbolical sculpture. Among the males the Jewish custom of circumcision prevailed, and these were two points which struck Wyzinski particularly. The tribe was not indigenous, but under the control of Machin, chief of Manica, and was made up of a mixed race, being partly of the blood of the Makoapa, who owned Knobneusen as their chief, partly of that of a fierce and treacherous race called Banyai.



DOMESTIC UTENSILS IN USE AMONG THE BANYAI. [Vol. I. p. 154.

This native kraal of Busi is pleasantly situated. To the northward, far away in the distance, a lofty hill called “Morumbala,” near whose base flows the “Zambesi,” while to the southward the mountains of Nyamonga and Gorongoza stretch away into the horizon. Thick forests of trees, many of them of tropical growth, sweep around, while the plains are rich in luxuriant vegetation. The cedar, the ebony palmyra, mohonono, mashuka, acacia, mashanga, and the dwarf custard-apple, grow abundantly, while a bright red bean, called the mosika, together with maize, is much cultivated. Iron is found and worked on the hill-sides, after a very homely fashion, while coal actually crops up out of the ground, and is picked out by the women, who use only a hoe.

The copper and brass ornaments are procured, in the way of trade, from the Portuguese of the Zambesi; but gold is plentiful and its value known, the women washing it out of the ground in quantities, sometimes even finding it in pure nuggets. All this seemed strongly to confirm the missionary’s firm belief that in this neighbourhood was once found and exported gold, cedar, and other riches. Elephants were numerous in the forests, and the ivory was sold to the Portuguese. It was to a grand elephant hunt the head of the tribe had been called, and, with the exception of the brave and his escort of fifty warriors who had accompanied the white men, none but the women remained in the kraal.

A week passed by, and at its expiration the shouts of the men, and the shrill screams of the women, heralded the return of the head warrior Umhleswa, and told that the hunt had been a successful one.

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**The Ruined Cities of Zulu Land.**

The morning after the chief’s arrival there was a great commotion in the kraal. Men ran to and fro, there was shouting and much talking, and at last, followed by his warriors, the chief Umhleswa came down from the council enclosure, and taking his way among the huts, halted at the entrance of that which had been assigned to the white men. Umhleswa found them seated under the tree which overshadowed their home, and, whatever he might think of them, his own appearance was in no way prepossessing. Under the middle height, his legs were curved, or bowed, his forehead low and retreating, the part of the head behind the ears being very massive. The ears themselves were enormous, and the mouth very large; the nose flattened, and the lips thick. He wore the usual set of small buttons let into the flesh, but they were of virgin gold; and a panther skin was attached by a golden clasp round the waist, falling like a Highland kilt. A number of small objects of glass, beads, and ivory hung down from his waist, making a rattle as he walked. Bound his ankles, wrists, and the fleshy part of the arm were circles of copper. He carried no arms, but held in his hand a stick, also of gold, about a foot long, and his teeth were filed, giving an appearance of savage ferocity to his repulsive face. The white men rose, and some additional skins being brought, the three chiefs, Umhleswa, the missionary, and the soldier, seated themselves, the warriors squatting in a circle around.


UMHLESWA.

[Vol. I. p. 158.

“The white chiefs are not traders, but like gold,” said the savage, after a prolonged stare. “They seek some fallen huts, formerly made by their white fathers?” asked he, speaking in the Zulu tongue.

“Achmet Ben Arif spoke truly when he told you so, Umhleswa,” was the reply.

“The white chiefs saw the fallen house at Sofala. In the mountains at Gorongoza are caves; the traders of the Zambesi built the house, the worshippers of the white man’s God lived at Gorongoza. There are no other remains of them.”

“And the stone tablets on the mountain?” eagerly asked the missionary.

The lips of the savage parted, showing the sharp filed teeth. “They are the graves of those who served the white man’s god.”

“And no other ruined huts are here?”

“None. Let the white chiefs hunt with my warriors, they are welcome; the elephant and the rhinoceros are in plenty. The Zambesi is not far distant, when they are tired of the hunt.”

The missionary was terribly disappointed, for the chief’s face bore on it a look of truthfulness. There was no reason for doubting him, and he did not do so.

“Umhleswa would see the chiefs hunt himself. Cattle were carried away from his kraal last night. The robbers were three in number, and are panthers. My scouts are out on the spoor: will the white men join my braves this day?”

“Willingly,” replied the missionary, who at once explained what had passed to the soldier. Tired of a week’s inactivity, the latter was enchanted at the chance. The rifles and ammunition were soon ready. One of the scouts came in with his report that the spoor had been followed into a neighbouring wood, and that the three panthers had not left it. The party consisted of the Europeans and the Matabele chief, together with Umhleswa and about thirty of his tribe. The men were armed with spears, some carrying bows and arrows, the chief alone having an old Spanish long-barrelled fowling piece, damascened with gold.

About four miles of plain lay stretched between the Amatonga village and the forest line, and it was to this the whole troop of noisy savages, headed by their chief and the two white men, took their way in a body. The forest-land, broken at intervals by patches of plain watered by a small stream, stretched away to the mountains, and once it was reached, Umhleswa made his arrangements. All the men armed with assegais were told off as beaters, and advancing in a long line they carried the bush before them. The rest, armed with bows and arrows, were stationed in small groups at the further extremity of the thick cover. Several patches of bush had thus been beaten out, and no game was found.

“What immense numbers of parrots these woods contain,” said Hughes.

“And how slowly and well these savages beat. I should not like to face a panther with nothing but an assegai,” replied Wyzinski.

The two were standing close to the chief as the missionary spoke, a strong party of the bowmen near, when a tremendous uproar took place among the spearmen, a shrill, piercing scream sounding high above the clamour.

“The panther has struck down one of my braves,” exclaimed the Amatonga chief, listening eagerly.

The clamour became louder and louder, seeming to recede.

“Look out, Hughes, they are doubling back, and, if they don’t succeed, must break out.”

Hardly had the words been uttered, when three panthers dashed out from the cover, about twenty paces only from where Umhleswa stood. They looked beautiful but dangerous, as they crouched for a few moments on their bellies in the sand, the bright sun streaming over their painted hides, the end of the tail moving slowly to and fro, and showing their white teeth; then rising, the three, evidently male and female, with their young one a little behind them, came slowly forward, ever crouching for the spring and snarling savagely.

“Are you ready, Wyzinski?” said Hughes, in a low hoarse tone; “take the female—it is nearest to you.”

The men with the bows had disappeared; not so Umhleswa, who stood his ground firmly.

“Take the young one, chief,” whispered the missionary to the Amatonga.

Both the rifles united in one common report, the Spanish piece ringing out a second later. The male panther sprang into the air and fell, nearly at the feet of the little party, quite dead. The female, badly wounded, broke away towards the mountains, while the young one made his spring, striking down the Amatonga chief, and, dashing through a party of the assegai men, again sought shelter in the bush. The fore-arm of the female panther was broken, but it ultimately gained the mountains, with a party of some dozen men after it, yelling, shouting, and discharging their arrows at impossible distances. The poor fellow who had been struck down in the bush was dead, and his body was laid beside the carcass of the leopard. Umhleswa was a good deal hurt; the blow having struck his head, but the animal being young, weak, and frightened, had inflicted only a scalp wound; nevertheless, the chief was stunned, and it was an hour before he recovered consciousness.

For the first time since their arrival among the Amatongas the white men were left to their own device. The confusion was very great, and all assembled round their unconscious chief. A litter was constructed, and they started for the kraal, the whole party of savages accompanying it.

The two Europeans, having once more loaded their rifles, stood watching the retiring and discomfited savages.

“We ought to have that second tiger, Wyzinski; you fired too low,” at last observed Hughes.

“I suppose I did, confused doubtless by the three leaping animals. I am sorry for it. Umhleswa missed his, and it is humiliating that I only wounded mine.”

“Well, what say you, shall we follow the spoor; it will lead us to yonder mountains, where we shall in all probability find the wounded panther?”

“What if we were to follow the young one?”

“No, it would lead us into the forest, and besides it is unwounded. The Amatonga chief missed, and his braves ran away; let us bring in the female; and besides that, now that the hope of finding your cherished ruins has vanished, we have nothing to do but look for sport. The more reason we should not lose this chance.”

The missionary stood leaning on his rifle, and he slowly shook his head as he answered—

“My faith in the existence of those ruins is unshaken; but there was a look of truth in the face of the savage when he assured us none such existed here. Well, we will go to Manica, and perhaps Machin, who is represented as a powerful chief, may throw some light on that.”

“Ay, but how will you get over the sacred nature of the ruins if they do exist?”

“By bribery; depend upon it, nothing succeeds better with the virtuous Amatonga.”

“Well, good-bye to the ruins at present; and whether Solomon knew the land or not, or whether Ophir be here of elsewhere, our object is the skin of the panther.”

Their rifles at the trail, the two hunters moved forward towards the mountains, from which they were separated by several belts of forest, guided by the gouts of blood which the wounded animal had left. These tracks led at first across the open. Here there could be no mistake, for the bowmen had followed the animal for some distance, shouting and firing off their arrows, but the two hunters soon struck into the brush once more, and still guided by the spots of blood, pressed on cautiously but quickly. Hardly a word was spoken as they forced their way onward, the yells and shouts of the Amatongas dying away; and, with the exception of the breaking of the branches, and the sound of running water in the bed of the stream, all was still. After heavy rains this river must be a considerable one, but at that moment it was small, so the hunters followed, so far as was practicable, its course, the wounded panther having done the same. After having proceeded thus some two miles in the brush, sometimes stumbling over the boulders of stone, sometimes with difficulty forcing a pathway among the trees and bushes, the river turned suddenly to the right, and as suddenly the forest ceased.

The missionary halted, and looked about him anxiously.

“What’s the matter?” asked Hughes in a low tone, cocking his rifle as he spoke.

“See,” answered the other, “the stream has been dammed up here, and there are evident traces of masonry. This is strange.”

“We are close to the end of this belt of forest-land, and shall soon solve the mystery, if there be one.”

“There is a considerable sheet of water here, and why should it exist? Can we be near some large kraal?”

Slowly the two moved forward, and as they did so the trees became gradually further apart, the banks of the stream seemed quite clear, even from brushwood. A sharp bend led to the right, and there before them, tumbled here and there among the mighty trees, looking like masses of rock, lay scattered far as the eye could reach, following the bend of the river, fallen masonry.

Both stopped dead in utter astonishment, looking like men at once frightened and bewildered, the missionary’s usually calm and impassive countenance growing one moment deadly, pale, the next flushing a deep crimson. So great was the shock, so totally unexpected the event—for he had perfectly believed in what the Amatonga had said—that the tears stood in his eyes.

Here, then, was a confirmation of all his theories. Here the vast ruins among the gold fields of king Solomon; here the source of the Sabe, or Golden River, down whose stream the boats of bygone days floated gold, cedar-wood, and precious stones. An Englishman’s first impulse at once seized on Hughes, and, yielding to it, the two exchanged a vigorous shake of the hand.

“What could induce Umhleswa to tell us such an untruth?” were the first words which broke from the missionary’s lips.

“Because the ruins are sacred, and these people believe no rain will fall for three years if they be molested,” was the reply. A sense of the danger now stole upon the missionary’s mind as his comrade spoke.

“Hughes, I shall go on; but I have no right and no wish to endanger your life. Leave the adventure to me; return to camp while there is yet time.”

The soldier’s face flushed to the roots of his hair, and he made no reply, simply grasping his rifle and moving forward.

“Stay,” urged the missionary, laying his hand on the other’s shoulder, “I meant no unkindness. As a matter of simple prudence you ought to return. If harm happened to one of us, it would not matter as far as the world is concerned; if to both, this secret would be lost with us.”

“Don’t talk nonsense,” replied Hughes, firmly, “but come along. We are comrades in danger as in all else. What one shares, the other does too. This must have been once a vast pile.”

“Gold, cedars, and now the ruins; we have found all,” muttered the missionary, as, yielding the point, he strode onward, once more sinking into reverie.

There rose right in front of them two massive ruins of pyramidical form, which must at one time have been of great height. Even now, broken and fallen as they were, the solid bases only remaining, they were noble and imposing. Part had come tumbling down, in one jumbled mass, into the bed of the river, while the dwarf acacia and palm were shooting up among the stones, breaking and disjointing them. The two gazed long and silently at these vast mounds, the very memory of whose builders had passed away.

Awe-struck and surprised, they sat down by the stream, and, without exchanging a word, drank of the clear water. Their clothes torn, hands and faces bleeding from the exertions made in forcing their way through the bush, their skin tanned to a deep mahogany colour, there they stood at last among the ruined cities of a lost race. By the banks of the stream the pomegranate, the plantain, and the mango, were growing in wild luxuriance—trees not known in the land, consequently imported.

Overshadowing the fallen blocks of stone, the date-tree and palmyra waved their fan-like leaves. Dense masses of powerful creepers crept up the ruins, rending the solid masonry; and the seeds of the trees dropping year by year had produced a rapid undergrowth, those which had once been valuable fruit-trees having degenerated into wild ones. Chaos had, in a word, re-appeared where once trade and prosperity, order and regularity reigned.

“Let us gather some of the custard-apples, and climb yonder ruin,” said the missionary, speaking for the first time.

It was no easy task; for the accumulation of fallen masonry, and the dense growth of the brush, rendered it often necessary for the onward path to be cleared by the use of the knife. The whole mass appeared at one time to have been encircled by a wall, now fallen, the entrances to which could be distinctly traced, and this confirmed the report which, had been gathered by the missionaries of Santa Lucia Bay.

Slowly the two forced their way towards the vast ruined mound they were striving to gain, often stumbling and falling among the loose stones and treacherous creepers.

A crowd of half-fallen passages led away to right and left, terminating in what appeared to be a court-yard, in which were the remains of pillars of stone.

“There has once been carved work on these pillars, Hughes,” said the missionary, as they paused, breathless with their exertions, before a mighty column. “The action of ages has worn it away.”

“And what is more singular,” replied Hughes, who now seemed as much interested in the ruins as his comrade, “no mortar of any kind appears to have been used, the massive stones fitting into one another exactly.”

“This temple or palace has stood upon a kind of platform of masonry,” remarked the missionary, “with broad steps leading up to it. What a commanding object it must then have been.”

“The difficulty will be to climb what was once the flight of steps,” said Hughes. “I don’t see how we can manage it.”

Slinging their rifles behind them, and after many failures, the two helping each other from time to time, and taking advantage of every projection, stood at last on the raised platform on which the building had rested. Below them ran a maze of crumbled galleries and court-yards: and wherever the eye could penetrate, mounds of fallen masonry cropped up amidst the dense forest growth.

The vast ruin itself was now a shapeless mass, being utterly broken and defaced. The top of the mound was overgrown by bush, interlaced with creeping plants, and, as using their knives, the two cut their way onward, the light of day penetrated feebly into a ruined chamber of vast size. A dead silence reigned therein, and as they paused at the entrance and looked back on the scene which lay below, perhaps the first Europeans who had stood on that weird spot for many ages, the missionary could not but feel dispirited.

“The day-dream of my life realised. I stand among the ruins of the cities of old; but where they begin, or where they end I know not. The forest has re-asserted her old rights, torn from her by the hand of civilisation,” he remarked.

“Look where you will there is nothing to be seen but broken mounds and tottering walls; it would require a brigade of men and years of work to clear these ruins,” replied Hughes.

“Yes, the extent of them is a mystery at present. We can but affirm their existence. What a deep dead silence hangs over the spot. Let us go on.”

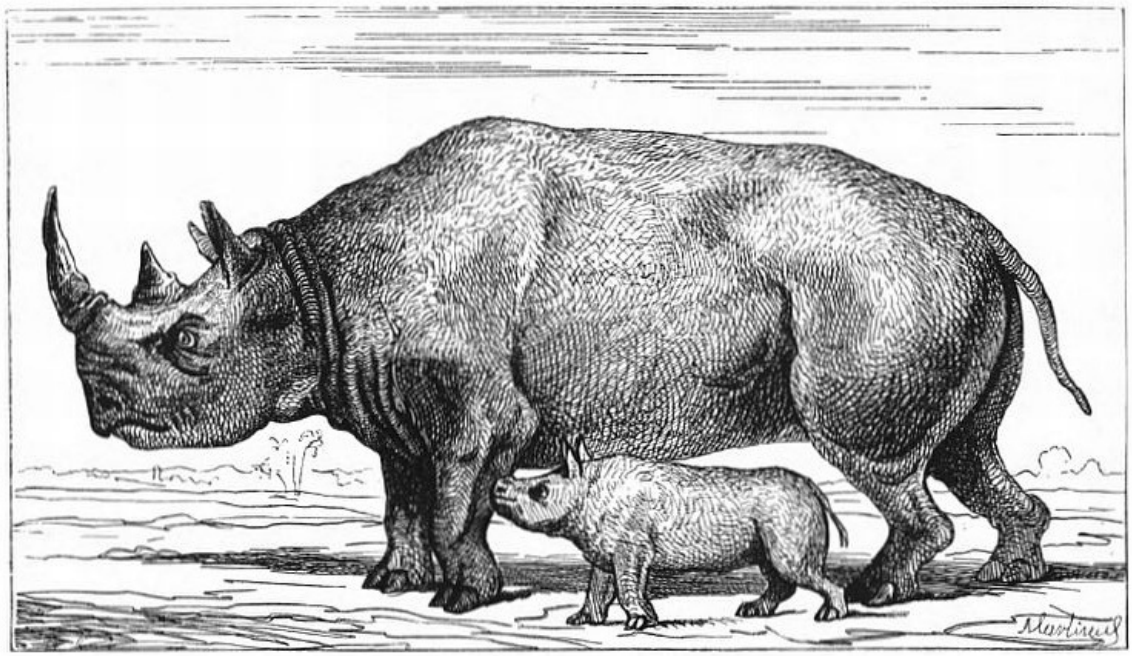
They penetrated the ruined chamber, but hardly had they put their feet across the threshold, when bats in vast numbers came sweeping along, raising, as they did so, a fine dust, which was nearly blinding. The ruins seemed their home, and there they lived, bred, and died in countless numbers. Some were of a sickly-looking greenish colour, and of heavy and lumbering flight, often striking against the two explorers as they came along.

At one moment the missionary was surrounded by these tenants of the ruined palace, these winged things which had taken for themselves the abodes of the Pharaohs of old. He struck out in self-defence and killed several, measuring one for curiosity. Its length was only between five and six inches, but when the wings were spread it was at least nineteen from tip to tip. Their numbers seemed to increase, for troops of others, of a dull brownish-red colour, joined their loathsome companions, and then a third species of a chestnut brown, mingled with dingy white, came trooping along. What the building had been it was impossible to tell; but it must have once seemed a mighty pile standing on its platform of stonework, with a flight of broad steps leading to it. These steps had disappeared; but remains of them could be noticed, and from the elevation where the two stood the line which had once been the wall of the town could be traced here and there. There were not any remains of a purely Egyptian character, save a worn arabesque representing the process of maize-grinding; but this was to be seen daily practised among the tribes, and therefore proved nothing, for it remained an open question whether the natives had taken it from the sculptor, or whether he had imitated the natives. Here and there were remains of carvings representing serpents, birds, and beasts of uncouth form, leading to the belief that the building had once been a temple. Passing along, nearly blinded by the fine dust, their knives cut them a way out, and the breeze and sunshine seemed doubly welcome after the dank, confined air of the old ruin. Huge lizards glided away among the broken stones as they emerged from the corridor—for such it seemed—and monkeys were to be seen darting away among the trees as they let themselves down from the platform. These animals had not any tails, resembling those found among the Atlas mountains; while the jackal and hyena, surprised at the sight of human beings in this solitary spot, sneaked away among the masses of fallen masonry, snarling as they looked back. Near the stream the spoor of the elephant was distinctly visible, and it was evident this was one of their favourite feeding grounds, for the banks were strewed with the broken branches of the mashuka-trees, and the débris of the plantains. The tamarind-trees and palmyra grew luxuriantly, and for hours the two wandered among the ruins or, seated on the fallen heaps, lost themselves in conjectures on the past, “It is impossible,” at last said Wyzinski, seating himself, fairly wearied out, “for us to explore further these relics of the past. We can but tell of their existence, I repeat.”

“The axe, or fire—perhaps both—would be necessary before even their extent could be known,” replied Hughes. “Look at that mass of masonry, thickly hedged round with date, camel thorn, and white mimosa. Mark the thick undergrowth and the strange creeping vine-like shrubs running along the ground, and festooning themselves to the trees, and the difficulty will be realised.”

“There seem to me to be caves cut in yonder mountain-side: let us go there.”

In rear of the ruins rose the slopes of the Malopopo hills, and leading in that direction was a kind of passage through a lower range, the river flowing in the middle. On each side rose the rocks, scarped down towards the bed of the stream, from which coal was cropping out. The summits of the hills were worn and rounded by the action of time, and here and there clumps of trees were growing on the river banks. It was up this cut the two advanced, Hughes leading. Stopping as he turned a shoulder of the rock, the missionary joined him. Seven rhinoceroses were sleeping quietly by the water side under the trees, the boughs of which were literally bending under the mass of nests made by the same bright yellow bird which had been seen so numerous on the Sofala river.



RHINOCEROS, WITH YOUNG. [Vol. I. p. 174.

The animals were totally different from any other that had been seen.

“They have a perfectly smooth skin,” remarked Hughes.

“Yes, and are of a pale yellow colour instead of brown, like the one which treated me so unceremoniously in the country of the Matabele. Both the horns too are pointed, and both long.”

“We had better look out. See they have awoke, and are getting into line ready to charge us.”

In fact the brutes seemed very savage, and so soon as they perceived the intruders on their solitude, they charged down the glen. Scrambling up a rock, the danger was easily avoided. The herd passed on except one old cow with its young one, who halted after having gone some twenty yards, and turning deliberately round returned, gazing with apparently great curiosity at the white men. It was impossible to pass; and there stood the great lumbering animal fairly mounting guard over the two who, perched on the rock, were only wishful to be left alone.

There was nothing for it, however, but to get rid of the troublesome visitor; so, leaning the rifles on the flat rock on which they were lying, by agreement both aimed for the centre of the forehead. The two reports seemed as one, as for a moment the rhinoceros stood firmly, and then fell over into the river, dyeing the water with blood. It was a great size, measuring close upon twelve feet in length, and ten in girth, while the horns were so nearly matched that there was not a quarter of an inch difference between them. The openings of several caves were to be seen, and near one there appeared to have been some fight lately, for blood, evidently quite fresh, was lying about.

To this cave the two climbed, entering very cautiously. Chance had again favoured them, for there lay the leopard quite dead. Bones of different kinds were heaped about, showing that for a time at least it had been the abode of wild animals. It was about twenty feet high, and there were some curious carvings on the walls, the entrance having evidently been scarped down by the hand of man. Close to the doorway were two colossal carvings, as if to guard the mouth of the cave. Each represented the figure of a nearly naked warrior, having a covering only round the loins; and each held in his hand two spears, and not having any shield—in this widely differing from the present race. The faces of these figures seemed of an Arab type. There was no trace of door, but some broken remains would seem to indicate that the entrance had once been walled up, while close by lay a slab of stone bearing a tracing on it of the figure of the African elephant. There were many similar caverns here and there in the mountain-side.

“The sun is sinking, Wyzinski,” said Hughes, “It will be impossible to retrace our way in the darkness, and the moon does not rise until eleven o’clock; we had better stay where we are.”

“I am tired out,” replied the missionary. “I don’t doubt but that these caverns have once been the graves of the dead belonging to yonder city. This may well serve for ours, only we must contrive a fire.”

“Yes, or we may have the young leopard back, if Umhleswa’s Spanish rifle has not done for him. We have still half an hour of daylight: the branches dragged down by the elephants lie in heaps down yonder, and are dry.”

The half hour sufficed, a fire was lit at the entrance of the cave on the ledge outside, and the missionary, lying down, was soon buried in sleep.

The day had been very hot, and what with the excitement, fatigue, and want of nourishment, the two were tired out. Still Hughes determined to watch, as heaping wood on the fire, he placed his rifle on his knees, and leaned back in a sitting posture against the rock. Night came on; the cries of the animals began to be heard, and the jackals soon found out the carcass of the rhinoceros. The stars were very brilliant, and the soldier sat thinking of the past, and peopling in imagination those fantastic masses of fallen ruin which had once at that hour rang with bustle and merriment. The wind came in hot puffs, making the date and palmyra leaves rustle as they waved to and fro; the noise of the stream breaking over the fallen masonry was very monotonous, and soon the sentry found himself dozing. He rose, heaped fresh wood on the fire, looked out from the ledge into the night, listened to the cracking of the branches, which told him that elephants were not far off, and then again sat down.

The moon rose, silvering with its beams the finely-cut leaves of the tall palmyra and the broken ruins, shining on the

human figure at the entrance of the cave, and gleaming on the bright barrel and lock of the English rifle; but the soldier slept on his post; the jackals fought over the carrion, the fire burned lower and lower, and finally went out. Day was dawning, when a loud shout close to the mouth of the cavern woke both the soldier and the missionary, but only to find themselves surrounded by a band of the Amatonga warriors fully armed, while the savage eyes and filed teeth of their chief Umhleswa, seemed to give a more vindictive expression than ever to his repulsive face.

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**Umhleswa's Bargain.**

The following day the whole kraal was in commotion, Umhleswa summoning the braves of the tribe around him in council, the white men not being deprived of their arms, but very closely watched. The assembly was a noisy one. On the one hand the native superstitions invested the ruins with a sacred character, and the Amatonga chief had been placed where he was to prevent any access to them by Europeans. There could not be a doubt that the whole tribe had been guilty of negligence, their chief included, and that they were responsible to the king of Manica for what had happened. On the other, Masheesh, as the representative of his chief, loudly proclaimed the white men to be under Mozelkatse's protection, and demanded their safety, threatening a dire revenge if anything happened to them. The anger of so powerful and fierce a chief as Mozelkatse was to be dreaded. Umhleswa, too, was an ambitious man, and was not contented with his position as chief of a petty tribe. He coveted firearms, and these he could only obtain from the whites. Without those arms he could do nothing, and the way to procure them was certainly not by putting to death the first white men who came among them. Umhleswa was cruel, vindictive, and unscrupulous, and he had, without hesitation, told the white men a deliberate untruth to hinder their seeking for the sacred ruins. His chance wound and subsequent insensibility upset his calculations; still he was very much averse to shedding their blood.

THE CHIEF SGALAM. [Vol. I. p. 179.

There was, however, a warrior of the tribe second only to himself in power—a man of another stamp, and famed for personal courage and deeds of daring. Between Sgalam and Umhleswa there had always been rivalry, and, on this occasion, the Amatonga brave took an entirely different view of the whole matter, openly blaming Umhleswa's conduct, and demanding the death of the white men as the only means of securing the safety of the tribe.

The result was long doubtful, and what between the chief's arguments and Masheesh's threats, the balance seemed in favour of clemency. The council was noisy, and divided in opinion. Umhleswa had just been showing in eloquent words the injustice of dooming to death men who had acted from ignorance, pointing out that they could not have known the sacred nature of the place they had invaded; and he seemed to be carrying with him the feelings of the tribe as they all squatted round in the inclosure on the hill-top, when Sgalam, roused to a last effort, strode straight up to Luji, who was listening open-mouthed, and laying his hand on the man's shoulder, "Here is one of their head-men," he said, with violence; "ask him if the white chiefs were not warned, ay, even in Mozelkatse's camp. Should they go free, Sgalam himself will denounce the folly in the council inclosure of Manica."

The baboon, seeing a hand laid on Luji, and doubtless thinking harm was meant him, at once flew at the orator,

making his teeth meet in the man's arm, and chattering wildly.

The powerful savage, with one blow, dashed the animal to the ground, Luji, who was fairly roused, being in a great rage, threatening the chief with the white men's vengeance. A scene of confusion ensued, but Sgalam's eloquence decided the matter, and the verdict was death; the council breaking up without fixing when and in what manner the punishment was to be inflicted.

In the interior of the hut assigned to the Europeans that night, all was quiet, and the two occupants were sound asleep. There was no door, but only a narrow entrance, across which a naked savage was sleeping, several others being thrown here and there outside, also fast asleep. Midnight was long passed, when a noise was heard near the opening, and the moonlight was for a moment obscured by two bodies passing. Calling to Wyzinski, the soldier, who slept lightly, seized his pistols, but the voice of Masheesh was heard, speaking in low tones, as he stepped over the body of the sleeping sentry, followed by the second figure. It was not dark, the moon shining brightly outside, and Umhleswa's face and form was not one to be easily mistaken. He was naked save at the waist, his body smeared with oil, but wearing no distinctive mark of any kind, while his broad, flat nose, high cheek-bones, receding forehead, sharp filed teeth, and shining body, gave him even a more repulsive look than usual in the faint moonlight. Outside all was quiet save the usual cries of the jackals and hyenas hovering round the kraal, and the heavy breathing of the sleeping guard.

Seating himself on some skins, while Masheesh squatted down near the entrance, Umhleswa spoke.

"Have the white chiefs no fear of death," he asked, "that they sleep soundly?"

"No," replied the missionary, using the Zulu dialect; "we do not believe in it at your hands. We were travelling through the land, our safety insured by Mozelkatse's word. You sent for us and we came, consequently besides the safeguard of the king of the Matabele we have yours."

"If Mozelkatse's word be scorned," added the Matabele brave, "the land between the Suave and the Zambesi shall be dyed red with Amatonga blood, and the assegai of Masheesh shall find the heart of their chief. The country shall be desert, and the tribe live only in the remembrance of the past."

"I have not come to the dwelling of the white men to hear this," replied Umhleswa, scornfully. "Will they promise, by their God, not to go near the fallen huts if set free?"

Both hesitated, for the desire to explore those ruins was strong in their minds, and both were willing to risk life to do so.

"We will make Umhleswa rich with presents, we will hunt for him the elephant and the rhinoceros, if he will not only allow us to see the ruined huts, but aid us with his men to lay them bare."

The dark eyes of the savage glistened at the thought of the presents, and he mused for several minutes, the silence being so deep that the breathing of the sleeping men could be distinctly heard outside. He spoke at last, but slowly—

"It may not be; send Umhleswa arms for his tribe; make him powerful enough not to heed the anger of the chief of Manica, and the fallen huts are the white men's. Do they know that death has been pronounced against them, and do they know the kind of death they must meet?"

"It matters not what," replied the missionary; "we have faced it too often to fear it in any form."

"Death!" hissed out the savage, his eyes gleaming, and his white teeth shown in the half light, "by fire,—slow, but sure death. Will the white chiefs promise?"

"We promise," replied the missionary.

"Will they pay a ransom?" continued the savage.

"We have nothing to give; but we will return with presents."

The chief pointed to the rifles and pistols.

"Umhleswa would gladly have these, and when the white men return with more, he will take them also."

"They shall be yours, chief, when we cross the frontier, not before."

"Will the God of the white man send rain when his children ask for it?" he inquired.

"If in his great power and infinite knowledge he thinks it is necessary," replied the missionary, a little jesuitically.

"Then," continued Umhleswa, "it is agreed. The white men promise not to hanker after the fallen houses, but to cross the frontier near the Zambesi, to give each a rifle, also that when they return they will bring a rich present for Umhleswa, giving him the means to resist the chief of Manica, and to laugh at his anger."

"It is agreed," replied the missionary.

"The white man speaking our language answers for his brother?" asked the savage.

"He shall answer for himself," replied the missionary.

Turning to the soldier, Wyzinski explained the terms of the bargain, pointing out that they were completely in the chief's power, and that he himself was fully determined to organise a party, and return to the ruins, in which case the protection of the savage would be valuable.

At the other end of the hut a violent discussion was going on between the Matabele brave and the Amatonga warrior,

the former declaring that the white men must be brought back to Mozelkatse's country, the other remaining quite unmoved.

Hughes at once saw the truth of Wyzinski's explanation, and though he did not like to part with an old friend, made up his mind to do so, the more readily because he saw that Umhleswa could equally be in possession of the rifles by killing the whole party. He therefore rose, crossed to where the chief sat, and gave his hand in token of ratification.

"Good," said Umhleswa, rising; "and now let the white men sleep in peace." Stepping over the figures of his recumbent braves, the chief took his way in the moonlight, through the huts, even the dogs remaining silent as he passed.

It was nearly dawn, and Masheesh having thrown himself down on the ground to sleep, the two white men, greatly relieved, sat discussing their future prospects. The freshness of the coming day had made itself felt already, the moonlight was growing more and more feeble, and still they sat talking of many things.

"We shall have plenty left to send the Matabele back a rich man," said the missionary.

"And as for Luji, I left his full pay and a handsome 'Bucksheesh' with my relative on the Umvoti," answered Hughes.

"We shall be certain of a good reception from the Portuguese at Tête or Senna on the Zambesi, and are sure to find some coasting vessel at Quillimane, bound for Table Bay."

"And we shall have traversed Eastern Africa from the Limpopo northwards to the Zambesi; but, see, day is breaking; I long for the fresh air of morning after stilling all night here."

Taking up his rifle, Hughes walked to the entrance, stooped, and went out, stepping over the prostrate bodies of the guard. Day was just breaking, and with it the Amatonga kraal was waking into life. Luji was fast asleep under the tree, and on a branch above him, sat the baboon, looking upwards, and making hideous faces. It was evident there was something concealed in the tree, which wanted to pass the monkey, and which the latter would not allow. Watching them, Hughes soon saw a head, garnished with two great eyes, peeping out of the foliage. Waiting an opportunity, he fired, the village ringing with the report which sounded very loud on the quiet morning air. The guards at the entrance of the hut, startled out of all propriety, jumped to their feet, forgetting their duty, and scuttled off. A howl of terror from Luji rang out, the caracal, dropping from branch to branch, plumped heavily on the half-awakened Hottentot, while the baboon dashed after it, chattering with delight. The animal was a large one, and resembled a very big and beautifully marked cat, striped like a small tiger, the ears being black, pointed, and tipped with tufts of hair.

Taking it by the tail, and laughing at the alarm he had caused, Hughes walked towards the entrance of the hut, where, attracted by the report, the missionary and Masheesh stood.

Just as he reached it, a long, loud, wailing cry rang out from the very centre of the kraal. For a moment all was silent, and then once more it was heard. There was an unusual bustle, the savages, male and female, seeming much excited. Soon many other voices chimed in, and it became evident that something had happened to cause sorrow and lamentation in the tribe. Masheesh had already gone, and breakfast was to the two white men of more importance than anything that could affect their hosts, the Amatongas.

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**The Dead Chief.**

The sun had risen in all its splendour, the smoke from the many fires curling spirally up into the air, for there was hardly the faintest breeze. Every thing betokened the heat of an African day. Under the shadow of their tree sat the two Europeans, their rifles leaning against its trunk. Luji was near, playing with the baboon, which was chattering and making hideous faces; the missionary busily employed taking notes of the journey, and Hughes skinning carefully the caracal he had that morning shot. Things seemed to have quieted down in the kraal, and the excitement to have partially at least died away. Not knowing whether they were to consider themselves prisoners or not, though the guard had not resumed their post, and thinking if they left the camp the act might be wrongly construed by Umhleswa, the white men remained where they were.

"What is the matter with the Matabele?" asked Hughes, as he raised his eyes and saw Masheesh coming down among the huts in a manner very different from his usual stately pace.

"We shall soon know the cause; see how the muscles of his black face are working, and listen to the shouts of the Amatongas behind him. Well, Masheesh, what's wrong?" asked Wyzinski, looking at him, with his pencil and note book in his hand.

"Sgalam is dead!" replied the Matabele, in an excited tone.

"And who the deuce is Sgalam?" asked the missionary, calmly bending his head once more over his work.

"The chief who spoke so bitterly against the white men; he who threatened to denounce Umhleswa if they were not put to death; refusing to hear the words of Mozelkatse, and who was threatened by Luji with death."

"Well, a chief has departed from among his people, and the Amatonga have lost a brave; but what then?"

"The evil eye has done it. The white men have bewitched their enemy, and he is dead."

The full danger of the situation dawned on the missionary's mind as Masheesh said this, and turning to Hughes, he told what had passed. The latter only laughed.

"Since we have been in Africa," he replied, "I have not seen one instance of violence or bloodthirstiness. A more gentle race I never met with. Why it is the custom even among the warriors who have shed blood in battle, to consider themselves unclean, and a native who has so much as touched a dead body is thought so. What is there to fear?"

"The whole native population of South Africa is superstitious, and these Amatongas are a low caste tribe, more

superstitious than most. You heard Umhleswa ask about the rain?”

“Yes, I know he did.”

“Well, not only have they their rain makers, but their sorcerers; and they believe firmly in witches, ghouls, the evil eye, and vampires. They will kill all their cattle on the order of one of these sorcerers, and starve by hundreds.”

“Well, if that is the case, it certainly is enough to excite them, that the very man who was the most bitter against us should die thus suddenly. It is a very strange circumstance that Luji should have denounced him.”

While they were talking the shouting and yelling seemed to approach rapidly, and now a band of Amatonga, their naked bodies smeared with paint, came rushing down from among the huts. In a moment more than a hundred yelling savages surrounded the tree, shouting, screaming, and brandishing their assegais. The rifles could do nothing against such a number.

“Our only hope is in Umhleswa,” whispered the missionary, as he bent his calm face over his note book, apparently unconcerned. They were a terrible looking set, those dark-skinned Amatongas, and the two Europeans felt themselves completely in their power.

Hideously ugly, with their enormous mouths, woolly hair, and receding foreheads, they had still further disfigured themselves with paint Masheesh did all a man could do to quiet them, but it was no use; the white men were seized, separated, and their rifles taken from them, their hands being firmly tied together. Luji shared their fate, and the monkey very much frightened, jumped to his usual place on his shoulders, jabbering and grimacing. Several blows with the wood of the assegais were given, and thus ill-treated, with the whole band of yelling savages around them, the captives were driven up the centre of the Amatonga village.

The change in their situation had indeed been a sudden and dangerous one. Relying on the promise of the chief, all anxiety had been dismissed from their minds, and the future had seemed bright and fair before them. A few minutes later, they found themselves bound prisoners, and on their way to the hut of the dead man.

They reached the entrance, where on the threshold sat the wife of the dead chief, rocking herself to and fro, and uttering a succession of wailing cries. Suddenly starting up as the captives approached, she spoke quickly to the braves around her, gesticulating and screaming.

She was urging her people to sacrifice the murderers of her husband, as an expiatory offering on the chief’s grave. This much the missionary could understand, as he bent his calm, clear eye on the excited countenance of the frantic woman. The quiet glance seemed only to enrage her more, as shaking her long skinny fingers in his face, she turned and dashed into the death-chamber.

Jostled violently along, the two prisoners found themselves standing in the hut close together.

“We are lost, Hughes,” said the missionary, in low, hoarse tones.

“The chief may save us,” replied his comrade. “There is yet hope.”

Inside the women were chaunting, in loud drawling tone, the good qualities of the deceased, telling of his virtues in peace, his wisdom in the council, and his great deeds of war. The body itself lay stretched at full length in one corner, lying on some panther skins.

“There is hope there,” whispered the missionary. “Look at the dead man’s face, the pinched-up features, that small dark stream flowing from the lips, the tongue hard, black, and dry, hanging from the mouth, and the limbs drawn up with cramp. He has been poisoned.”

“By whom?” asked Hughes, as the two stood, their hands bound behind them, gazing on the sickening spectacle.

“By Umhleswa. It was his interest to do this, and if so, he is watching the result.”

A rush of people into the hut now separated the two, while outside the shouting of the men, the jabbering of the baboon, and from time to time a yell from Luji, who was evidently the most suspected, was heard.

The two white captives, separated from each other, were now forced into a sitting position, one on each side of the corpse, while the women, ever chaunting the praises of Sgalam, proceeded to lay the body out. It was quite nude, and though cold, had not yet stiffened. The tongue which, thickly coated with yellow, had been protruded, was now forced back into the mouth. A rope of palmyra fibre was brought, and the women then proceeded to swathe it round with the cord, giving the body a sitting position. This operation lasted a couple of hours, during which the prisoners were kept apart, as spectators, the noise outside never ceasing. Hughes, who now had the notion that both were to be sacrificed on the dead chief’s grave, attempted to speak across the hut to the missionary, but a heavy blow was the reward. Wyzinski’s calm face and thin features relaxed into a smile, as the soldier returned the blow by means of a violent kick, and found himself the next moment powerless lying on his back, and a stout rope of palmyra round his legs. Strangely situated as they were, it was a curious sight. The busy women, singing their monotonous song; the sitting corpse stiffening into the position that had been given it. Outside, shouting and wild excitement, and every now and then some Amatonga brave dashing into the hut, yelling out half a dozen phrases in praise of the dead Sgalam, and dashing away, to be followed in turn by others. In one corner the soldier firmly bound, in another the missionary, his hands only tied. At length a litter of branches was brought, the sitting corpse placed upon it, the hut became filled with savages, the rope which confined the soldier’s legs was unfastened, and the two were ordered to follow the bier, which was conveyed outside. A circle of dark braves swept round the captives, their glittering knives in their hands, as the procession moved off, the leading men of the tribe grouping themselves round the corpse shouting and yelling. They had not far to go, for the journey ended at an enclosure a few hundred yards from the dead warrior’s hut. The bright sun streamed over them as they entered this enclosure, which was in fact the place where the chief’s cattle had been penned. There, right in the centre, a deep hole had been dug, and into this, ever preserving his sitting position, the body was lowered, the songs, screams, and shouts increasing in intensity, as the broad hoes threw back the light earth into the grave. Slowly but surely the body disappeared, for a hundred hoes were at work dragging the sand back. The face of the dead was gradually covered, the hole was filled, and there, in the centre of his cattle shed, sat the dead Sgalam concealed from all eyes. The men with the hoes threw them aside, and commenced a strange slow dance round the grave; then, pausing, with wild

yells, the savages threw themselves on the captives, and in a moment they were on the ground struggling vainly for their lives, with a hundred bright blades gleaming in the sunshine around them. Their tribe imperilled by the white man's foolish curiosity, one of their best warriors and most noted chiefs killed by them,—for they firmly believed it,—the two delinquents were about to moisten with their blood the grave of the Amatonga brave. The moment was a critical one, when suddenly the wily Umhleswa appeared among them, his Spanish gun in his hand, the ostrich plume in his hair, and the panther skin round his waist. His glittering eyes ran over the group, as with a few deep guttural words, he bore back the crowd of savages.

"Would you kill the innocent, and spare the guilty?" he shouted, waving his hand toward the white men, who now rose covered with sand, but unhurt. "The Amatonga have a custom; would you break that custom, and defile the grave of our brother with the blood of the innocent? Let the far-seeing Koomalayoo be consulted; let the sorcerer of the tribe speak out, and let those who have done this deed die."

"To Koomalayoo, to Koomalayoo," yelled the Amatonga, and the well-planned purpose of the wily savage was accomplished. Moving along among the huts, the groups of excited savages, their numbers ever increasing, bore with them the dirt-begrimed white men, and the frightened Luji. An ox was driven out of an enclosure and placed at the head of the procession, the whole moving on slowly under one of the conical hills, and taking its way towards the neighbouring forest. Bound with palmyra rope, and the baboon firmly tied in its usual position on his shoulders, Luji's face seemed the very picture of abject terror, while the ape, fairly cowed, jibbered and moaned.

The missionary as usual looked calm, resigned, and confident, but a heavy scowl sat on the soldier's face. The escort kept on their way, shouting, screaming, and clattering their spears against their shields. About half a mile outside the Amatonga kraal, under a grove of trees, stood a solitary hut. Near it rose a mass of rocks, and the plain around was thick brush. This was the dwelling of Koomalayoo, the dreaded sorcerer of the tribe. It was he who had told of the coming of the white men, and it was his now to decide their fate. The ox was driven into the cattle enclosure belonging to the hut, as a present to Koomalayoo, who at once made his appearance.

This man was an Amatonga, and possessed to a rare degree the distinctive ugliness of the race. His flat nose, monkey-like forehead, and huge slit of a mouth, surmounted a body literally a skeleton. The face was that of the living dead, so emaciated was it; the body seemed a framework, with a black skin drawn tightly over it. The eyes alone were bright and restless. A collar and waist-belt of human bones, with anklets and wristbands of the same material, made a clatter as he walked, while in his hand he held a short wand, apparently of pure gold. Such was the noted Koomalayoo, who now glanced over the group of captives, his restless eyes fixing themselves on Luji's face, with an expression which boded him no good. A circle was formed, the captives being inside it at one end, Umhleswa and the sorcerer at the other.

Umhleswa now made a long speech, telling of the coming of the strangers, and of their having by chance stumbled upon the sacred ruins, profaning them by their presence. The history of the council was given fairly enough, and of Sgalam's hatred to the Europeans.

The incident of the monkey and of Luji's threats was largely dwelt on, and Koomalayoo's eyes grew intensely bright as he fixed them on the unlucky Hottentot, whose face turned a yellow livid colour with fear. The Umhleswa then proceeded to point out that the white chiefs were not present at the council, again referred to the threats used by Luji, and to the mysterious character of the baboon, winding up artfully with a defence of his policy, because of the benefits which would result from trade with the white men.

Calico, beads, guns, knives, he spoke of as falling to the lot of the poorest Amatonga, and having thus worked on their cupidity, the wily savage ceased speaking.

Koomalayoo rose, and without a word stalked out of the circle, which opening to let him pass, closed again. All kept silence—a deep dead silence—as the diviner entered his hut; and so great was the stillness that his monotonous voice could be heard reciting incantations, as the sorcerer mixed the potion which was to give him clairvoyance. About a quarter of an hour passed—not a soul moving—before he again appeared, holding a gourd in his hand. Whatever were its contents, he drank the whole at a draught, threw the gourd from him, and once more entered the circle, where, seating himself on the ground, he remained silent, his eyes bent downwards, apparently waiting for the coming inspiration. All looks were fixed upon him, and not a word was spoken. At last he suddenly started to his feet and began speaking rapidly, following out the tale from beginning to the end, winding up with the death of the warrior Sgalam. "Sorcery has done this," he continued. "The strong man does not die in an hour; the warrior's soul does not start for another land like that of the weakly infant. Is it the men of the Batonga who have done this deed? No. Is it the braves of Manica? No. The Matabele are among us. Does the blow come from them? Mozelkatse's warrior would scorn the deed. Is it from the Madanda, or the strange tribes of Gorongoza, death has come, or has the evil eye been used by the dwellers on the Maxe, who love us not? No. To none of these does the far-seeing eye of Koomalayoo trace the deed. But white men are with us, white men who are not traders. Have they worked the evil?"

Koomalayoo paused. A subdued murmur ran through the circle. Wyzinski's face looked calm and natural as usual; but the soldier's, though unconscious of the meaning of the words, was flushed, and he himself nervous and excited. The murmur died away, and again the sorcerer spoke. A sigh of relief burst from the missionary's lips as Koomalayoo continued. "I tell you, no. It is not the white men whose blood must atone for that of the dead chief—No." All at once, whirling round as on a pivot, the arm and hand holding the gold rod fully extended, the diviner span round; then as suddenly stopping, the rod pointed right between Luji's eyes. "It is the black skin who has come among us, with his familiar demon on his shoulders. Behold the worker of the charm! When the black imp leaped upon our brother among the warriors in council, he spit the venom into his ear. That night our brother died."

Koomalayoo's eyes fairly blazed with fury as he looked full at Luji's quivering, shrinking frame. The man seemed fascinated, and his terror-stricken face turned into bronze as the sorcerer yelled forth the terrible words, "Let fire drive out the demon from among us," and fell to the ground apparently exhausted.

For a moment there was a deep, dead silence; the rustle of the leaves could be heard as the light wind played through the trees; the next, the circle was broken, the whole mass of the Amatonga precipitating themselves on the doomed Hottentot, throwing down the two white men as they pressed on, and trampling them under foot, while the air, a moment before silent, became filled with yells and discordant shouts, the shrill scream of terror distinctly heard above all.

Hughes, not knowing what was to happen next, had seized the nearest Amatonga brave and was busy throttling him, shouting as he did so as loudly as the rest in his excitement. The man's eyes were starting out of his head, his tongue was protruding, when a dozen strong hands dragged the soldier from his victim, and thrust him bruised and breathless into the hut. The missionary was there before him, and there too stood the wily Umhleswa, showing his sharply-filed

teeth, while his little cunning eyes danced with triumph.

“Umhleswa is a chief,” he said, slowly moving to the entrance of the hut, and looking back on the astonished prisoners as he stood in the bright sunshine. “He has not lied to his white brother.” He waved his arm and disappeared.

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**The Auto Da Fé.**

With the dark smile on his face, and triumph beaming from his sinister-looking eyes, Umhleswa had left the hut. Koomalayoo, its owner, was busy hounding on the too willing savages to kill his supposed rival, for it was by using the suggestion that he and his familiar had come among them to take the sorcerer’s place in the tribe that the cunning chief had secured Koomalayoo’s co-operation. Masheesh now entered, his first impulse being to pass his sharp knife over the palmyra rope which yet bound the white men’s hands as he did so.

Their first emotion over, the two exchanged a hearty shake of the hand, looking into each other’s eyes, the soldier speaking first.

“The black scoundrel,” at last said Hughes, drawing a deep breath, and shaking himself like a dog. “Wyzinski, we must save poor Luji. Speak to Masheesh—will you?”

Turning to the Matabele, the missionary spoke long and earnestly; but the chief kept a dogged silence, shaking his head from time to time, then looking up into the speaker’s face.

“The Amatonga must have blood,” he said, slowly. “Shall it be the white man’s? Masheesh can do nothing.”

“Will the chief try?” asked Wyzinski; but again he was met by the slow shake of the head, which told more than words could convey the hopelessness of the case.

“But if you will not, at all events we will,” said the missionary. “It is a terrible thing to push superstition to such a point.”

“Does the white chief disbelieve in the charm cast on the dead Amatonga?” asked Masheesh, as though such disbelief were monstrous.

“Can the Matabele warrior assert it as his own faith? Is he credulous, like an Amatonga?” asked Wyzinski in reply.

“How does the white man account for Sgalam’s death?”

“The chief Umhleswa knows the use and the value of the English rifle; he sees the great power it would give him and his tribe. By our death he would have gained nothing, save two or three rifles. No white traders would have come near him, and his end and aim would have been frustrated.”

“Mozelkatse’s vengeance would have found him out,” interpolated the Matabele.

“True; but Sgalam took another view of the matter, and threatened the anger of the chief of Manica. Hence the midnight meeting in our hut, and the death of Sgalam, hence the decision of the sorcerer Koomalayoo and Luji’s persecution. Some one killed Sgalam, and some one must answer for it.”

“So the white chief thinks Umhleswa cast the spell?”

“No, Matabele, no,” answered the missionary, “it was a potent poison which did the work; and Umhleswa had everything to gain by the death, Luji had nothing.”

Masheesh turned away incredulous, not even taking the trouble to reply.

“It will be impossible, I fear, to save the poor fellow; but we must make the effort, Hughes. You see even this man, belonging to a tribe far superior in education to these Amatongas, perfectly believes that Luji by sorcery caused the chief’s death.”

“Let us try, at least,” replied Hughes, as both took their way to the entrance of the hut.

All had been comparatively quiet, since the Amatonga chief had left the place, a council having been held outside to determine on the best mode of punishing the Hottentot sorcerer. The sun was shining brightly, and a light breeze waving the branches of a group of mashunga trees, under which the men of the tribe had assembled. Umhleswa had been speaking rapidly, and doubtless eloquently, to the circle of braves around him. Near by, stood the unfortunate Hottentot, closely guarded, and if it had not been a pitiful, it would have been a laughable sight, for, tied in his usual position, on the prisoner’s shoulders, sat the baboon. Naturally ugly, the brute was rendered still more so from the effects of the gunpowder explosion, which had scorched its skin, and there it sat, peeping from side to side of Luji’s head, moaning, grimacing, stroking the Hottentot’s face, and showing his teeth to all who came near. The large tears were streaming down the captive’s cheeks, mixing with the blood and dirt with which they were begrimed.

The chief concluded his speech just as the two white men emerged into the open air, pointing as he did so to the crouching captive, and the whole band started up, shouting and yelling, to dash past Luji into the bush. One loud scream of anguish burst from the man’s chest, for he had heard his fate, and knew that it was death by fire.

Rudely thrust back by the men who had been left to guard them, Wyzinski and the soldier were powerless, but felt their blood boil within them as they noted the preparations made. The savages seemed to be holding high festival in the bush and in the tall, parched-up reeds, and then one after another appeared bearing bundles of branches and inflammable grass, throwing them down only to return for more, and thus, laughing, singing, and yelling, they collected a large pile.

A mass of bare, splintered rock rose in the plain, and towards this Umhleswa and his subordinate chiefs took their

way, while several of the half-maddened savages laid hold of the Hottentot, the rest dancing wildly around him. Shriek after shriek rose from the captive as he resisted, and the points of the assegais, urging him on in rear, drew blood, the baboon nearly strangling him in his fearful efforts to escape.

Turning, the poor fellow caught sight of his late masters, and as he held out his fettered hands, they marked the big tears of agony rolling down his yellow-black cheeks.

Again Hughes made an effort to escape.

“By heavens, they are going to kill Luji! Oh! for my rifle. At all events he shall not go alone,” he shouted, as he dashed from the entrance of the hut, and was rudely repulsed by the Amatonga guard.

Wyzinski’s eyes were closed, and his thin, finely-cut lips moving as if in prayer. It was, indeed, a terrible sight.

Two strong stakes had been driven into the ground against the smooth face of the rock, and the prisoner was now bound firmly to them, in the fashion of a spread eagle, while all round, in a semicircle, were piled heaps of dried reeds, branches, and grass, near enough to roast the man gradually, but not to burn at once, poor Luji’s shrieks for mercy ringing out even above the joyous yells of the Amatongas. Two of the tribe were engaged in procuring a light by rubbing together pieces of dry wood, while leaning on his assegai, lazily contemplating the whole with an air of great satisfaction, stood Umhleswa, showing his filed teeth and grinning with delight. “And these are the men I thought so gentle, whom I believed incapable of bloodshed. Fiend, scoundrel, Umhleswa,” shouted Hughes, in his excitement, once more rushing on the guards at the entrance, and being again roughly thrown back.

The missionary still prayed.

A bright, red glare shot up in the sunshine, as the air, heavily laden with the sweet scent of the mashunga and the acacia trees, fanned the burning branches; a cry of human agony and terror, mixed with loud yells of vengeance and of delight, rang out. Shriek after shriek followed, as the poor wretch felt the increasing heat, and the flame burned fiercer and more fiercely, while the horrible baboon, in his terror, dug his sharp nails into the Hottentot’s face, the blood streaming, and the Amatongas fairly screaming with laughter.

More and more intense grew the fire, and, as the scorching heat became unendurable, the agony experienced by the baboon increased in intensity. This he revenged on the unfortunate man. The Amatongas seemed to revel in the horrible scene, as they filled the pure, afternoon air with their laughter. Throwing fresh wood on the blaze, they made the fire leap and roar, while they dashed sharp pieces of rock at the captive, cutting and bruising his flesh, but avoiding death, as, blinded with his own blood, and one eye torn from its socket by the mad efforts of the baboon, the unfortunate Hottentot now moaned feebly. Umhleswa stood by watching the scene, as he leaned on his long assegai, the ostrich feather floating over his head, and the panther skin round his waist, from time to time urging his men to further cruelties, or stirring the fire with the spearhead.

Fearfully excited, and unable longer to bear the sickening spectacle, the white men in desperation and rage threw themselves on the guard, and a fierce hand-to-hand struggle ensued. Not wishing to use their arms, and less powerful than they, it required all the superiority of their numbers to resist the shock, for they both fought like madmen, with hand and foot, only at last to be cast back, stunned and bleeding, into the hut.

Louder and louder grew the shrieks outside, madder and madder the dance, round the death-fire. The blaze had died away, and over the embers dashed the Amatongas, using their long knives, cutting strips out of the quivering flesh, but craftily avoiding vital parts, they threw them in the fire. The baboon was dead. A lump of rock had dashed out his brains, which were bespattered over the half-roasted Hottentot’s face and breast, the shattered head and ungainly body dangling about a ghastly sight. The man himself hardly presented a vestige of the human form. One eye hanging out, his limbs smashed by the lumps of rock hurled at him, the blood pouring from his many wounds, and a long, feeble, continuous moaning coming from his fire-blistered lips. And now a fresh batch of reeds and boughs were thrown on the flagging fire, this time within the former circle. The breeze, laden with the perfume of the mashunga, fanned it into flame, and it leaped up high in the last rays of the setting sun, which was tipping the tops of the trees, and the far-away mountains of the Matopo, with a golden hue. The Kaffir’s hair caught fire, and the horrible smell of the burning flesh overpowered the scent of the flowers Umhleswa stirred the blaze with his steel-headed assegai. It was the only merciful deed he had done, for the fire leaped up more quickly, and the stakes, burned through, gave way, the mutilated remains of what had been a human body falling heavily and helplessly forward.

Fresh reeds and branches were heaped on, the flame roared with fury, and the yells and shouts became louder. Once the mass of blazing wood moved, a charred hand was thrust forth, and then all was still. The fire had done its work, and the Amatongas seemed appeased. Noti slept beneath the shadow of the ruins of Sofala, the restless surf moaning over his grave. The lions had killed him, but Luji’s ashes, reduced to fine dust, were blowing over the plains before the night breeze, when the moon shone forth over the sorcerer’s hut and the smoke-begrimed rock.

The Amatonga nature had proved more relentless than the lions, the man more savage than the beast.

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**The Wife’s Revenge.**

More than a week had elapsed since the events related had taken place, and the two Europeans still remained, half free, half prisoners. From the day when Masheesh had witnessed the Hottentot’s cruel death, up to the present, he had not been seen, either by the white men or by the Amatongas. The rest of their followers had made their escape, finding their way back as they could, and their position, perfectly alone among the savage tribe, their safety hanging only on the cupidity of the treacherous Umhleswa, was most critical. For two days after Luji’s death, all had seemed quiet in the kraal, but then a party had sprung up among the men, some of whom had been urged on by the dead chief’s wife to avenge on the two white men his death. This party had gradually grown stronger, and its members never lost an opportunity of showing their hate; indeed it was on more than one occasion only the fear of the deadly rifles which kept them from open violence.

There they sat before their hut, under the shade of the tree, feeling and looking disconsolate enough. It was the eighth day since they had again taken possession of it, and not once had they seen Umhleswa during that period. A good provision of manioc flour had been conveyed to them. Their shot guns had supplied them with small game, for they dared not venture far from the kraal, for fear of awakening suspicion, and even as it was, found themselves closely watched.

The two had just finished a supper they had cooked themselves. They were both fully armed, and near them, within reach of their hands, lay their rifles. The sun had set, the air was warm, and the breeze scarcely moved the leaves of the tree overhead. Before them lay stretched the plain with its belt of forest-land, and in the distance the faint line of the Matopo hills. Close by, the densely populated kraal, the blue smoke from many fires curling up into the air. The hum of the bees was heard as they winged their way homewards towards the forest, and above them in the tree the cries of the parrots, as they quarrelled before composing themselves to sleep. Rising and shading his face with his hand, Hughes gazed in the direction of the kraal. A solitary figure was wending his way through the huts, coming towards them.

“It’s weary work this,” he remarked, as he sat down again with a sigh, “keeping watch and watch all day, and dividing the night between us, too. It’s a weary life. What can have become of Masheesh?”

“The Matabele brave has cared for his own skin, and has fled to the mountains, like the rest of them,” replied the missionary.

“I thought better of him,” said Hughes, absently, “and I am sorry I was wrong.”

“Look, is not that Umhleswa coming towards us,” said Wyzinski. “God grant he may have made arrangements for our journey.”

“It is he, indeed,” replied the other, as he rose to heap fresh branches on the fire.

Slowly the chief stalked along, apparently not caring where he went, stopped opposite the two, and then, as if perceiving them for the first time, approached and squatted by the fire.

Umhleswa’s evil nature was now too well-known, for this seeming carelessness to dupe them.

“Have my white brethren all they can want?” he asked.

“No, chief, we ask the fulfilment of our contract, namely, an escort as far as the Zambesi.”

“My braves are badly armed, and may be unable to protect you. Will the white men give their rifles now?”

The treacherous nature of the request was too evident for the veriest tyro to fall into the trap. To give up their means of protection, and at the same time the only ransom they had to offer, would have been an act of folly, “No, chief, we will not,” replied Wyzinski, a silence following on his words. Suddenly an idea struck him. What if he were to utilise Masheesh’s absence? It could not possibly do any harm, and it might do good.

“Will Umhleswa wait until the Matabele chief comes with Mozelkatse’s warriors to serve us as an escort. He has been gone many days and should be on his return?” he asked.

The wily savage started, fidgeting as he sat. “It is a long journey across the Tati,” he replied.

“The Tati, chief?” asked Wyzinski, remembering at once that Masheesh had spoken of that river.

“Yes, the Tati, where the yellow gold is found, which the Bamangwato now claim,” replied the savage, pointing with his hand. “It lies yonder, between those hills of the Matopo and the more distant Zouga mountains.”

“And who owns the land?” inquired Wyzinski.

“The great chief Machin calls it his,” was the answer, “and Mozelkatse claims it as his, too.”

“You see, Hughes, how all tallies. Beyond those mountain somewhere near the sources of the Limpopo, there exist gold fields, and these rivers which Umhleswa names run into the Limpopo. Here, between those gold fields and the coast, were built the cities of the gold seekers of Solomon. We have trod their streets, and yonder stream, which Masheesh truly named Auro, took their riches to the port.”

“The deuce take your ruins, Wyzinski!” said Hughes. “Do try to get us out of the scrape we are in. Humour the scoundrel.”

Umhleswa seemed uneasy at this by-play, not understanding one word of English.

“Will the white men keep their promise if Masheesh comes?”

“Certainly not. He will then be our deliverer, not you, and the rifles must be his.”

“Umhleswa saved you when the knives of his people were about to drink your blood?” sententiously remarked the savage.

Wyzinski shuddered. “Come, chief,” he replied, taking from his belt a revolver, “send us on our journey, and this shall be yours.” Raising his arm, he fired barrel after barrel into the air, pausing between each ere he drew the trigger to enhance the effect.

The savage’s eyes glistened, and he showed his filed teeth. He doubted not that Masheesh had been sent to bring down the Matabele warriors upon him, in which case he should lose the promised reward.

The thought swayed him; the sight of the revolver finished the matter.

Slowly rising, he walked away several paces, and the missionary’s heart beat quickly, for all seemed lost. Turning, he pointed to the sky. “When the moon rises yonder, and my people are buried in sleep, let the white men be ready. Umhleswa does not lie,” he said, moving away.

Hardly had he gone a dozen paces, when he again paused, hesitated, and once more returned.

“The rifles are for my braves,” he said, again speaking slowly; “the small gun,” pointing to the revolver, “is for Umhleswa. Will the chief give it now?”

Wyzinski hesitated, and for a few moments seemed plunged in thought.

“Take it,” he said at length frankly, as he placed the coveted weapon in the hands of the savage. “Take it, but remember that at a chief’s belt two such weapons should hang; the second will be yours when we reach the Zambesi.”

Umhleswa looked the speaker full in the face, slowly nodding his head three times, then once more pointing to the sky.

“Let my white brethren be ready when the moon rises,” he said, as he stalked away proudly; perhaps the only native in that part of the country possessed of a revolver.

“Do you think he will keep his word, Wyzinski?” asked Hughes, when the conversation was translated to him.

“He is sure to do so,” replied the missionary, “simply because it is his interest.”

“Then the best thing we can do is to be in readiness. There are many things we must leave behind,” returned Hughes. “The moon will rise in two hours.”

Entering the hut once more, and as they fervently hoped for the last time, they set about their preparations, no easy task, when out of the scanty materials, all of which had been deemed necessary a short time since, the greater part were to be left behind. They were still busy, when a body of men gliding out from among the huts by twos and by threes, assembled at the entrance, one of their number signing to its tenants to follow. Carrying their rifles in the hollow of the arm, their pistols at their belts, they cast one look round the interior of the hut which had served them so long as a home, and stepped out into the night.

The moon was just rising over the mountain range, the night was quite still, save when from time to time the cry of the jackal could be heard from the plain. In the native kraal all slept, and the party, consisting of fifteen men armed with assegais, and commanded by the same brave who had conducted them from their camp at Gorongoza, moved silently away the moment the white men joined them. Avoiding the kraal, they shaped their course to the north, travelling as swiftly as they could through a country densely covered with forest. Game seemed to grow more scarce as they neared the end of their journey; and, except for necessary purposes, it was little sought after, the object of all being identical, namely, to strike the Zambesi as soon as possible. This they at length did, though the forest growth impeded their progress so much, that it was only on the evening of the ninth day after leaving the country of the Amatonga that they reached its banks. Under the shade of the high hill of Baramuana a small tent was pitched, not larger than that used by the French soldier, and known by the name of tente d’abri. A fire burned fiercely in front of it, and close by ran the Zambesi, a fine broad stream flowing towards the sea, between banks covered with reeds of luxuriant growth. Beyond the river a level plain, broken by forest-land, and in the distance the blue outline of a high mountain range.

Near the fire were seated the two Europeans, and in a semicircle round them the fifteen Amatonga warriors who had been their guides. Further down the stream, at a bend of the river, the walls of a brick building were visible, some ten miles away.

A perfect jungle of forest swept up almost to the spot where the group were seated, the tamarind and acacia trees growing to the river bank, covered with creeping plants, such as the convolvulus, the jasmine, the deadly nightshade, all festooned from tree to tree, while the wild guava, the pomegranate, and many a sweet-scented bush pushed upwards their luxuriant undergrowth. The bees were humming among the sweetly-scented flowers of the dholicos, and the rushing sound of the river, as it took its way to the sea past the fort of Senna, was music to the ears of the two travellers.

“Give them their due, Wyzinski, and let us be rid of them; I hate the very look of an Amatonga,” exclaimed Hughes.

The group of savages sat round, staring at the two with a steady, concentrated gaze, their long assegais raised in the air, “Matumba,” said the powerful, but stunted brave, who had been in command of the party, speaking with difficulty the Zulu tongue, “Matumba has done his duty, let the chiefs do theirs. Yonder are the walls of their brethren’s fort.”

The missionary did not at once reply, but pushing the promised arms towards the speaker, took from his belt his revolver, discharging its barrels into the air, handed it to the Amatonga.

“This is now Umhleswa’s property, and thus the white man fulfils his promise.”

“We are left with our two rifles and one revolver between us,” remarked Hughes. “If ever I get the chance of paying off these thieves, won’t I?”

Matumba took the arm, and, turning to his men, distributed the rifles among them. A sharp conversation followed, unintelligible to the Europeans, save that the Amatonga pointed several times to the two remaining rifles.

“The white men,” resumed Matumba, once more turning to them, “are near their friends. They have no need of their guns, the Amatonga are far from their kraal. Let them give the two guns, which are now useless.”

“Never, Matumba,” exclaimed Wyzinski, springing to his feet and cocking both barrels of his piece. “Look out, Hughes, they mean mischief. We have kept our word, Amatonga. Keep yours.”

A sharp conversation ensued between the natives, all talking together, the chief, Matumba, evidently trying to keep them within bounds, while they as evidently wished to take the coveted rifles by force. Placing their backs against the rocks, their rifles ready, the two waited the result, but great was their relief when the whole party, after much talking, at last moved off in Indian file, and disappeared under the deepening forest shade.

“We are well out of that, Wyzinski,” remarked Hughes, as he seated himself at the foot of the rock, “and now, what are we to do next?”

“Break ground as soon and as speedily as possible. We have but to follow the stream, and we shall be within the

walls of Senna in three hours."

The little tent was struck, the knapsacks strapped on, and their rifles at the trail, both moved rapidly away. But a deep cut they found ran between them and the Portuguese fort. It was filled with heavy timber and luxuriant undergrowth. Night came on, and there was no moon, so that the direction of the stream was soon lost, and they were brought to a stand still.

"Let us halt here," said Wyzinski, as they pushed their way through a clump of mimosa, and gained a small clearing, hemmed in on every side by the forest.

"We can reach Senna by early morning, and I am half dead with hunger."

A fire was lit, some strips of venison cut from an eland killed the previous day, roasted on the embers, and they made a hearty meal.

"It will be a relief to me to see the inside of the fort, Hughes," said Wyzinski. "I misdoubt those Amatongas."

"They have done better by us than your favourite Matabele. I never thought Masheesh would have left us thus. If you will take the first turn, I'll have a sleep," replied Hughes.

"Agreed," returned the missionary, as his comrade placing his knapsack under his head, threw himself under a low bush, and was soon sleeping heavily. Hours went by, and still the missionary, with his rifle thrown across his knee, sat by the fire. He rose from time to time to collect and heap on it the dried branches. Once he heard distinctly above the noises incidental to an African night in the wilderness, the splintering of wood. He was in the act of throwing an armful of dry branches on the blaze. Stooping, he seized his rifle, and was just about to wake his companion, when the noise ceased. Stepping up to where the soldier lay, he looked at him. The starlight shone over the bronzed and travel-worn face. The cap had fallen off, and the long locks of dark hair touched the ground. "It would be a pity to wake him," muttered the missionary. "I am not tired; the presentiment of evil is upon me, and I could not sleep even if I tried."

Turning, he again squatted down by the fire, the cocked rifle over his knee. Once, more than an hour after, the same sound, like to the breaking of wood, reached his ear.

"It may be some heavy animal feeding," he thought, "and my fears be groundless; the darkness of the night, the loneliness and fatigue, have unnerved me."

Soon his thoughts were away in other lands, and with friends, some of whom had been long since dead. Then they returned to the ruined cities of this wild land. Had they any affinity to those found in Mexico? he asked himself. No, they must be Egyptian.

Suddenly a wild shout burst on his ear, a crashing blow, a whizzing in the ears, and all was darkness. The missionary lay stretched beside the embers of the fire.

How long he remained insensible on the ground Wyzinski never knew, but the grey dawn was just breaking as he struggled back to consciousness, to find his arms tightly and painfully bound behind his back, his head splitting with pain, while the clearing seemed filled with the dark forms of the Amatongas, seated in a circle, and evidently debating on their prisoner's fate. As he lay there on his back, barely able to turn his head, his open eyes gazing upwards at the stars, whose feeble light was just paling before the first grey streaks of dawn, a black mass intervened between him and the blue sky. It was a woman's head, the long hair told him this much, but the face was that of a demon; the beadlike eyes which peered into his flashing with malicious hatred; the thick lips parted, showing the yellow teeth clenched with passion; the flat nostrils distended with rage, and the hair, matted with grease and dirt, sweeping his face as she bent over him.

It was a face he knew, for it was that of the dead chief's wife; and as the missionary closed his eyes to shut out the horrid vision, the hag, seeing he had again become conscious, uttered a piercing yell, and dashed into the middle of the council ring, chattering in a shrill and parrot-like voice. The missionary's eyes remained closed, for he felt his position was hopeless, and what at this moment grieved him more was, that by his negligent watch he had sacrificed his friend. If he had been struck down and made prisoner with his rifle in his hand and wide awake, what chance was there for the sleeping soldier? He knew he should, after the fashion of this tribe, be tortured; he prayed for firmness to meet his doom, but he thought with agony of what had been his comrade's fate during the hours he himself lay insensible and apparently dead.

A rude stroke from the sharp point of an Amatonga spear roused him, and in obedience to the command he endeavoured to struggle to his feet. Unable to effect this, two of his captors roughly seized him, dragging him up. The dawn was just lighting up the scene, as he glanced round. There lay the embers of the fire scattered about the clearing; there lay the soldier's knapsack, and there, near it, with an ox hide thrown over it, something which took, under its coverings, the shape of a human form. There was no mistaking it.

The missionary's eyes filled with tears, and a convulsive sob heaved his breast, as he looked on all that was left of the man who, in his dead sleep, had trusted to his friend's vigilance.

The Amatongas seemed to have no time to lose, for hardly giving their prisoner space to realise what was passing around, they hurried him along through the bush, retracing their path until the whole group reached the foot of the Baramuana hill, where the distribution of the rifles had taken place the day before.

"My presentiment of evil did not deceive me," muttered Wyzinski; "fool, triple fool as I was not to profit by it, and yonder," thought he, as his eyes followed the course of the river, and the brick walls of the fort met his gaze, just tipped by the first rays of the sun, "yonder lay safety."

Grinning, laughing, and chattering, the circle of Amatonga braves drew round him. Their prisoner was thrown to the ground and his feet bound with the palmyra rope; the woman fiend, her passion lending her strength, hauling at one end of the rough cord until it literally cut into the flesh. A stake was driven into the ground at the foot of the rock, and then the missionary knew his doom was, like Luji's, death by fire. Next the whole band dispersed, going into the forest, and returning by twos and threes, laden with brush as dry as tinder. Quickly the semicircle of boughs and long grass grew round the stake, while close to the prisoner's head sat the fiend-like woman, spitting out her rage, heaping imprecations

on his head, and occasionally breaking out into a slow chant or death song.

The missionary's eyes were again closed; his lips were moving in prayer. He was asking for strength to bear his fearful death, as a man should whose negligence has brought evil not only on himself, but on others. The belt of forest trees ran close to the spot where he lay, and while he prayed a dark face put aside cautiously the clusters of convolvuli which formed a flowery screen among the trees, as two black piercing eyes gazed out from among the flowers, seemed to take note of the scene, and then disappeared.

And now four of the Amatongas emerged from the bush, bearing the nameless something, covered up with skins, but yet showing the outlines of the human form. Wyzinski shuddered as he opened his eyes and saw it. The pile of brushwood grew higher and higher, and the missionary felt himself rudely dragged along the ground, and fastened to the stake. The palmyra rope which cut into his flesh was removed, and his feet firmly tied apart to two small wooden pins driven into the ground. The hideous looking woman, who had been dancing and singing round him, waving her lean arms, and clashing together her long yellow teeth, now sat down right opposite the victim, her eyes intently fixed on his, to enjoy his agony. The last armful of brush was tossed upon the heap, fire was procured, and a long twisted wisp of dry grass lighted, and placed in the widow's hands.

Chanting out a monotonous song, the woman rose and came on. She reached the wall of dry brush, she waved the wisp of flame in her victim's face, scorching his hair and whiskers; then, with a yell of vengeance, stooped to kindle the fire, when a flash of light seemed to quiver through the sunshine, and she fell forward, pierced through the heart by an assegai, the torch falling from her dying hands, kindling the dry grass and brushwood.

In an instant the missionary was surrounded by a semicircle of flame, the reports of rifles rang in his ears, a loud shout of "Boarders, away!" came from among the trees, as half a dozen Portuguese soldiers, led on by Hughes, the Matabele chief, Masheesh, and Captain Weber of the "Halcyon," dashed across the open, scattered the burning brush right and left, cut away his bonds, and dragged the half-choked missionary free of the flames.

Three of the Amatongas had fallen by the first discharge, and without halting to reload, the Portuguese charged with the bayonet, led by an old seaman, whose scar-seamed face told of some recent fight. It was Captain Mason, late of the "Argonaut." The savages, wholly surprised, at once fled, but halting as they reached the belt of forest, threw their assegais. "Forward, my lads; no quarter for the accursed scoundrels!" shouted the excited Mason. "For—," the word was never spoken, for an assegai struck him in the left eye, piercing to the brain. He fell heavily on his face, his clubbed rifle tumbling to the ground; a deep groan, one or two spasmodic struggles, and the captain of the "Argonaut" was no more, the whole band of savages having disappeared in the bush.

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**Lotus-Eating on the Zambesi.**

Startled from his deep sleep by the shout of the Amatongas, as they leaped into the clearing, the soldier had sprung to his feet, and possessing the faculty of instantly recovering his senses, when suddenly awoke, he at once comprehended his situation. Shouting to Wyzinski to join him, and whirling round his head the heavy knapsack held by the straps, he struck down the foremost savage: a second shared the same fate, but the leather straps broke with the blow. Springing on the third, Hughes grappled with his adversary, clutching the chief Matumba, for it was no other, fiercely by the throat—but he had met his match.

Matumba, short of stature, was yet a powerful man, and though partially stunned by the fall, and his heavy knobstick having dropped from his hands, he struggled manfully for life. The fire had been trampled out, the light of the stars was very feeble, and the two rolled over and over in the death struggle, none daring to meddle with them. A dozen dark, naked forms moved round them; the long knives gleamed in the starlight, but the Amatongas could not strike, so rapid were the movements of the two struggling men. At last, Matumba's efforts seemed to grow weaker, the deadly grip tightened on his throat, and as he lay under him, Hughes buried his short dagger in the Amatonga's side. Casting the body from him, with a superhuman effort, and without pausing for a moment, the soldier dashed through the circle, the savages striking at him with their knives.

Seizing his rifle as he fled, with one sweeping blow he drove back the foremost of his pursuers, and shouting to Wyzinski to follow, plunged into the bush. The ground ascended, the trees grew farther apart; he was on the verge of the forest; but one of the long knives had wounded him deeply in the left shoulder, and he was growing faint from loss of blood. Pausing to listen, he distinctly heard the crashing of the underwood. Was it Wyzinski following him? Listening attentively, he could distinguish the same noise to the right and left, and he then knew that the Amatongas, paralysed and astonished as they had been at first by the desperate nature of the resistance, had spread themselves out, and were bringing up the whole country before them on three sides, just as they did when hunting antelope. On the fourth ran the Zambesi. Moving rapidly forward, and determined to trust to the river rather than to the Amatongas, Hughes came to a nullah. Its banks were covered with brush, and the masses of convolvuli almost hid it in places. A sudden thought struck him. Jumping in, he followed its course until he came to a spot completely shut in by creepers and shrubs, then placing his rifle near him, he lay down. Minutes passed, the breaking of the bushes came near him; the cries of the savages calling to each other seemed close to; the head of an assegai was thrust into the mass of verdure which formed his only protection, striking the rock within an inch of him; the noises in the brush, and the cries passed on. Grey daylight came streaming between the leaves, the purple convolvuli opened their flowers, and the parrots and wild pigeons began to awake among the branches.

The wound in his shoulder had stopped bleeding, but he felt faint and nearly unable to move. Cautiously raising his head above the level of the bank, he glanced around. "All seems quiet. If I could only reach the river," he muttered. "My mouth is dry and parched with thirst."

Slowly and painfully he extricated himself from the bed of the nullah, and then, his rifle on his shoulder, followed its course.

It did indeed revive him, as he scooped up the waters of the Zambesi with his hands, and then, taking off his clothes, bathed the wounded shoulder in the cool river. What had become of his comrade was now his thought, and the idea of not ascertaining his fate for fear of personal consequences, never occurred to him. The sun would soon be up, the bees were just humming along the river banks, the patches of forest-land on the plain beyond the river looked black, in the grey dawn, and the stars were fast disappearing. He would take his way back to the clearing slowly, and cautiously. Just as he had stepped on the bank reinvigorated and refreshed, a noise struck his ears.

Turning towards the river, he leaned on his rifle, listening attentively. It was a fine broad stream the Zambesi, even

here, before the Shire river pours its waters into it far below the fort of Senna; and as he looked down it, he again caught the noise distinctly.

“It is the steady pull of oars in the rowlocks,” he said, speaking aloud, unconsciously. “I cannot be mistaken. Perhaps I may find help.”

Concealing himself behind a bush, he waited. The sounds, whatever they were, became more and more distinct, and soon, slowly pulling against the stream, a boat drew clear of the bend of the river. Slowly it surged onward meeting the stream, urged on by the strokes of six rowers, the Portuguese flag streaming out from the stern, and a small carronade mounted in her bows. In the stern sheets sat a tall, upright figure, the tiller ropes in either hand, dressed in a monkey jacket, pilot cloth trousers, and a sailor’s cap. His long white hair streamed in the wind, and by his side a nearly naked savage. “Could he be mistaken? No,” said Hughes again, speaking aloud, “it is Captain Weber, and Masheesh has not deserted us. He was bringing aid, alas too late.”

“Boat ahoy!” shouted Hughes, as he stepped from behind the bush, waving his rifle in the air.

A loud shout came over the river; the next moment the skipper’s left hand gave the yawl’s bows a broad sheer towards the bank, and Masheesh and the old sailor were by his side. His tale was soon told. Not a moment was lost, and though they found the clearing empty, the spoor of the Amatonga was plain. Masheesh was sent forward to reconnoitre, the Portuguese soldiers were landed, and the result is known.

“And what is that over yonder, which I took for you?” asked the missionary.

Hughes rose from the spot where he had been sitting, the missionary’s hand in his; he stooped over the heap, and threw the skin aside.

“It is Matumba,” he said; “look at the mark of my grip on his throat, and the dark blood-stain on his side. He gave me trouble enough,” he continued, as he threw back the skins over the dead savage; “and his face with its starting eyeballs, and tongue hanging out of his mouth, is no pleasant sight. He was a treacherous savage, but died the death of a brave.”

“I don’t see,” said Weber, who now joined them, “that there is any reason why we should not pitch the bodies of these villains into the fire and have them consumed. It is more ship-shape than leaving them to the jackals.”

The thing was no sooner said than done, and the party made short work of it. The body of the captain of the “Argonaut” was carried down to the boat, and covered with the Portuguese ensign. Those of the Amatonga placed on the fire, which was burning fiercely.

“One, two, three, and yo heave ho!” shouted the sailors, as Matumba’s corpse was launched into the air, and fell with a heavy thud into the middle of the flames, sending up a shower of sparks. Fresh brush was heaped over it, and the whole was left burning.

“Poor Mason,” said Captain Weber, as the party moved off, “he never got over the loss of his ship. Of the whole crew, only yonder man now remains.”

“But what were you doing here on the Zambesi, Captain Weber, and how came you in company with Masheesh?”

The Matabele had been in great force, during the short engagement, and now with his long assegai dyed red with blood, stalked solemnly beside the missionary, who walked with great difficulty.

“It is easily explained. You will remember when you went over the ‘Halcyon’s’ side, I told you I had but a few months of my three years’ cruise, Captain Hughes,” replied the seaman, “and that I was bound for Quillimane.”

“Perfectly, and that you would give me a passage to England if I needed it,” answered Hughes. “I shall be glad to accept it, if you can land me at Delagoa Bay, Port Natal, or the Cape; for we two have nothing save our knapsacks and rifles now.”

“Avast there! Hear my tale first. It appears a special envoy has been sent out by the King of Portugal to report on this colony on the Zambesi. With his staff he has been for the last three months at Tété. The ‘Halcyon’ has been taken up for his passage home, and I am on my way to sign articles with Don Francisco di Maxara.”

“But that does not account for my seeing Masheesh at your side in yonder boat?” remarked Hughes.

“The Governor of the fort yonder was at *Tété* with his Excellency when the Matabele arrived, and told his tale. The Portuguese would not get under way without orders. Reaching Senna late last night, I heard of the affair, knew it must be you, and determined to send poor Mason on to sign articles, and guided by Masheesh to go to your help.”

A cordial grasp of the hand followed this.

“Why, you are burning with fever, my lad, and more fit for the sick bay than the jungle,” said Weber, looking into the soldier’s face.

“Shove off; give way, my lads; his Excellency must wait a wee,” continued the seaman, as the boat sheered down stream, and the men bending to their oars, the stout craft dashed down the Zambesi, heading for Senna.

Don Isidore Mujao, the commandant, met them at the landing place, greatly surprised at their speedy return, and still more so when he saw the use his Portuguese flag had been put to. About forty years of age; tall, dark complexioned, and sedate in manner, he welcomed the new comers, at the same time giving his orders to the men. Taking up the body of the late captain of the burned ship, six soldiers conveyed it to the little chapel, and during the pause, the new comers looked around them.

The fort was built of brick, and was in a very dilapidated condition. Situated on the right bank of the Zambesi, the river rolled its waters under the walls, and seemed a large stream, dotted with reed-covered islands.

“Captain Weber, you can spare your men a toilsome row; his Excellency will arrive either this night or to-morrow from Tété *en route* for Quillimane. Gentlemen,” continued the Portuguese, “you are welcome; you will meet with scant hospitality here, but we will do our best.”

Don Mujao took off his black broad-brimmed hat as he spoke, bowing low.

“Ay, ay, then I have not much time to lose. I say, Don,” exclaimed the sailor, “this is the Senhor Wyzinski, a missionary, on the loose, and whom we found in a fair way to make a grill for Davy Jones; look at his singed hair and whiskers; and this is an old friend, Captain Hughes, 150th Regiment, who looks half dead with fever.”

Again the formal Portuguese raised his hat, bowing first to one and then to the other.

“Roderigues,” he said, beckoning to a soldier who stood near, “show the Senhors to the only room we can give them. Once more I ask your consideration for our shortcomings, Senhors.”

“Come, make sail!” cried the skipper; “don’t be all day backing and filling here.”

The gate opened, then swung to again, as passing the Governor, who stood with his hat raised from his head, and preceded by the very questionable individual who had been called Roderigues, Hughes and the missionary, literally worn out with fatigue and excitement, the one wounded in the shoulder, the other his face blistered with burns, and hardly able to walk from the effects of the tightly bound palmyra rope, took their way up a narrow, winding staircase, turning out of a landing into a large room, lighted by two barred windows looking over the Zambesi and the plain beyond.

Two rude stretcher beds placed at opposite sides of the room, two large horse buckets, evidently intended for washing purposes, a coil of palmyra rope, to haul up water from the river below, and a couple of rude chairs, formed the furniture. The roof of the chamber was vaulted, and the floor was of red brick. Such was the room into which the soldier ushered the two travel-worn men, and to them it seemed a palace. Standing at attention as they passed, the Portuguese spoke some words in his own tongue, then closed the door with a clang. Placing their rifles against the wall, and throwing down the knapsacks which had been recovered, the missionary’s first act was to push the rude bolt, and offer up fervent thanks for the protection vouchsafed them during their late danger.

The water-buckets were put into use, the knapsacks rummaged, and then the two sat gazing in silence over the river.

“We must manage a passage with our friend, Weber,” said Wyzinski, at last.

“I don’t know how it is, I don’t feel any interest in anything,” languidly replied Hughes. “These shivering fits upset me. The fever has its hold of me.”

“I wonder whether they have any quinine? What a miserable, tumble-down set of wretched hovels these Portuguese have here. A town of thirty houses.”

“The country looks fertile, and the colony should prosper,” languidly returned Hughes, shivering heavily from head to foot, and his face flushing as he spoke. “Those are curiously-shaped sugar-loaf hills, the river flowing between us and them. The thick forest stretches beyond, and how beautiful the distant mountains seem.”

“Those are the hills of the Morumbala range, but what interests me more is yonder boat, swinging to her anchor. She is of English build, has a small cabin, and pulls eight oars. I should like to drop down the Zambesi to-morrow. There must be traders at Quillimane, sailing to Natal or the Cape.”

Here a prolonged, and painful shivering fit took possession of Hughes, gradually and rapidly increasing to such an extent, as soon to incapacitate him even from talking. That night the pulse was beating at a fearful pace, the temples throbbed nearly to bursting, and the terrible shivering fits shook his frame. The following day the brain was affected and the sufferer went once more through the scenes he had lately acted. The missionary dragged his cot to that of his sick comrade, and Captain Weber shared his watch, but the resources of the fort were very small, and but for his strong constitution the chances were against recovery.

The morning of the third day, there was a great bustle within the walls of the ruined fort. Weber came to say good bye. The Portuguese envoy had arrived from Tété, the agreement had been made, and the captain of the merchantman was to drop down the river that morning to finish his preparations.

Hughes was wandering, and did not know him. “It shall go hard but that you shall have your passage in the ‘Halcyon,’ if he can bear it,” said the skipper, the tears standing in his eyes as he pressed the missionary’s hand. “An hour of the fresh breeze of the Indian ocean would do more to cooper up yonder craft than all the rubbish in the world. He’s on his beam ends now, that’s sure; but may be he’ll be all a-tanto soon.”

A knock at the door, and Don Francisco Maxara entered; an elderly, grey-haired man, tall in stature, and stately in bearing.

“I cannot say it is a pleasure, Senhor,” began the old noble, as he bowed to the missionary, and made room for the merchant captain to pass, “but at all events it is a duty to place myself and all I have at your command.”

Boiling restlessly from side to side, his handsome features, bronzed by the sun, now flushed with fever, Hughes was unconscious of their presence. He was with his corps cheering on his men as he had cheered them on the plains of Chillianwallah, the day the gallant 10th Regiment melted away before the masked fire from the Sikh artillery, when gliding through the open door and passing her arm through her father’s, Dona Isabel de Maxara looked down on him.

Tall and graceful in figure, the girl’s face, was of that beautiful clear brown tint, found only in the sunny south, but one of the peculiarities which distinguished her was the network of blue veins, tracing themselves under the transparent olive of the skin; the eyes were large and intensely brilliant, shaded now by the long black lashes, which, with the slightly arched and beautifully pencilled eyebrow, told of Moorish blood. The mouth was small and beautifully cut, the lips parted now and showing the white teeth; and if there was a fault in the features, it was that the forehead, with all its lace-work of blue veins glancing under the clear olive skin, was too high and massive for a female face. The hair was brushed backwards, fastened behind by a large comb, tipped with gold, from which hung the long mantilla of Spain.

The sick man saw nothing of all this, he was busy among the guns at Chillianwallah.

“How long, Senhor,” said the girl, looking up at the missionary, and the large eyes filling as she did so with tears, which rolled one by one unheeded down her cheeks,—“how long has your friend been ill?”

“This is the third day, mademoiselle,” replied he, speaking in French, both father and daughter having used that language. “Have you any quinine, Senhor?” he continued, addressing the father.

“Yes, at your service; but not having had any before, what have you been using?” replied the noble, taking the sick man’s hands, and feeling his pulse.

“A drink made out of the kumbunga plant. It has cured me more than once.”

“Wait,” cried the girl, eager to be of use. “I will return in a moment,” and she flew out of the room, showing as she moved the beautiful foot and ankle peculiar to the Portuguese.

The old noble shook his head as he let the arm he held fall on the bed-clothes.

“There, use that at once,” said the breathless girl, as she returned with a small bottle filled with quinine. “And as soon as you can, get away from this terrible place.”

“We will leave now, my daughter; we are but in the way. Later on we may be useful. Command me, Senhor,” added the Portuguese; “whatever I have is at your service. I pray you do not spare me or mine.”

With a stately wave of the hand, as though he were quitting a palace, instead of a poor barrack-room in a dilapidated fort, the nobleman passed on.

“You will let me know,” said Isabel, pausing before she joined her father, and raising the large black eyes to the missionary’s face—“you will let me know how your poor friend is.” And with one more glance round the room, and at the wretched bed, she passed out.

Wyzinski stood looking at her. It seemed like a dream; but then there was the stoppered bottle of white powder in his hand to prove the reality. All that day, all that night, the missionary watched by the bedside. Towards midnight a heavy thunderstorm passed over the plains watered by the Zambesi. The air seemed blue with the forked lightning; the thunder rattled and roared over the fort, but the morning dawned calm and beautiful, and a cool breeze blew in at the open windows, bringing with it the sweet breath of the tamarind flowers. The quinine, too, had done its work; and the crisis which in the dreadful tertian fever of the Zambesi always occurs on the third day, had passed over favourably. These storms are of frequent occurrence in the land through which the Zambesi rolls its waters, and scarcely a week goes by without the thunder making itself heard round the dilapidated walls of Senna. Another of these periodical storms had just occurred, sweeping over the land, accompanied by torrents of rain, cooling the air, and refreshing the parched-up plains on the banks of the Zambesi. The river was high in consequence, rolling down branches and trees and quantities of driftwood past the brick walls of the crumbling fort. It has already been said that several small islands intersect the course of the river; and near one of these, not a stone’s throw from the water-gate, two boats were moored, swinging to the stream. The one a large European-looking pinnace—though really built on the Zambesi after an English model—possessed a covered cabin aft, and was capable of holding some twenty people. The other was of smaller and lighter mould. From the island came the sounds of laughter and conversation.

Under the trellised creepers, through which the rays of the afternoon sun were shining, sat a party of Europeans. The water was bubbling up in a stone basin; the purple grapes were hanging in rich clusters from the vines; and there, doing the honours of the table with a gentle grace which showed a practised ease and knowledge of the world, sat Dona Isabel Maxara. Near her, half sitting, half reclining on some cushions, Captain Hughes seemed lost in contemplation of the fair girl. Still very weak, and much pulled down by the short but sharp attack of the deadly tertian, he had got it into his head that the quinine had saved his life; and perhaps it was not a very unpleasant thing to be beholden for life to so fair a physician. And so he gazed on the tall, graceful, and beautifully-turned figure, the head carried with that dignified swan-like movement peculiar to Spain and Portugal, the long black lace veil now thrown back and floating behind. The clear olive complexion was well set off by the crimson lips of the well-cut mouth, and the large coal black eyes, with their long lashes, well matched by the luxuriant tresses of jetty hair. As she rose to carry the small cup of coffee to the invalid, he certainly thought the life it pleased him to consider she had saved, could not have a better use than devotion to her; and when the fair Isabel stooped over the young soldier, and one long tress, of the raven hair touched his hand, raised to receive the cap, the rosy flush flew up into a cheek once browned by exposure, but paled now by illness.

At a table close by, the Portuguese envoy, Dom Francisco Maxara, sat playing at chess with the Commandant of Senna; the two, wholly absorbed in their game, exchanging a word only at intervals. The missionary was unpacking, showing, and repacking, the various skins and small animals he had managed to secure. The birds were singing in the bushes round about, and above all came the buzz of insect life, and the ceaseless roll of the broad Zambesi.

The soldier lay back on the cushions sipping his coffee, his eyes half shut, a pleasant feeling of indolence enervating his frame, as he gazed. “She is very lovely,” he muttered; “and here am I, a captain of a marching regiment, allowing myself to fall in love with the daughter of a Portuguese grandee, whom I shall probably never see again.”

“And this,” continued Wyzinski, who seemed to have monopolised the conversation, “is it not a beautiful skin? Do you remember, Hughes, shooting this wild cat in the tree the morning of that terrible day among the Amatongas?”

“Indeed,” replied the other, “I am little likely to forget it. I shall always think it was the excitement, and the prostration consequent on the hunt, which so nearly consigned me to an African grave.”

“Tell me the tale,” cried Isabel. “I long to hear your adventures among the tribes of the interior. It seems so strange for us to meet here on this great African river.”

The conversation was carried on in French; and the soldier told of their travels; told how the baboon had first been found; how it had lived in the camp, and how it had died. The chess-players were disturbed by the silvery peals of laughter which rang round them as Hughes related, with some humour, the incident of the powder-flask; and Dona Isabel’s dark eyes had been fixed for a long time on the speaker’s face ere the tale was finished, and the sun sank beneath the horizon, the stars peeping out, while the fire-flies came floating around, and the cool puffs of the sea breeze

swept across the river.

“Sing for us, Isabel,” said Dom Francisco, as he checkmated his antagonist, at the same time rising and making him a stately bow.

Dona Isabel took her guitar, and the sweet tones of her voice rang out among the trellised vines and over the broad river, dying away on the plains beyond, where the howl of the jackal was just making itself heard.

“You will give me my revenge, Senhor Maxara,” asked the Commandant.

“Nay, Dom Isidore, not possible—at least, until you do me the high honour of becoming my guest in our own land. We must leave to-morrow evening.”

“And the Dona Isabel,” asked Mujaio. “Is she, too, in such a hurry to leave Senna?”

“The Dona Isabel must abide by her father’s decision,” she replied; “but she may have a word to say to Dom Maxara on the subject.”

Rising, Isabel took her father’s arm, and leading him towards the river side, seemed to urge something, to which he would not consent.

“Impossible, Isabel; wholly so. The brig is an English trader, bound for the Cape, and takes us only as passengers. Her captain cannot delay beyond the stipulated day; but come, we will do our best.”

“My daughter, Dom Isidore has been urging our stay at Senna for some days longer, but I am forced to say nay. You, gentlemen,” continued the ceremonious old noble, bowing first to the missionary, then to the soldier, “seek to return to the Cape; will you so far honour my daughter and myself as to accompany us?”

The soldier’s face flushed with pleasure. It was just what he could have desired. Wyzinski courteously declined, urging that they must wait until the “Alert” gun brig should touch at Quillimane, as they were without funds, and unable to pay their passage to the Cape.

A stately wave of the hand from Dom Francisco followed this matter-of-fact declaration, which wounded the soldier to the quick. He almost hated Wyzinski, and yet the determination had been come to that morning, on hearing of the advent of the “Alert.”

“The brig ‘Halcyon’ waits us at Quillimane,” persisted the noble. “She is chartered by my government to convey me, its envoy, to the Cape, and can take no passengers, but is bound to receive my suite and guests. Will the senhors honour us by becoming the latter?”

“And you may, indeed, help us,” interposed Isabel, fixing her dark eyes on the missionary. “What shall we do on board an English brig, with no one to understand us. But will not the senhor be too weak if we leave to-morrow?”

As she stood there, with the stars shining upon her, and the fire-flies playing like an aureole round her head, it occurred to Hughes that he was strong enough to follow her anywhere. The missionary looked at him inquiringly.

“Every day will bring me strength,” he replied; “and I shall be very glad to get to the sea once more. Senhor Dom Francisco Maxara, I accept your kind and generous offer, with many thanks.”

“And I also,” joined in Wyzinski.

“Then, Senhor Commandant, we will start to-morrow evening. I shall leave my staff here until the surveys, estimates, and plans be completed, and you shall have your revenge when you come home.”

“All shall be in readiness,” replied Mujaio, as he took a whistle from his neck, and sounded a shrill call. A boat shot across the stream from the fort; the noise of the oars straining in the rowlocks was heard, and the bowman jumped ashore, holding the boat’s painter in his hand.

“Good-night, gentlemen,” said the noble. “I shall have much business to transact with the Senhor Commandant to-morrow, and may not see you. My daughter, Dona Isabel, will hope to have that pleasure in my absence. The smaller of the two boats allotted us you will look upon as yours.”

Moving towards the river, his daughter on his arm, the stately Portuguese took off his broad-brimmed hat most courteously. Senhor Mujaio followed, having first handed the missionary the silver whistle.

“When you require the boat you have only to use this. Good-night, gentlemen.”

A dark spot shot off from the bank into the starlight; the noise of the oars was again heard, and then the sound of a merry Portuguese air, in the chorus of which even the boatmen joined, though the soft, silvery female voice told who was the principal singer. Then the dark shadow thrown across the river received the boat, and all was silent. With a sigh of gratification, Hughes threw himself back on the cushions.

“Well, there is our future provided for,” he ejaculated. “Who would have thought of meeting such a divine creature here, Wyzinski? Fancy such a jewel shut up in that crumbling old fort. Why, the Amatongas even could take it.”

“There is a much more warlike tribe here to the north, named the Landeens, who have taken it more than once,” replied the missionary.

“And might do so again,” mused the other, “this very night.”

“Don’t you think you might utilise your light infantry education?” asked Wyzinski.

“What do you mean?”

“Why, I mean if you were to run away, as you did from the hippopotamus.”

“What, run away from the Landeens?”

“No, from the lady,” laughed Wyzinski; “I think it would be the wisest plan.”

“Don’t be a fool, Wyzinski; I am not strong enough to bear chaffing.”

“But quite strong enough to go down the stream—of course I don’t mean the stream of life, but of the Zambesi—with Dona Isabel de Maxara?”

The captain of the gallant 150th did not reply, but fell into a musing mood. Some Portuguese cigarettes lay on the table near the chessmen. The night was cool; and it was pleasant, looking over the flowing river, and watching the twinkling lights flashing from the windows and embrasures of the fort. The cry of the jackal was heard from time to time; a distant splash told of the hippopotami; and then the moon rose, tinging the stream with its rays, and lighting up the islands on its bosom. The well-known conical hill of Baramuana became distinctly visible; and far away to the northward, the faint, ghostlike outline of the Morumbala range could with difficulty be traced; while the flat country round, closely covered with forest growth, looked like a dark blot in the moonlight. The lights twinkled and then went out in the fort; the noise in the wretched houses of Senna gradually ceasing.

“And what are your intentions, Wyzinski, on your arrival at the Cape?” asked Hughes, after a long silence.

“To organise a party; get the support of the English Government, if possible; but, whether or not, to return to the Amatonga, and by means of the ambition of their chief, Umhleswa, fully to explore the ruins now lying buried there. Will you join me?”

“No, Wyzinski; I have had enough of African life. I long for Europe and its civilisation.”

“Say for Portugal and its water-melons, and I shall understand you better.”

“Nay,” answered the soldier, dreamily; “this fever has weakened me, and I have my regiment to think of. I must shake it off, or all hopes of advancement will be taken from me.”

“You are quite right,” replied the missionary. “Concentrate your thoughts on that, and don’t think of the Dona Isabel; that haughty old noble would as soon dream of the sun for her bridegroom, as of a captain of the 150th.”

The soldier sighed; and Wyzinski, using the whistle, the boat was soon once more at the island, and Senna, its fort, commandant, garrison, and guests, buried in deep sleep, even with the fear of the treacherous Landeens before their eyes.

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**Elephant Hunting on the Shire River.**

Two boats have been mentioned as intended for the use of the party descending the Zambesi River. The one was a simple ordinary pinnace, but the second and larger boat had evidently been fitted out for special use, and was in fact that appropriated to the not unfrequent voyages of the commandants of the two forts of Tete and Senna. Pulling eight oars, its speed was considerable, when rowing, as in the present instance, down stream, and it was so broad in the beam as to be able to stow away luggage as well as passengers. A light wooden framework had been constructed, so as to fit on either gunwale aft, forming a cover something resembling that of a modern English wagonette, with windows let into the side. Divans and cushions served for seats, while handsome mirrors ornamented every spare corner, thus making of the roomy boat a pleasant sleeping place, enabling its occupants to escape the pest of mosquitos, incidental to the banks of the Zambesi.

Leaving Senna late, the party dropped lazily down the broad river. The moonlight was pleasant enough; and from time to time Isabel’s voice, accompanying her guitar, rang out on the night air, while many a tale of European and African life whiled away the night. Morning dawned; the beams of the rising sun tipping the tamarind trees on the banks of the Shire as the grapnel was dropped under the lee of a small island, just where the river poured its waters into the Zambesi. The men were sent ashore to pitch a tent on the right bank, and thus night was turned into day on the bosom of the broad river. That afternoon the tent was standing under the shelter of a group of mashango trees, its canvas sides being raised to admit the air; and dinner, which, with its delicacies of fish and vegetables, seemed a banquet to men who had for so long been forced to live on venison, was served under its shade. Several bottles of Bordeaux stood under there, too, swathed in wet towels, just where the warm wind was the strongest, cooling by evaporation. In front, the river, now sweeping onward, a broad majestic stream, swollen by the waters of the Shire flowing from their sources in the vast watershed of central Africa to the north. Groups of cocoa-nut and palmyra grew here and there; the gum copal threw its shadow over the glancing water; and large ebony trees of monstrous growth, thickly covered with mantling creepers, bent over the stream. There, too, was the singular palm tree, to be met with often on the Shire, which sends up its stem, dividing many times, and each one forming a fan-like top of curiously cut leaves, like giant fingers to the hand of a Cyclops; and there was the prosopis tree, long known to the settler on the Shire’s banks for the fitness of its wood for boat-building. Beyond lay the plain, one or two small kraals dotting it here and there, the patches of sugar-cane, maize, and banana showing tokens of unusual industry and civilisation. Cattle, too, were moving lazily about in the rich pasturage, or standing grouped under the shade, while far away the blue ridges of the Morumbala mountains closed the view. The day had been cool, and a slight breeze just blew out the folds of the heavy Portuguese flag, waving from the stern of the larger boat. Its cushions had been removed and placed inside the tent, and the guitar lay neglected on the ground, its fair owner listening to the soldier’s tale of the Matabele hunt and the rhinoceros, as she twisted indolently the stalk of a splendid water-lily, gathered before landing. Between Dom Francisco and the missionary was the chess-board, but both were listening too attentively to pay much attention to the game; while the boatmen and attendants were seated in small knots round the tent discussing the remainder of the dinner, emptying half-empty bottles, or laughing, talking, and tale-telling in opposition to the parrots’ screaming among the branches.


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“But,” said Isabel, as Hughes concluded the story, “your rhinoceros, dangerous as it was, is nothing to the animal of the same species, which we heard of at Tete, and which many affirmed they had seen.”

“What is it?” eagerly asked Wyzinski, forgetting the game in his desire for information. “I once met a woman of the Makao tribe, who spoke of a strange species. Strange enough she was herself, with her upper lip pierced and ornamented by an ivory ring, a bark covering serving for petticoat, that and a necklace of bark for all clothing.”

Reclining back on her cushions, the black mantilla drawn over her neck and bust, one tiny slippered foot just peeping from out of the folds of the light dress, Dona Isabel carried the pure white petals of the water-lily to her face, her large black eyes peeping over the flower contrasting strangely with its whiteness, but seeming herself too indolent to reply.

Puffing a long spiral stream of smoke from his mouth, the Portuguese noble answered for her.

“It is said, and implicitly believed by the natives, many of whom assert that they have seen it, that far away to the northward there exists a rhinoceros, carrying one single sharp pointed horn right in the centre of the forehead.”

“The unicorn of old,” interrupted Wyzinski.

“The unicorn of our fathers’ tales,” replied Dom Francisco, gravely bowing. “The animal is of immense strength and savage ferocity, say the natives. It is useless for man to contend with him, and any one who meets it may count on death.”

“At all events he may take refuge in a tree, and wait until the animal goes away.”

“It is said this rhinoceros will patiently bore with his sharp horn until he has broken the tree, and then kill the man; that he will work for days until his object be accomplished.”

“See!” exclaimed Dona Isabel; “there are canoes coming up the river. What are they doing?”

There were at that moment four small boats rounding the island, just where the Shire discharged itself into the Zambesi, and their movements seemed eccentric enough to warrant the surprise expressed by Dona Isabel.

Independently of the rowers, one man stood erect in the bow of each canoe, holding in his hand an assegai, which from time to time he threw. As they neared the bank, a huge hippopotamus rose to the surface, and with a shout, the how man in the nearest canoe made his cast. The spear missed; but the second boat dashed up. Again the hippopotamus rose, and this time the assegai struck true.

“Why, it is exactly the way the Arctic seamen take the whales!” exclaimed Hughes.

A loud scream from Dona Isabel, as she started from her recumbent position, was heard. The hippopotamus had risen again, and with its great red mouth open, dashed in fury at the leading canoe.

The man in the bow seemed paralysed with fear, for he did not make a cast; the next moment the boat was floating bottom upwards, drifting with the stream, but the animal had received another assegai as he was in the act of striking the canoe.

As for its crew, they rose to the surface, and struck out for the bank, vigorously swimming like fishes, their comrades taking no notice of them. The hippopotamus seemed badly hurt now, for it rose again quickly, receiving another lance, and then, dragging itself on to the bank, fell from exhaustion and loss of blood, the natives giving a yell of triumph as they rowed up.

“Listen!” said Wyzinski, “that was a shout; here, down the river bank, to the right.”

“And there comes the owner of the cry,” replied Hughes; “he is a European, too, and well armed.”

Dressed in a light calico suit of clothes, wearing a broad-brimmed Panama hat, and carrying a rifle in his hand, while a brace of pistols were stuck into a broad crimson Andalusian sash which encircled his waist, the owner of the shout, as Hughes had called him, rode up, followed by three mounted natives.

“The Senhor Dom Francisco Maxara?” inquired the new comer, raising his sombrero.

“The same, Senhor,” haughtily returned the noble, rising and replying to the courtesy.

“I am Dom Assevédo, of Quillimane. I have a house at Nyangué, and am owner of a good deal of the land about here. Will the Senhor Maxara and his fair daughter (here the sombrero was again removed) condescend to consider my poor house at Nyangué their own for the period they may honour me by staying?”

“I thank you, Senhor, but it may not be. The ‘Halcyon’ brig waits us at Quillimane, and I must needs say no. Isabel, can you not persuade the Senhor to join us?”

“At all events, I can offer him part of my cushions,” replied the lady, “on condition he talks French, for Portuguese will not be understood by our guests.”

“Ah, the two Englishmen whom I have heard of from the Limpopo. Perhaps you, gentlemen, will honour me with a visit?”

This, too, was impossible; and Wyzinski was in the act of explaining why, when a loud clamour was heard among the natives, who were busy on the sandy bank below cutting up the hippopotamus. The excitement seemed to communicate itself to the boatmen, and, walking to the entrance, Dom Assevédo called out, “Come here, Senhora, there is a sight seldom seen.”

Looking down the stream, which was rolling slowly on its course towards the sea, between banks where the palmyra and cocoa-palms grew in clumps, seven elephants were swimming the river. With their trunks raised high in the air, and their huge black bodies rolling from side to side, the animals, notwithstanding their tremendous bulk, seemed to move with apparent ease and pleasure to themselves.

“They are heading right for the island at the mouth of the Shire!” exclaimed Hughes, all the spirit of the old shikaree reviving at the sight.

“Something must have terrified them,” said Dom Assevédo; “perhaps the jungle has been fired in their rear.”

“There they go—one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven, all on the island,” counted Hughes.

Dona Isabel had stood, her hands clasped, her eyes fixed on the strange scene, a beautiful statue, the very model of mute astonishment.

“If they don’t break out and take to the other bank, I can show you some sport, now,” exclaimed Assevédo.

A few minutes of breathless watching followed, not a word being spoken, while the spiral wreaths of smoke curled up into the calm air from Dom Francisco’s cigarette. All eyes were fixed on the island. Five minutes elapsed, lengthening into ten, and the elephants had not reappeared.

“Do any of you gentlemen speak Kaffir?” inquired Assevédo.

“I do,” replied Wyzinski; “at least the Zulu tongue.”

“Good; then do me the favour to go to the men on the river bank. Tell them you come from me, use my name, and let them get their boats together, and join us in our hunt. Senhor de Maxara, will you order your men to get your boat ready?”

“Surely you will take me with you?” asked Isabel.

“Fair Senhora, there is danger.”

“And have I not seen the bull fights of Seville?” asked the girl, her eyes flashing fire. “Let me be able to say when I return to my country, that I have also seen the African elephant hunted.”

HIPPOPOTAMUS.

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“The animals are sure to take up the river banks for the forest land. If your boat is large enough to take my pony across, there can be no reason to say no,” replied Assevédo.

The boat was found amply sufficient. A lady’s side-saddle was rummaged out from the luggage; the rifles, of which there were no lack, loaded; and the whole party, embarked in four canoes and two boats, rowed across the river. At first they pulled up the stream, so as not to alarm the elephants, striking the opposite bank much higher than the mouth of the Shire. Landing, Dom Assevédo posted the men. The elephants, when disturbed, were certain to take to the water, swim the river, and enter the woods, which here stretched right away to the foot of the hills.

“Senhor Wyzinski, as you speak the Zulu tongue, will you take the canoes, and landing in rear of the elephants, make as much noise as possible, and fire the reeds if necessary.”

“Senhor Inglesi, you are the younger man, will you look to the Senhora Isabel, while I and Dom Francisco take our post under yonder clump of trees.”

Captain Hughes was in the act of ramming down a cartridge as he received the directions. The rifle was a heavy one, and by a lucky chance two of Devisme’s explosive cartridges fitted the bore.

Dom Assevédo then explained to Isabel that, should the elephants come her way, she was to ride for the open, where she was perfectly safe, the animals not being fleet enough to overtake her, and they would be sure to make for the forest.

The loud cries of the natives were soon heard, and Hughes looked about him. The Shire river, on whose banks they were, was not broad, though it appeared deep. They stood facing the river, under a clump of cocoa-nut trees. To the right at a little distance lay the Zambesi, and behind them, distant about a thousand yards, began the forest, which seemed gradually to increase in density until it became nearly impenetrable. To the left a comparatively open country, with fields of maize and sugar-cane ripening in the sun. Some long reeds growing about ten paces to their front served as a screen.

Not a word was spoken, and as he stood by the pony’s side, and looked up at its rider’s slender, graceful figure, and beautiful face, the soldier felt the duty he had undertaken a pleasant one.

Isabel sat on her horse like a statue, her lips parted showed the white teeth, her eyes intently fixed on the island, and her face shaded from the sun by a flapped-hat with its broad brim.

Shouts and yells came floating on the air over the Shire river, sometimes very loud and eager, at others dying away, and at last a large black mass slowly approached to the water side. Isabel clasped her hands as the elephant waded into the river, ejaculating some words in her own language; but the great animal paused, looked over the Shire towards the opposite bank, and, whether suspecting clanger or not liking a second swim, it returned to cover.

And now a faint column of blue smoke shot up from the island, telling that Wyzinski had fired the bush; it thickened as the dry reeds caught fire, the red flame darted up at intervals, and heavy masses of smoke rolled away to leeward. The fire leaped merrily onward, making rapid progress, and soon a loud trumpeting was heard, as, plunging into the river, the elephants, terribly frightened, swam towards the opposite bank, their trunks raised in the air high above the water. They would evidently land within twenty paces of where Dona Isabel was posted.

“Tighten your bridle-rein, Dona Isabel,” whispered the soldier, as he placed his hand on the snaffle. “Be ready. Here they come!”

“Madre de Dios!” ejaculated the astonished girl. “Oh! Santa Maria, how grand!”

Rolling about like seven huge porpoises, their backs, heads, and flapping ears above water, the elephants came on swimming in Indian file. The trunk raised straight up in the air gave to the black masses a strange look, while the tusks at times lowered sent the water in their front spurting into the air. Three out of the seven were males. They gained the bank, the water falling from them in sheets, and then they leisurely walked away for cover. One old male was some dozen yards behind the rest, and this elephant Captain Hughes singled out for himself. Landing, it stood for a second or two, the water dripping from its huge sides, looking curiously around. At this moment the loud reports of two rifles rang out from the forest, and the remaining elephant, alarmed, moved off in an oblique direction, which would bring it close to the spot where stood Dona Isabel and the soldier.

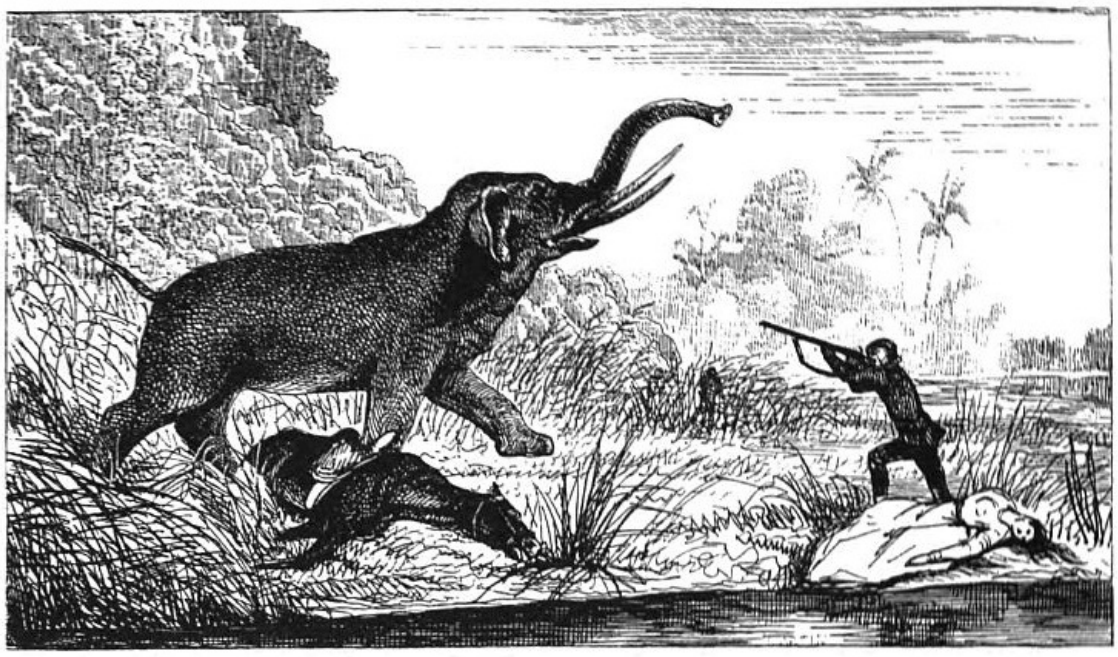
The former seemed quite stupefied with wonder as the great mass came onward at a trot, swinging its long trunk to and fro.

“Ride for your life, Dona Isabel!” said Hughes; “keep for the open, and ride hard.”

Hughes loosed his hold of the reins, and the pony started off. Isabel, turning in her saddle, fixed her gaze on the elephant, and in so doing turned the pony’s head right for the forest.

Hughes shouted loudly, but without effect; the girl, wholly absorbed with her astonishment, knew not her danger. For a second the elephant paused, then, trumpeting with rage, dashed after her.

The right moment had been lost. Captain Hughes, in his endeavours to make Isabel turn, had neglected it, and when he did raise his rifle to fire, the elephant was at forty paces distant, turned from him, and going at full speed. To level his rifle, aim, and fire, was the work of a second. The elephant slackened its pace, but only for a moment, the soldier, his rifle at the trail, dashing madly after it. On swept the pony at top speed, but the elephant gained on it. Isabel’s hat had fallen, her long, jet-black hair was floating on the wind. The forest lay before her, through which she could not ride many paces; but she knew it not, for her gaze was still rivetted on the elephant. On they swept, the soldier dashing after them madly, shouting to her yet to turn for the open. The forest line was reached, and in a moment, swept from her saddle by the branches, Dona Isabel lay on the ground, the riderless pony dashing on. On, too, came the elephant, after the horse, trumpeting furiously. It passed over the prostrate form, its huge foot within an inch of the fair head, and the next moment its tusks were buried in the flanks of the agonised horse, which had been stopped by the forest undergrowth. Bearing it down, the huge elephant actually pinned the animal to the ground, where it held it impaled and writhing with agony, then deliberately kneeling on the bleeding carcass literally crushed it into a shapeless mass. Rising, the elephant turned from the dead pony, trumpeting once more as it saw lying on the ground, quite inanimate, the form of the rider. Dom Francisco and Assevédo were hurrying up, but were yet distant. They both fired, but the bullets served but to enrage still further the infuriated animal, as it came on, the blood dripping in large gouts from its reddened tusks. It was a race between it and the soldier—a race won by the man, as, breathless, and with only one barrel of his rifle loaded, he stood between the senseless Isabel and the charging animal. On it came, right upon him; if it passed it must tread down the fair girl’s body. The thought gave him nerve, it steadied his hand as he aimed right for the centre of the forehead. The report rang out, the elephant halted suddenly, swaying from side to side, and then fell with a heavy thud. A loud shout from the two men advancing over the plain, and Hughes knew that Dona Isabel was safe. Throwing aside his now useless rifle, he knelt by her side, raising her on his arm, and leaning her head back against his knee; a small red stream was flowing from her forehead, and she had fainted.



ELEPHANT CHARGING. [Vol. II. p. 15.

“My child—my Isabel!” moaned the old man, forgetting his pride in his sorrow, as he threw himself by his daughter’s side, panting and breathless.

“It is nothing, she has fainted. I go for water!” exclaimed Assevédo, as he hastened towards the river.

Slowly the blue veins beneath the clear olive skin began to beat again. Once more the eyes opened and closed. Hughes was busy sponging away the blood, which flowed rather freely, with a handkerchief. Dom Francisco and Assevédo, kneeling by Isabel’s side, were using the cool water of the Shire river; and close beside them, its tusks red with blood, the enormous bulk of the dead elephant; while, fifty paces away—a crushed and unsightly mass—lay the pony.

Isabel opened her eyes, and seemed for a moment utterly astonished. “Santa Maria!” she ejaculated, “where am I?”

Then suddenly the whole affair seemed to flash on her memory, and, raising herself gently, she smiled.

“I was not frightened, only astonished,” said the brave girl, as the red blood mantled in her cheeks. “Where is the elephant?”

“There,” answered her father; “and you may thank the Senhor Capitano Inglesi that it lies there.”

Isabel de Maxara turned—the dead animal with its gory tusks, and the shapeless mass which had been a horse, met her gaze. For a moment her face flushed, the red blood once more mantling richly under the clear olive skin; the next she

grew deadly pale. “I thank you, senhor,” she said as she looked full at the soldier and held out her hand, “I thank you for my life.”

The rest of the party were standing by the elephant. Hughes clasped the long taper fingers, and looked into the black eyes, from which the tears were falling. For a moment they met the gaze, and then fell before his as he kissed the little hand held out to him.

“Your ball has shivered his head, Hughes,” called out Wyzinski, but the soldier paused a moment to thrust into his bosom a blood-stained pocket-handkerchief before he joined them.

The second ball, a heavy conical one, had penetrated the skull before bursting, making a frightful hole, and blowing the head to pieces; a second severe wound, behind the shoulder, showing where the first had struck.

The elephant was a very large one, and was the only one out of the seven secured.

“And now, gentlemen, let us leave the cutting up to the natives. You can scarcely refuse my late request now, after what has passed, if it is only that Dona Isabel needs rest.”

“If we comply I must make a condition, namely, that you send a messenger to Quillimane, to warn Captain Weber of the delay, and it must not be for more than twenty-four hours.”

“Agreed, and now for the boats and my house at Nyangué,” cheerfully exclaimed Assevédo.

“Senhor Inglesi, I thank you most heartily and sincerely,” said the old noble, taking off his hat, bowing, and grasping the soldier’s hand warmly in his own. “You have earned our eternal gratitude at the peril of your life.”

“Don’t you think a light infantry movement and a timely retreat would be a brilliant evolution?” whispered the missionary, as he passed Hughes. “I don’t mind backing the flavour of the water-melons of Portugal against the custard-apples of India.”

“Nonsense. Just mind your own business,” replied Hughes, as he picked up the discharged rifle, shouldered it, and joined the party on the Shire’s bank.

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## The “Halcyon.”

The coast of Africa, as seen from the sea, is never very prepossessing; and the sandy spit of land, with the equally sandy bar, which obstructs the entrance to the Zambesi at Quillimane, is no exception to the rule, while the banks of the river are low and flat, dotted here and there with tall cocoa-palms, and haunted by alligators. The town itself, or rather village, for it can hardly boast of any more sounding name, consists of a few better-class houses, one of which was owned by Dom Assevédo, and a number of half-ruinous huts and sheds. The anchorage is unsafe, and often untenable, while the low-lying land is a hot-bed of fever. Outside the bar, her two anchors down, the blue peter at her fore, and the English Union Jack floating at her gaff, rode the brig “Halcyon.” She was a rakish-looking craft, her long low black hull rising on the waves, and showing from time to time her bright clean copper as she rolled. Her masts raked slightly off, her sharp bows and sides round as an apple, told the seaman at once that she must be a dry ship, and her breadth of beam, if needed, attested the fact. Every bit of brass work on board was as usual rubbed bright as gold, every rope was carefully coiled down, and her decks white as snow. The “Halcyon” would not, in fact, as she rode to her anchors off the bar at Quillimane, have disgraced herself, even had she been, as she once was, her Majesty’s gun brig “Torch.”

Sold out at a time when the system of steam was rapidly changing the aspect of the navy, the “Torch” was nearly new. Bought by a Liverpool firm, she had been thoroughly overhauled and fitted out for a three years’ cruise on the African coast, trading in ivory, gold dust, and ostrich feathers.

Captain Weber, an old sailor of thirty years’ standing, commanded and partly owned her, and on such a voyage of course great latitude had been allowed him.

His three years’ trading voyage ended, and bound for the Cape, but intending once more to touch at Delagoa Bay, he had been induced to delay his departure in consideration of the handsome sum offered by the Portuguese nobleman returning from his tour of inspection of the stations on the Zambesi.

Captain Weber, as has been already mentioned, was a middle-sized stout built man, with a reddish mahogany-coloured face, and long grey hair. He was proud of his brig, lived for her, and believed in her capabilities to an unlimited extent. His first-mate, Thomas Blount, was a young man for his station in life, rather tall, and, as we have already seen, fond of dress. The two were leaning over the bulwarks, looking towards the land, one afternoon, three days after the events just narrated. The crew, which was a strong one, consisting of twenty hands, all told, were between decks.

“Our passengers should arrive this afternoon. Dom Assevédo’s messenger said so, did he not, Captain Weber?”

“Yes, and that haze to the southward and eastward tells of a blow. It will be a foul wind for us. We must make sail before sunset, Mr Blount.”

“I think,” remarked the younger man, “I see a boat crossing the bar, there, right over that Madras fellow’s stern.”

“Well, I hope it may be them. We have more fever on board than I care to see, and I hate this hot, unhealthy hole. Rouse up the watch, Mr Blount, and heave short at once.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied the mate, touching his cap, round which ran a narrow strip of gold lace, and moving away.

The captain remained where he was, watching the black specks, for there were three of them, rising and falling on the waves outside Quillimane bar. The decks of the brig were no longer deserted, and the shipping of the capstan bars told that the orders just given were being carried out.

“Bring to, starboard cable,” called the first officer from the quarter-deck.

“Ay, ay, sir,” was the ready response, for the seamen were tired of riding at anchor off the bar, and the click of the capstan, as they stamped round to a merry tune of the flute, was music to officers and men alike.

“Up and down, sir,” was the cry of the second mate, who on the forecastle was superintending the duty of heaving up the anchor, and which term meant that the brig was right over her anchor.

“Heaving away, sir,” came again the cheering shout, as the anchor left the ground and the men strained every nerve to run the heavy mass up to the brig’s bows.

The flute rang out a merrier tune, round and round went the capstan bars, then came the second officer’s loud shout of “Heaving in sight, sir,” as the men suddenly stopped in their merry round.

“Cat and fish the anchor, Mr Lowe. Bring to the port cable. Heave short,” were the brief words of command from the quarter-deck.

“All ready with the cat, sir,” was the responsive shout, soon followed by the customary words, “All ready with the fish, sir,” while the men, the starboard anchor being got on board, duly secured, or, in more nautical terms, catted and fished, clapped on the port or remaining anchor, which now alone held the brig, gently rolling to the swell, and that in its turn being soon up and down, Mr Blount reported to his superior officer.

“Do you make out the boats, sir?” he added, as Captain Weber still remained looking towards shore.

“Ay, ay,” replied the seaman. “There’s Dom Assevédo’s barge, the lubberly Portuguese blowing and puffing like grampus at their oars.”

“Rig out a tackle from the main yard. We shall have to hoist the lady in, and perhaps the Dom too, like a bale of cotton.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied the mate.

“Make sail, Mr Blount; brace up the headyards. Let me know when you are ready.”

Ten minutes later the passengers were on board, and Dom Assevédo’s barge veered astern.

“It’s rather hard I can’t speak to my lady passenger,” said Weber, as he went down below with the party.

“Tell him I can understand English, though I am afraid to speak it,” said Isabel in French to Hughes, who was by her side.

“Ay, ay, my pretty one, we’ll soon take the shame-faced-ness out of you; nothing like blue water for doing that. Well, you tell the Dom that I’ll send all his traps below. Senhor Assevédo, I can’t give you much law,” said the old seaman, in his rough hearty tones, as he turned to return to his post. “Steward, show the lady her berth. Look alive, man,” he continued, calling down the hatchway.

The brig was now riding at single anchor, the headyards braced up one way, her afteryards the other, her sails flapping heavily.

“Heave away, my lads, heave away with a will,” shouted Weber, the moment his foot touched the quarter-deck, and the remaining anchor was soon hove up, and properly stowed away on board. “Brace round the headyards. Let fall the fore course. Take a pull at the bowlines, Mr Blount. Touch her with the wheel, Adams, she will come up a couple of points yet,” were the rapid words of command, and the “Halcyon” moved through the water on a taut bowline, heading nearly her course.

“A pleasant voyage to you,” said Dom Assevédo, as he bent over Isabel’s hand in the cabin.

“Below there!” came in the captain’s rough tones, “tell the Senhor Assevédo that if he don’t want to see the Cape, he had better get on board his barge. The tow-rope won’t hold on long, I’m thinking.”

Heartily shaking hands with all, the Portuguese gentleman, whose name and kindly nature are well known to men of every nation trading on the Zambesi, stepped over the side, the boat’s painter was cast off, a last good bye shouted in Weber’s stentorian voice, and the “Halcyon,” with all sail set, to her royals, was soon standing off the bar, the bubbles flying past her rounded counter, as she slipped through the water at the rate of sonde six knots an hour.

Towards sunset the wind fell, and the brig began to lose her way. The stars came out shining through a thin haze, and sail after sail flapped against the masts, filling for a moment, then collapsing again, until soon the “Halcyon” lay rolling on the gentle swell, her cordage rattling, her blocks and tackles striking against her spars and rigging, her hull groaning, and her sails perfectly useless, not having even steerage way.

Leaning over the bulwarks, and looking towards the land, the faint outline of which could still be discovered about ten miles distant, Hughes was conversing with the captain.

“You think, then, we shall have wind?” he asked.

“I am sure of it,” replied Weber; “look at the double halo round the moon, look at the sickly, watery appearance of the clouds, look at that fog-bank away to the southward. We shall have plenty of wind before morning.”

“And from what direction?”

“Dead against us,” replied the seaman; “we want to run to the south, and the wind will blow from that quarter.”

“You have a beautiful craft, Captain Weber, and one I know can show weatherly qualities.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered the captain, slapping his hand down on the bulwark, “I love every stick the jade carries, every rope-yarn aboard of her; while I am at sea, she is wife and children to me. Do you hear the wind sighing aloft? You would do well to persuade the lady to turn in.”

Wyzinski, Dom Francisco, and Isabel were walking on the quarter-deck deeply engaged in conversation, and enjoying the freshness of the night.

“I did not think I should ever look back to the Zambesi with pleasure,” said Isabel, as Hughes joined the party; “but really, the unostentatious hospitality we received from Senhor Assevédo will always be remembered by me. It is a magnificent river, and I am sure must be fully half a mile wide in some parts. The coolness of the air, too; I never thought to see European vegetables, such as peas and cabbages, growing side by side with the mango and banana.”

“Ah, with its plains of wild cotton, which no one takes the trouble to cultivate, its sugar-canes, indigo, and droves of splendid cattle, the country bordering on the Zambesi might be a very rich one,” said Wyzinski.

“Which, otherwise worded, means if the colony belonged to the English instead of the Portuguese, Senhor,” tartly remarked Dom Francisco.

“Not so, Senhor de Maxara; the English in South Africa have failed in many things, as regards colonisation, nor could I be guilty of such a thought.”

“The object of my mission is to draw up a report as to the capabilities of the land, and I hope a new day may now dawn for the Portuguese colonies in South Africa,” said the noble. “The country is rich in mineral products. Cattle and animals of all kinds abound in the plains, while coal, gold, iron, and copper could be procured for the labour of taking them,” he continued; “but that is Captain Weber, is it not, leaning over the bulwarks; will you go with me, Senhor, and serve me as interpreter? I wish much to thank him for the arrangements he has made for our comfort.”

Hughes thus left with Dona Isabel, a silence ensued. The sails were banging loosely in the brails, flapping against the masts, for the night was perfectly calm, but still there was the never ceasing throb of the ocean, causing the brig to roll lazily, the cordage and blocks to strain and creak, the studding sail booms to rattle, and the timbers of the stout brig herself to groan and moan.

“I was wondering, Senhora,” said Hughes, breaking the silence at last, “what made you think of a voyage to so remote a region as Africa?”

“Oh, that is easily told. My father has a long pedigree, but a cramped estate. Our Portuguese nobility are mostly in the same position. My mother, of the old and princely house of the Guzmans, died when I was quite a child, and my life has been passed with an aunt, in France. She, too, died, and the convent of the Augustine sisters was no longer a home for me; besides, my education was finished.”

“I wish it had comprised the English language, Senhora,” said Hughes, smiling.

“I wish it had, too, for I should like to talk to Captain Weber,” replied the girl, laughing. “To continue, my father was honoured with his present mission, and was about to refuse it on my account. It may lead to a definite appointment, and as he never denies me anything, I easily persuaded him to accept, and to let me accompany him.”

The brig’s bows had been during the last hour all round the compass, but at that moment she lay with her head to the southward. A heavy puff of hot wind struck her suddenly, taking her aback and giving her sternway, the studding sail booms snapping off short in the irons, the broken ends with their gear coming tumbling down, those of the mainyard falling on the quarter-deck. The whole was over in an instant.

“In with the studding-sails, my lads, look alive,” called the captain, as the watch on deck busied themselves with the useless sails.

“You will excuse me, gentlemen,” said Captain Weber, “that puff is but a precursor of the wind that is to follow, and I must get the sails off the brig.”

Taking off his cap politely, the captain turned to his work, while, with a ceremonious salute, Dom Maxara offered his arm to his daughter to conduct her below.

“Good night, gentlemen, we shall meet again in the morning,” said the noble. A pressure of the hand, a low “Good night,” a silvery toned voice repeating the word, and Captain Hughes found himself alone, gazing over the bulwarks into the blue sea, and thinking.

Thinking of Isabel, of course. Then she was not rich, and he was glad of it. But why should he be glad? for he was not rich himself, and beyond a few hundreds a year and his pay, he had nothing to boast of. What on earth did Dona Isabel’s position matter to him? A fair wind and the brig would spread her wings. A few days and the party would separate at the Cape, in all probability never to meet again. She was of an ancient race, the blood of the Guzmans mantled in that blush. Well, he, too, was of old Welsh blood, and could count kith and kin up to the days when the Druids held their unholy rites and sacrifices on the heights of Penmaenmawr and Snowdon, when Caswallon Là Hir, his ancestor, wandered through the forests of Caerleon and Bodysgallen, clad in his mantle of skins. But what was that to him, and what had he to do with the blood of the Guzmans? He would think of other matters.

Again his thoughts wandered, and, as he gazed into the blue ocean, he called up a picture of another land. The lofty rugged mountains of Snowdonia, the iron-bound coast, washed by the waves of the Irish Channel, the ebbing and flowing waters of the Menai Straits, a house which had stood the wear and tear of ages, embowered in its trees near the beautiful Conway. Would Dona Isabel—pshaw!

“Take a pull at the larboard braces, let fly the fore and main royal halyards. In with the canvas, my lads. Starboard the helm,” shouted the captain, as the breeze from the south struck the brig, filling her remaining canvas, and making her heel over, as she gradually gathered way. “Steady! so!” and the bubbles began to glide by the vessel’s side, the noise of the water slapping up against her bows, and the rattle of the blocks and tackle, as the canvas filled, and everything drawing, the “Halcyon,” close hauled, on a taut bowline, stood her course as near as possible.

Gradually the wind freshened, and when Hughes and Captain Weber turned in at midnight, the “Halcyon” was working her way through the seas crested with foam, in that peculiar jerking manner usual to vessels close hauled; but with little cargo, and what there was light, she made splendid weather of it, topping the great waves, or wallowing in the trough, though, as Captain Weber emphatically observed, slapping his hand down on the cabin hatchway, “She didn’t ship an egg-spoonful of water.”

“Hands by the royal sheets and halyards. In royals. Mr Lowe, see to the royal braces,” were the words heard, as the two stepped below, about midnight. Morning was scarcely dawning over the ocean as Captain Weber again made his appearance on deck. According to a seaman’s instinct, his first glance was directed aloft, his second to the compass.

“Ah, I thought you would have a reef in the topsails before morning, Blount, and I see I am right.”

“We had better go about soon, Captain Weber,” replied the mate; “there is a little westing in the gale since midnight, and the brig has lain up a couple of points.”

“We will stand on until we make the coast of Madagascar, Blount; we must have made a good deal of southing, there are no islands between us and the coast, except ‘Barren Islands,’ and they lie far away to the northward.”

“How’s her head now, Jones?” asked the mate.

“South-east and by south, sir,” replied the man at the wheel.

“Then we shall fetch Cape Saint Vincent on the Madagascar coast; and it will have been a long leg.”

It was a grand sight as the little “Halcyon” struggled through the chaos of water. The change in the wind, slight as it was, had greatly aided her, but the gale was gradually increasing. Overhead the heavy clouds were flying before its fury, the long waves being an angry green, white with foam. Far as the eye could reach, one sheet of tumbling water was to be seen, bounded only by the horizon. No sail, not even a solitary gull was in sight, and through this the “Halcyon” was straggling, now rising on the foam, now falling into the bright green trough, as she dragged her way onward through the seething ocean, under her single-reefed topsails, foresail, fore-topmast-staysail, and boom-mainsail.

On swept the little brig, but the gale increased in its fury after sunrise. Towards twelve o’clock, the Senhora Isabel appeared on the quarter-deck, whither she had been conducted by the first-mate. The men of the watch lay close under the weather bulwarks, seeking what shelter they could find. A good many teaspoonfuls of salt foam came dashing on board the brig now, and even the captain was forced to allow it, as he held on by the weather main-shrouds, and looked keenly to windward.

“What a magnificent spectacle!” exclaimed Isabel, as she gazed on the seething ocean.

“At all events we are better here than riding with both anchors down at Quillimane,” replied the mate.

A report like the boom of a heavy gun was heard above the gale, and the foresail was seen flying away to leeward, blown to ribbons. A heavier blast weighed down upon the struggling brig, and before a word could be spoken, the bolts of the futtock shrouds, drawing one after another, with a splintering crash down came the fore-topmast with all its rigging and hamper, dragging with it the main-topgallant mast, and carrying away the jib-boom, the whole mass falling bodily over the side.

In an instant the watch were on their legs, and the remainder of the crew poured on deck, speedily followed by the alarmed passengers.

The captain stood for a moment surveying the wreck, and then with the true spirit of an old salt, accepted the situation.

“Keep her away,” he shouted to the two men at the wheel; “let her go free. Steady, my lads! Out axes and cut away the wreck. Pass the word below for the sail-maker to send up a new foresail.”

The wreck of the masts was now dragging under the brig’s lee, thumping heavily against her sides. Quick as thought the first-mate sprung forward, and, seizing an axe, began cutting away the ropes which kept the spars dragging after the ship. Holding on by the shrouds, the bright steel did its work, and no longer close hauled, but running free, the brig’s motion seemed much easier. Already a portion of the wreck was floating astern, a few ropes alone held the rest, and one by one they were severed, when a monster wave came rolling on towards the brig. The captain’s warning voice was heard far above the roar of the winds and waves, shouting to all to hold on. The mate alone did not hear him, as he raised his axe to sever the last rope. The blow fell, but at the same moment the brig plunged her bows into the green wave. Striking her on the counter, the vessel seemed to tremble and to pause in her career, as the green water curled over her bows and bulwarks, in one mass of white foam, falling in tons upon her deck, and rolling away to leeward, poured out of her scuppers. The little brig seemed pressed down into the ocean by the enormous weight of water, and as the wave rolled aft, there, battling with the foam, was the form of the gallant mate. Swept from his hold, the white face rose on the wave close to the brig, and Isabel screamed with horror as the helpless man, tossed about, like a cork and apparently not a yard from them, came surging along, the lips parting, and the words, “Save me! save me!” distinctly borne on the wind.

Quick as thought, Captain Weber caught up a coil of rope; his arm was in the act of casting it, when the mass of spars and cordage swept past. The coil whistled through the air, it fell right over the mate’s shoulder, he clutched at it as the fore-topmast crosstrees, with the full force of the surge, struck him from behind, and he sank like a stone.

A cry of terror ran through the brig, all for a moment forgetting their own danger in the horror of the scene.

“Silence, fore and aft,” shouted the old captain, his grey hairs streaming in the wind. “Heave the brig to, Mr Lowe. This is no place for you, lady; let the steward lead you below. All danger is over.”

“Land ho!” shouted one of the men forward, as Isabel disappeared down the hatchway.

“Where away?” asked the master.

“Broad on the port bow,” was the answering shout.

“It is the high land of Cape Saint Vincent,” said Captain Weber, shading his eyes, and gazing intently in the direction named.

The wind was increasing in violence, and the barometer in the captain’s cabin still falling. The brig had been kept away, and was now running free, but the gale was increasing rapidly.

“See that the fore and main-staysails are properly bent,” called the captain.

“Ay, ay, sir,” came the ready response, as his officer stepped hastily forward.

It is always a ticklish thing to heave a vessel to when there is a heavy sea running. The brig’s sails were reduced until she was stripped to her close-reefed main-topsails, her fore-staysail was then set, and the two officers exchanged places, the old captain sprang forward, and holding on by the weather fore-shrouds, gazed wistfully over the ocean, while his mate stood near the man-at-wheel, waiting the coming order.

Sea after sea struck her, dashing the glittering spray high into the air, and wetting the veteran sailor to the skin, as he stood anxiously gazing over the ocean. At length a moment came when the long waves seemed less heavy. Captain Weber seized it, and a motion of the hand was enough.

“Down with the helm, Adams, hard down,” shouted the watchful mate.

The brig flew up to the wind. “Set the main-staysail!” was the order thundered from the quarter-deck, and steadily executed by the trained seaman, the brig being soon hove-to under her main-topsail, fore and main-staysails, making comparatively good weather of it, and everything seemed to settle down into its usual order on board the little craft.

“He was a gallant fellow, and would have made a thorough seaman,” said Captain Weber, as he joined the party below, dashing the salt foam from his eyes and hair as he spoke. “He loved the sea, and left a quiet home to find a grave here in the Indian Ocean.” Isabel seemed violently affected by the scene which had passed before her eyes.

“His was a sailor’s death, it may be ours to-morrow,” continued the captain. “Poor Blount! he was to have had command of one of his father’s ships next voyage.”

“What do you think of the weather, Captain Weber?” asked Hughes, wishing to change the theme, for Isabel was sobbing convulsively, as the thought of the sorrowing parents came vividly before her.

“These blows seldom hold long, from the fact of their extreme violence. Should it last we shall be jammed down on the Madagascar coast: indeed, we cannot be far from it, for the land hereaway is low, or we should have sighted it at daylight.”

“Shall we feel the loss of our spars much?” inquired Wyzinski.

“Not so much while lying to; but our wings are nicely clipped. The ‘Halcyon’ has been at sea, trading on this coast, for nearly three years, without ever having the advantage of a good overhaul, or such an accident could never have happened.”

During the whole day, however, the gale continued unabated, and the dinner table was a neglected one by all save the captain. The party had been so lately at sea, as to escape all sufferings from sea-sickness, but the roar of the waves, the rattling of the ropes and blocks, the howling of the wind, and the many noises incidental to a gale, prevented, in a certain measure, even conversation. Every now and then a mass of water would tumble inboard with a loud thud, as it deluged the brig’s decks and washed away to leeward. The staysails, too, as the vessel fell into the deep trough of the angry waves, would flap with a report like distant thunder; in a word, all the discomforts of a heavy gale in a small vessel were making themselves felt.

Night had again set in, and in the cabin Dom Maxara sat, his head thrown back and his eyes closed, as though asleep, while his daughter, lying on a sofa, covered with shawls, was endeavouring to read. It was nearly midnight, but no one thought of retiring. At the table, close under a lamp, which was waving wildly to and fro, the captain was seated, intently studying a government map, while Wyzinski leaned over his shoulders in earnest conversation.

“There,” said Captain Weber, as he placed a pin in the chart, “there is just where the brig is.”

“And yet it was only this morning land was sighted,” observed the other.

“There exist strong currents, which have set us bodily to leeward; the wind, too, has more westing in it, and is driving us down on the land. It is but a question of time.”

“If the wind has drawn more to the westward, could we not hold our course!”

“As I said some time since, the brig has been three years at sea without an overhaul. If you had asked me the same question this morning, I should have expressed every confidence in her powers, but you saw yourself the sticks go over the side like rotten carrots, and I should have to carry every rag we could set to claw off this shore, for I don’t want to scud before the gale if it can be avoided.”

“Many years ago,” said Wyzinski, “I was one of a party of missionaries who sailed from Delagoa Bay with the intention of forming a mission on the island of Madagascar. The small vessel which carried us was commanded by a man who had traded with the natives, and who knew the coast well. He ran into a beautiful bay, all but land-locked, where we anchored, and remained for nearly a month.”

“What course did you steer after leaving Delagoa Bay—can you remember?”

Wyzinski was silent, evidently trying to recall long-past events, while Isabel had let her book fall on to the sofa by her side, and, with her limited stock of English, was evidently trying to catch the meaning of the conversation. Above all

came the wild roar of the waves' boiling around them, the groaning and creaking of the ship's timbers, and the boom of the fore-staysail as it shook in the wind.

"Our course lay north-east and by north," at length said Wyzinski, his thoughtful face raised to the lamp, "for the first twenty-four hours."

"Good," answered Captain Weber, ruling off the course on the chart. "There, that would carry you to somewhere about the latitude of Cape Correnti, and then?"

"It is almost impossible for me to remember," replied the missionary; "but to the best of my recollection it was east north-east."

The old captain bent over the chart, once more using the pencil and ruler.

"That would bring you within a short distance of Saint Augustine's Bay, as it is marked in this chart," said he, looking upwards at Wyzinski.

"That's it! That's the name we gave it, because the vessel was called the 'Saint Augustine!'" exclaimed the missionary.

"Can you give me any particulars about the entrance to the harbour?"

"None: we ran straight in and straight out. There are two clumps of trees to the right on the spit of land which sweeps into the sea, forming a natural breakwater."

"To starboard or port?" asked Weber.

"On the right as we ran in, and the vessel passed so close to the bluff on which they stood that I could have thrown a piece of money on shore."

"What tonnage was the 'Saint Augustine'? Hitherto you have called her only a vessel."

"She was a schooner of about one hundred and fifty tons," answered Wyzinski; "and that is all I can tell you about the matter, which is a very melancholy one for me, as I lost a dear friend."

"Killed by the natives, I suppose? Ay, ay, they are a bad lot; but I have a couple of guns on board, and I don't fear them. If the harbour is what you represent it, we should lie there on an even keel, and in forty-eight hours I could rig out a jury fore-topmast."

The captain rose, and turned to Isabel before he placed on his head the heavy sou'-wester. "We will have you in smooth water before this time to-morrow, my little lady," he said, as he turned.

Isabel smiled, and looked to the missionary for an explanation.

Drawing a stool to the side of the sofa, for standing was no easy matter, so violently did the brig pitch, he explained to her exactly what had passed.

"Oh dear, how glad I shall be!" she answered. "The noise and confusion wear one out. I have often wished to witness a severe storm at sea, but I shall never wish it again."

"I have been in many, but only one when the wind was more violent than this. Fourteen vessels, large and small, were sunk in Table Bay on that occasion."

"Did I understand you rightly that you have landed on the Madagascar coast?"

"Yes," replied Wyzinski; "but it is a sad tale of cruelty and death."

"Would it pain you to tell it me?" asked Isabel, in her low sweet tones, turning her dark eyes on the missionary's face, and laying her hand on his arm.

"When we lie in Saint Augustine's Bay, and I can make myself heard better than at present, I will do so. Try to sleep now," answered the missionary, rising. "I am going on deck to join Captain Hughes, and shall be very glad when morning dawns."

And it did dawn, slowly and faintly over the boiling ocean. Large masses of dark cloud were hurrying over the sky, and chasing one another as though in sport. To seaward the horizon was clear, and one mass of foam-tipped waves were to be marked far as the eye could reach. Not ten miles to leeward lay the long line of the Madagascar coast, with Cape Saint Vincent jutting into the sea, while, with the wind blowing a heavy gale from the west-south-west, the "Halcyon," with her diminished sail, her foremast, main-topmast, and bowsprit standing, looked terribly shorn of her fair proportions. The waves every now and then poured on her decks, rolling away to leeward, and the ropes were here and there flying loose, and streaming in the wind. A strong current must have set the brig down bodily on to the land, and Captain Weber had made up his mind to run for the bay which the missionary had spoken of.

On the quarter-deck, holding on to windward, stood a group of three. Captain Weber, the missionary, and Hughes had watched through the night, and were anxiously waiting for full daylight. Under the weather bulwarks, wrapped in their waterproofs, with their long thick boots poking out here and there, lay huddled the crew.

"There," said the captain, pointing to a fine bold headland just tinged by the beams of the rising sun as it shone through a break in the clouds, "that is Cape Saint Vincent. The land tumbles in board to the southward and eastward, and your two clumps of trees will guide us. Will you know the place again?"

"Everything connected with it is so stamped on my memory, that I could draw the bay for you."

“Very well, here goes. Mr Lowe, rouse up the watch, send four men to the wheel, set the foresail.”

Mr Lowe, though second mate, now naturally took the place of the drowned seaman. The yards, instead of being braced sharp up, were eased off, the helm carefully tended, and under her main-topsail, foresail, and fore-topmast-staysail, the “Halcyon,” on an easy bowline, dragged like a wounded sea-bird through the boiling waves, running parallel with the coast. Hour after hour wore on, and all watched anxiously. The long sandy line was now not more than five miles distant, and the tall cocoa-nut trees could be seen plainly.

Now and then the sun would break out and light up the scene, but hour after hour passed on, and still the gale blew furiously, while the sea, striking the brig’s counter, poured over her fore and aft. No one quitted the deck, but now and then the captain’s steward, a Malay, popped up his head with some inquiry from below. “Tell them we shall soon be in smooth water,” shouted Captain Weber, as towards ten o’clock the man’s face appeared through the little opening.

The brig was rapidly approaching a bold headland, which bore no name on the map. She would pass it at a distance of not more than a mile. The chart was nailed down on the wood-work of the cabin hatchway, and was continually consulted by both the missionary and the captain.

“I know that headland,” shouted the former, placing his mouth close to the captain’s ear. “The bay lies about five miles to the southward of it.”

Slowly the brig crept up with the nameless cape. She neared it; she was abeam, and now it lay abaft her beam, but the land once more curved inward, and the cliffs seemed scarped down to the sea. Seizing a telescope, and steadying himself by the hatchway, Wyzinski looked eagerly in the direction of land.

“There,” he said, “at last,” handing the instrument to the captain. “Yonder is the bay, and there stand the two clumps of cocoa-nut trees.”

Captain Weber looked long and eagerly. To the southward the land trended seaward, a lofty headland being visible. The “Halcyon” was embayed; for in her crippled state to weather that cape with such a gale blowing was impossible, and to anchor with that furious sea breaking on a lee shore would be sure destruction. Saint Augustine’s Bay was their only chance now. The crippled brig dragged slowly along.

“Now, sir,” shouted Captain Weber, addressing the missionary, “come with me. Mr Lowe, send two men to lash us in the starboard fore-shrouds; take up your position here on the break of the quarter-deck; let the men be stationed under the weather bulwarks. See the best bower clear.”

Cautioning the men at the wheel, the captain moved forward, followed by the missionary, under the shelter of the bulwarks. It was a task of no small difficulty to secure the two men in the fore-shrouds, the salt brine pouring over the whole party over and over again.

“Starboard,” shouted the captain. “Ease away the fore-sheets; let fly the main-topsail; haul down the fore-staysail.” The second mate gave the necessary orders; the main-topsail yard settled down upon the cap; the fore-staysail sheets were let fly, and the sail flapping heavily was hauled down and secured. The rattle of the clue garnets was heard as the foresail was nearly squared, and the brig’s head payed off from the wind.

It was a moment of great anxiety, for as she fell off the seas struck her broadside on, but Captain Weber had watched his time. One huge toppling wave came rushing onwards. “Hold on,” shouted the captain; as striking the brig’s bulwarks it stove them in, smashing the gig, and pouring into the waist of the vessel, hid her for a moment under the white foam. The buoyant craft rose, turning her stern to the waves, and feeling the full force of the foresail, dashed along straight for the shore. “Steady, so; starboard a little; steady,” shouted the captain, as with the trumpet in his right hand, he held on with a seaman’s grip to the shrouds. His cap had blown away to leeward, and his long grey hair was streaming on the wind, both he and the missionary having been buried under the boiling foam, as the “Halcyon” wore round.

The sharp jerking motion of the previous day was now exchanged for one much easier. Rising on the wave, the brig felt the full force of the gale, and seemed about to leave her native element, as the broad sheet of stout canvass tore her along, to sink the next moment in the deep trough, the canvass shaking, and astern, a mighty wave curling, and tipped with white foam, about to break on her deck, but to glide away under her keel, as she drove madly on for land, where not half a mile ahead lay the narrow opening to Saint Augustine’s Bay.

“Keep close to the bluff crowned by the cocoa-nuts,” shouted Wyzinski, as the brig, sinking in the trough, yawed wildly to port. Onward drove the “Halcyon.” She entered the outlet; one wild roll on the surging wave, and her fore-yard seemed to touch the bare rock; the next she ran into a noble and nearly land-locked bay. “Port your helm; hard a-port,” shouted the captain. “See the anchor clear.” A dozen men swarmed on the forecastle. “Brail up the foresail;” and the clue garnets rattled as the sail was quickly furled. The brig giving a broad sheer came sweeping round, gradually lost her way; then feeling the wind aloft, gathered sternway. “Let go the anchor,” shouted Captain Weber. “Let go the anchor!” roared Mr Lowe, from his post on the quarter-deck. A heavy splash followed, and the next moment the “Halcyon,” her starboard bulwarks gone for a length of two yards abaft, the forechains, the remains of her gig swinging at the davits, her fore-topmast and jib-boom gone, her foremast, main, and main-topmasts only standing, her first-mate lying hundreds of fathoms deep in the salt sea, rode on an even keel by a single anchor in Saint Augustine’s Bay, the gale roaring, and the dark masses of clouds flying over head.

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### Saint Augustine’s Bay.—The Missionary’s Tale.

By sunrise the following morning the gale had pretty nearly blown itself out. The heavy masses of clouds had rolled away, and a bright sun was shining on the smooth water of the bay. Outside, the ocean was still boiling and seething under the influence of the late heavy gale, but the waves, though tipped with foam, were rolling sluggishly, as if tired with their wild efforts.

The “Halcyon,” late her Majesty’s brig “Torch,” did not look by any means the same vessel that had sailed from Quillimane. Neither of her masts were wholly standing. The main-topgallant mast with yards and gear was gone; the fore-topmast with all above it had disappeared, while the bowsprit looked a naked stump, and the splintered white edge of the smashed bulwarks fully attested the violence of the ordeal she had gone through. Not a regular trader, and being fitted out for a long cruise, Captain Weber was in no hurry to make a port. Having little cargo, and that selected for

trading purposes, the brig was well provided with spare spars and sails, and, with the exception of Santa Lucia Bay on the coast of Natal, a better harbour for refitting her could hardly have been found. The rigging was covered with wet clothing, shaking about in the breeze. From the able seaman's tarpaulin and long boots to the captain's pea-jacket, and Donna Isabel's drenched cloak, all were there drying in the sunshine. The "Halcyon" rode with her bows to seaward, while astern lay the beach shaped like a crescent, and composed of fine sand glittering in the beams of the morning sun. The luxuriant forest growth swept down nearly to the water's edge, and the long straight stems of the cocoa-nut trees, with their tufts of thin leaves, shot up here and there like giants from among the lower growth. The crew, with the exception of two men, had been sent below, the brig being land-locked, or nearly so, and no possible danger apprehended, and as these men had been regularly relieved during the darkness, both crew and passengers had enjoyed a good night's repose.

It was about eight o'clock when Captain Weber appeared on the quarter-deck; walking aft, he looked at the now useless compass, and then glanced aloft, from a seaman's habit.

"Let the men have their breakfast, Mr Lowe, comfortably, and then we'll go to work."

"We have a spare topmast and topgallant mast, Captain Weber; but I have been rummaging over the spars, and can find nothing that will do for the main-topgallant mast."

"Is there any stick that will serve for a jib-boom?"

"Yes, sir; there is a spare fore-yard, which the carpenter thinks may do."

"Very good. The moment the men have done breakfast get the boats into the water. We will carry out an anchor astern, and keep the jade a close prisoner, to teach her not to pitch the spars out of her. Call me when they are towing astern." And Captain Weber dived down to finish his toilet.

Below, all marks of the late gale had disappeared. The steward and his mate had been busy since daylight, and the more than ordinarily comfortable though small cabin was in perfect order, when the passengers sat down at the breakfast table at nine o'clock. Of course the brig had not the slightest motion; in fact, she was as though in dock.

"Rather a difference this from yesterday, Dom Maxara," said Wyzinski, as that nobleman appeared coming from his cabin.

"A difference for the better. Will you oblige me by explaining to our captain," continued the old gentleman, "that my daughter, Donna Isabel, begs to be excused from joining the party? She is still suffering from the shock of late emotions."

A ceremonious bow followed the interpretation, on the part of the Portuguese, the Englishman replying with his mouth full.

"Ay, ay, signor, and small blame to her. It is not every day the fishes get the picking of so tight a lad and thorough-bred a sailor as poor Blount."

"How long do you propose lying here, Captain Weber?"

"A couple of days will set us all a-tanto again, and give us time to overhaul the standing and running gear."

"I suppose there is not any danger here?" asked Hughes.

"Danger!—how can there be? Let it blow as hard as it likes, and from what quarter it chooses, we are protected," replied Weber, thinking only of the weather.

"I meant from the natives, not from the elements," remarked Hughes.

"I know no more of Madagascar than you do," replied the captain. "It is the first time my anchor ever had hold of the island."

"Then let me tell you, I do," ejaculated Wyzinski. "The same circumstance which brought this bay to my knowledge, taught me that the natives here are treacherous and wily. You will have them round you before sunset."

"Let them come," replied the sailor; "we have small arms, besides two guns."

"Do you think we can land with prudence, Wyzinski?"

"I should strongly advise putting the brig in a state to resist if attacked, and the arms handy if wanted. As for landing, we might pitch our tent under the trees yonder; but I should deprecate any straggling away."

"Very well, gentlemen. I hear the boats being lowered; I am going to carry out an anchor astern, so as to moor the ship safely. The arm-chest shall be hoisted out, and placed at the foot of the mainmast. The two guns, and the small arms I will place in your charge, if you will honour me by serving as a marine, Captain Hughes."

"In which capacity the Light Infantry drill will be useless," remarked Wyzinski, laughing.

"The boats are alongside, and the men on deck, Captain Weber," said Mr Lowe, who at that moment appeared at the cabin-door.

"Very well. Get the stream-anchor into the pinnace, and rouse out a few fathoms of cable," replied the captain.

"Ay, ay, sir," was the mate's reply.

"And, Mr Lowe," called out the captain, "send the arm-chest on deck. Is there any one who understands an armourer's business?"

“Well, sir, there’s Jackson, who was a blacksmith’s apprentice before he ran away and joined the brig at Liverpool.”

“He’ll do; place him at the disposal of Captain Hughes.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” again replied the mate as he went up the hatchway.

“And now, gentlemen, I must look after the brig. So soon as I have moored her head and stern, you can have one of the boats, only I can’t spare you any other hand except Jackson.”

There were plenty of muskets to arm the whole crew, but they had need of much overhauling. The two guns were of respectable size, carrying a nine-pound ball; and what with the necessary cleaning, the making cartridge, and swinging the guns with their carnages, one on to the quarter-deck the other on to the forecastle, the day wore on. The man Jackson turned out a willing, handy fellow, and, understanding his business, was of great use. Neither Dom Maxara nor his daughter appeared on deck.

In the meantime the stream-anchor had been dropped astern, and the cable hove upon until quite taut; the shears had been got on deck; the carpenter was busy with his axe. The remains of the fore-topmast had been removed, for it had broken off short, leaving the head of the foremast uninjured, and already the spare topmast had been swayed aloft and pointed through. The men worked cheerfully and well. Not a sign of life had been seen on shore, and with the exception of the gulls, which were wheeling and circling round the brig, and the Mother Carey’s chickens which were dipping over the boats now veered astern, all outside the vessel was perfectly still. The sound of the breaking surf came with a hollow dull thud at intervals on the breeze, which was gradually dying out, and nothing could present a greater contrast than the quiet, peaceful sheet of water, with its fringes of cocoa-palms, and beach of white shining sand, with the still waters of the bay, to the noise, bustle, and labour going on all day long on board the brig.

The missionary’s fears had not been realised, and night came on quietly and serenely after a day of toil. The wind had quite died away, and the stars were shining brilliantly; indeed, so still was the air that the noise of the river could be heard as it fell into the sea, about the centre of the bay.

The night was warm and oppressive, and on shore the woods seemed filled with enormous fireflies, floating here and there. They were in great quantities, and would settle on the trees, lighting them with myriads of tiny lights, and making them look like pyramids of sparkling diamonds. Some would come floating off towards the brig, the little lights dancing over her decks and settling on her rigging. The scream of the parrots among the trees had ceased, and save occasionally the quack of the ducks feeding in the river, all was still. Silence now reigned on the brig’s decks, for the day had been one of toil. The night was hot, and the men lay thrown about carelessly, wrapped in cloaks, sails, or anything they could find, among the loose spars. On her forecastle two men alone kept watch, one of whom was the mate, Mr Lowe. Aft a small awning had been rigged, and the passengers were enjoying the beautiful tropical night. Cushions had been brought up from the cabin, the smell of the Portuguese tobacco floated on the air, and the coffee-cups lay here and there. The sound of the bell forward, as a seaman rising struck four bells, came ringing over the waters. Drawing her mantilla over her, and speaking languidly and slowly, as if the dreamy influence of the tropical night affected her, Isabel broke the silence, just as the last tone of the bell quivered over the sea.

“We hear none of the noises of the African plain here; all seems still and calm.”

“There are no lions or noxious animals in the island,” replied the missionary. “Oxen of great size are plentiful, wild asses, and sheep with enormous tails; goats, and wild boar, too, are numerous. The sloth exists here, and I have made many a good meal on a species of bat, of which there are plenty and very good. Hedgehogs, too, and locusts are a usual dish.”

“I pity the Queen of Madagascar if that’s her only food,” said Hughes, rolling a cigarette.

“Oh, there is plenty other. If you choose to take a shot-gun to-morrow you will find pintado, pigeons, parrots, ducks and geese abundant, only beware of the caiman, for the rivers literally swarm with them. There are plenty of fowls, and singularly enough one of the objects of veneration is a white cock. In the mythology of the country there exists a great giant powerful for evil, called ‘Denafil,’ and all white cocks are sacred to him.”

“You seem to know the country, senhor?” asked the noble.

“I passed nearly twelve months there,” replied the missionary.

“And promised to give us a history of your life among the Hovas. What better time than the present? That cabin is stifling, and I am sure none of us wish to go below,” said Isabel, in her silvery and persuasive tones, Dom Maxara being engaged with his cigarette, and Hughes in wishing the starlight was even brighter than it actually was, for the folds of the mantilla looked dim and indistinct under the feeble light.

The missionary was silent for a few minutes as if recalling his recollections.

“I cannot say I will fulfil my promise with pleasure, but I will fulfil it,” he replied. “I have already mentioned whence we sailed and how we reached this bay. The first night we landed we encamped on the banks of this very river, which is called the ‘Onglaki,’ the vessel that brought us sailing for Tamatavé. We were four missionaries under the guidance of one of our brethren, who had lately come from England, and who was named Willis.

“He had been in the island before, and, as we afterwards found, his object was partly political. The queen, by her terrible cruelties, had alienated the love of her subjects, and her son, Prince Rakolo, had allied himself with a Frenchman named Lambert, who had gone to France to solicit protection and assistance in his efforts to dethrone the queen.

“The Christian religion was once spread throughout the land; but now it is almost extinct, and the few Europeans left lead a life nearly, if not quite, as dissolute as the natives. Our chief’s object was to divulge and counteract the policy of the French and of Prince Rakolo; ours was to establish a mission among the Hovas at Tamanarivo. The country is rich, abounding with game of many kinds, and free from noxious animals; we journeyed along good roads towards the capital, sojourning in many villages, and carrying out our work as best we could. It is a beautiful country,” continued the Missionary; “the low lands produce a tree called by the Malgache Bavinala, with bunches of long leaves looking like a lady’s fan. This tree is very useful, for of its wood houses, plates, spoons are made; of its fibres, cloth, and a kind of linen; while its seeds give oil, and its sap when the tree is tapped produces a pleasant drink. The sagontin, or sago-tree,

abounds on the plains; sandal wood and ebony are plentiful; but the tree which struck me most was the ravensara, the nuts and leaves of which perfume the air around, and from which a delicious scent is distilled. Oxen, fowls, and sheep abound; rice is cultivated, and the sugar-cane grows wild."

"And the people?" asked Isabel.

"Are steeped in idleness, dissolute, and licentious. Under King Badama's reign the English had missions in Madagascar; but these disappeared in 1830, and the country now governed by Queen Banavola is fast falling into misery and ruin. To cut a long tale short, we arrived at Tamanarivo, and were received by the queen. Her majesty's taste is for blood, and it is said that fifteen thousand men perished in building her palace, and that thousands of people are put to death yearly by her orders. Our reception was an unfavourable one, and we were as yet in ignorance of the political nature of our leader's mission.

"The town of Tamanarivo is situated on a height; it has one long straggling street, where the houses of the richer class are situated. Here is the queen's palace, surrounded by enormous columns in wood, brought with great labour from fabulous distances. Five thousand men were employed in transporting one single pillar, and the greater part of them died from fever and disease, caught in the low-lying forest land, where the mighty tree grew. Near the palace is the tomb of King Radama, whose intelligence was the means by which the Hovas race emerged from darkness; and near it stands a second palace, richly ornamented with silver, which sparkles in the sun, and belongs to the queen's heir. On three sides the mountain is scarped, forming awful precipices; on the fourth it slopes gently down to the plain, and on these slopes the little houses of the poorer people are erected, and here we were assigned a hut.

"Among our number was a missionary named Maurice. Young, ardent and enthusiastic, he would make no allowance for the prejudices of others, and seemed to brave death, and even court martyrdom, in his incessant endeavours to make proselytes. Strict orders had been given by the queen that we were not to prosecute our religious rites, but Maurice could not be restrained. Whilst we waited, hoping that the queen's mood might change, our brother went forth among the people, boldly preaching the Gospel, and openly defying the queen.

"He planted the cross on the heights of the mountains, he assembled the people under the forest trees, and there with the sweet odour of the ravensara floating around, he told them that cheating and lying, though taught as virtues, were in reality crimes. He told them that the souls of their chiefs were not migratory, that the crocodiles were not once men, that the good genius of the world was not Zanhahar, and the evil one Angetch, and what was a still worse crime, that the ombioche or priests were only pretended sorcerers.

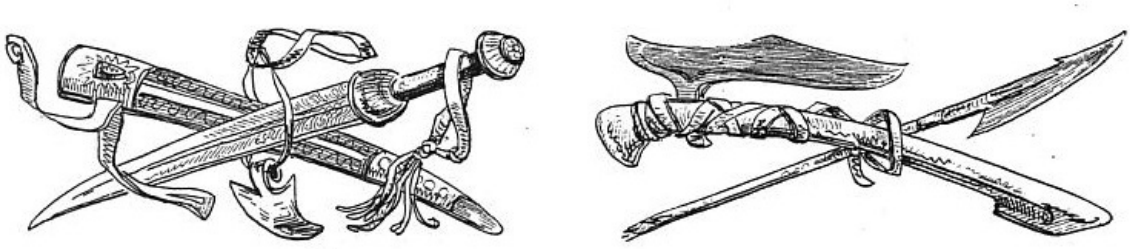
"He made many converts, but he raised up a host of enemies."

"You speak of him ever in the past," remarked Hughes; "he must have been a noble fellow. Did he pay the penalty of his zeal?"

"You shall hear," continued the missionary. "One morning our hut was surrounded with soldiers, our chief, Willis, was seized, and at once sent under escort to Tamatavé. Rice, manioc, and a kind of potato peculiar to Madagascar, were supplied us, and for nearly a month we remained close prisoners. Of what was passing around us we knew nothing, but during this time the 'ombioches,' against whose pretensions Maurice had preached, were employed finding out all those who had attended his meetings or received him.

"At the end of the thirtieth day we were led forth, as we thought, to death. In a large, empty piece of ground, near the palace, about twenty men were huddled. They were quite naked, and many of them cruelly maimed. These were the Christians, and they were surrounded by soldiers. We were placed on a height near where we could see what passed. Armed with sticks and knives, the soldiers were loosed upon the prisoners. The scene was a heart-rending one. Driven gradually towards the brink of the precipice, the screams of the terrified victims became fearful, as goaded on by the sharp knives, and the cruel thongs, one after another took the fatal leap, and the next moment lay mangled, shapeless masses on the sharp rocks below."

"Santa Maria, how terrible!" exclaimed Isabel. "I wish we were away from this horrible but beautiful island; and you, how did you escape?"



WEAPONS OF THE HOVAS. [Vol. II. p. 64.

"You shall hear. The massacre finished, we thought our turn come; but no, we were led back to our hut, and the next day the scene was enacted again, and this continued for eight days, until some five hundred corpses lay festering on the rocks.

"The mode of punishment was however varied; for the eighth day, some of the head men were reserved for death, and these men were pinioned and placed in narrow graves, where boiling water was slowly poured over them; many were poisoned, and every day the list of the condemned was read over and approved by the queen.

"The morning of the ninth day came, and we were brought forth, and conducted before the cabare or council to be judged. We were English, had come for a purpose; but we had disobeyed the queen's command, and merited death. Satiated for the time with blood, the queen pardoned us, ordering us to leave the land. Mischief enough had been done, but it did not end here, for Maurice could not be kept quiet. Rising, he addressed the council, and he spoke the language fluently. He pointed out their errors, he exposed the fallacy of their doctrine; he grew eloquent and excited, and ended by denouncing the queen, and calling upon her head the just retribution her crimes merited. He was sentenced to death. We

never saw him more; for that night we were marched towards the coast. It was the month of January, and that is the hottest month of the year in Madagascar; the deadly fever of the country ravaged the plains through which we marched, and I alone of those who pitched their tents under the trees that line the river yonder survived to tell the tale. Willis had already sailed for the Mauritius, completely foiled in his mission."

"And your poor friend, Senhor," asked Isabel; "did you never hear of him again?"

"Yes, through the agency of Monsieur Lambert, a resident in the island. There are," continued the missionary, "three modes of death much practised at Madagascar. The one, by poison extracted from a tree, is called 'tangui.' This tree is so deadly that the birds avoid it, and the snakes will not go near. The poison consists of a small portion of the nut in powder. It kills in about an hour, and the agony endured is fearful. In ordinary cases it is used as an ordeal, and sometimes, when it induces vomiting, the person taking it gets better.

"The second mode is by throwing the condemned into a river where the caiman abound. If he is not devoured after the third immersion, he is allowed to go free.

"The third is by fastening the condemned to a rock bathed by the sea. If the waves, splashing up against the rocks, do not sprinkle any water on his body, the condemned is liberated; if a drop of water touches him, a dozen lances at once finish him."

"The last seems to me the most merciful death, though all are horrible," said Isabel.

"After we were violently separated from him, Maurice was kept guarded for twenty-four hours, without food of any kind, not even a drop of water being allowed him. His sufferings under that hot sun must have been terrible, but even then his faith was unshaken, and he made constant endeavours to convert his guards. His days and nights were passed in prayer. On the evening of the second day, he was taken to the ombachie's hut. Here he met with the 'sampi tanguine,' or poisoner, and here life and liberty were offered him by the priest if he would publicly avow his errors and acknowledge their power. He was but a young man, and had lately married. He had left a wife, who was at that moment probably a mother, hoping to rejoin him. The temptation was strong, as the black poisoner stood before him with the deadly powder ready."

"And did he yield?" eagerly asked Hughes.

"Not for a moment. Half an hour afterwards he was writhing on the floor of the hut in agonising convulsions, the ombachie and the 'sampi tanguine' standing over him. He died pardoning his persecutors, and his body was thrown over the precipice."

"Poor fellow! Madre de Dios, what a melancholy tale! And the poor wife?" asked Isabel.

"I never heard," replied Wyzinski. "A missionary should not marry, in my opinion."

"There goes eight bells, and here comes the captain to take his watch," exclaimed Hughes.

True to the old instinct, Captain Weber's first impulse was to walk to the binnacle, and then to glance aloft at his dismantled masts and rigging.

Isabel seemed struck with the missionary's melancholy tale. She rose and took the arm of the old seaman, who looked fondly into her face as she walked by his side. The moon had not risen, but there was a strong light over the sea, and before saying good night the girl gazed over the brig's stern at the dark line of forest land and the myriads of dancing fireflies. She then turned, but seemed struck with something. "I did not know that there were rocks in the bay," she said, pointing to the entrance.

Captain Weber did not understand French, but his eye followed the direction of the girl's finger. There, sure enough, broad on the brig's starboard bow lay three black points looking like rocks, but rising and falling on the waves.

Dropping the girl's arm, he ran forward. "Mr Lowe, turn the hands up, quickly and silently," he said, in a hoarse whisper; "arm the men at once. Look handy! The Malays are upon us."

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### Saint Augustine's Bay.—The Pirates.

The "Halcyon," it will be remembered, was moored head and stern, but her bows did not point to the opening of the bay. A warp had been run from her starboard hawse-hole, and an anchor earned out far beyond the narrow entrance, so as to enable Captain Weber to cast his ship in that direction when he wished to sail. With his masts in the state they were, and the weather besides dead calm, it would have been a slow and tedious affair to move the brig from her anchorage. There were no boarding-nettings now she no longer belonged to the navy, and but for the missionary's warning, the "Halcyon" would have been wholly unprepared for resistance. Creeping aft, Captain Weber rejoined the party on the quarter-deck.

Quietly and courteously he offered his arm to Dona Isabel, who, quite unconscious of what was passing, was still looking into the night.

A glance at the entrance of the bay told him at once that the boats were concentrating for a dash, but it told him too that help was at hand, for several dark figures came tumbling up the hatchway. Carefully conducting the lady to her cabin, the old seaman raised his cap, uncovering his grey hair as he did so, and bade her good night. The next moment he was on deck, pointing out to the astonished passengers the danger. Mr Lowe stood by the arm-chest, concealed by the bulwarks, distributing the arms, and the whole crew were now alarmed.

"See," said Captain Weber; "there, they separate. Yonder two boats will board on the brig's bows, the third on her quarter."

"They are ready for the dash," replied the soldier, "and think us unprepared."

“Creep forward and train the nine-pounder on them, Captain Hughes.”

Sheltering under the bulwarks, Hughes obeyed. The gun was already loaded with rifle bullets, and heavily charged. The boats came leisurely on, for all on board the brig seemed buried in sleep. The dip of the muffled oars could hardly be distinguished even by those who were watching, consequently the noise could never have awoke men asleep. The wash of the wave made itself heard on the beach, and so still was the night that the quack of the ducks, and the call of the widgeon and wild geese feeding among the reeds, came on the air. On the forecastle the creaking of a gun-carriage told that Captain Hughes was not idle, and those in the boat heard it too. They stopped rowing, the three drawing closely together, apparently in consultation. This was the moment the captain chose, and the loud hail, “Boat ahoy!” rang out from the quarter-deck. A shrill yell and a musket-shot was the reply, followed by the boom of the forecastle gun, as it scattered its bagful of rifle bullets right among them. The aim had been deliberate and deadly. The loud scream of agony, the yell of vengeance, replied to by the cheer of the English seamen, rang out in the silent night. One boat had been sunk, and its crew apparently either killed or drowned, for not waiting to rescue them the other two dashed on with a wild scream for vengeance. Leaving the useless gun, for there was no time to load it again, Hughes and the three men on the forecastle made their way aft.

A spattering fire now ran along the brig’s deck, replied to from the two boats, as they dashed on, the one for the bow, the other on the quarter. In a few seconds, the Malays were alongside. Grasping the rigging, their long knives between their teeth, they swarmed over the bulwarks fore and aft.

The deadly musketry struck them down, the pistol shots, at point blank range, shattered their heads, but still they came on. The English seamen cheered as they struck right and left with their short cutlasses, and there on the main deck stood Dom Maxara, a long curved sabre in his hand, dripping with blood, cheering on the men in a language they did not understand. The boat which had boarded on the quarter was beaten off, but joining the other the two had united their numbers, and some fifty maddened and nearly naked pirates came pouring over the bows, driving the crew before them.

Among the Malays, one tall, powerful fellow, nearly naked, seemed the leader of the rest; shouting, gesticulating, and striking right and left, he urged the assailants on. Once already had the crew been driven back to the break of the quarter-deck, but, led on by Captain Weber, had repulsed their enemies. Brandishing a jagged piece of broken spar, his hat having fallen off, and a streak of blood on the forehead showing him to be wounded, the old seaman fought like a tiger.

“Give it them, my lads, no quarter for the bloody pirates. Overboard with them!” he shouted, as he dashed full at the leader of the Malays.

A furious combat again ensued, shouts, oaths, execrations, mingled with the pistol shots. The groans of the wounded, the yells of the combatants, changed what had been a quiet, peaceful scene into one of riot and bloodshed.

Dona Isabel, it has been said, had retired into her cabin; a single lamp was burning, and, perfectly unconscious of danger, she was preparing for rest, when the heavy boom of the forecastle gun startled her, and then the silence of the night seemed to be suddenly at an end, and the shouts, yells, and groans told too terribly of what was going on above her head. The cabin was deserted, the steward having joined the combatants, and as she opened the door her father’s voice was heard cheering on the men in her own tongue. She recognised the soldier’s shout as the pirates were slowly driven back, while, alone and frightened, she dropped on her knees in prayer. Suddenly a loud report right over her head startled her still more; for a moment all was silent, the yells and shouts ceasing as by magic, then a wild cheer from the crew followed, and Isabel, unable to bear the terrible suspense, rushed up the cabin hatchway. The stars were shining brightly, but the brig’s decks were slippery with blood. Her own boats had been veered astern, and close to her bows, two dark objects showed where the pirates had boarded.

The survivors of the boat which had been cut in two by the shot from the forecastle gun, had swum for the brig, scrambling over her bulwarks just as the captain so fiercely attacked the Malay leader. Both had grappled, and had rolled, struggling and fighting, into the chains, as the new comers, at once dashing forward, again bore back the crew. The forecastle was black with pirates.

“Lie down, men, shelter under the break of the quarter-deck!” shouted Hughes, as he jumped aft, and with nervous strength slewed round the second nine-pounder, pointing it so as to sweep the forecastle. “Down, down, for your lives!”

The next moment the loud report which had so startled Isabel rang out, and the rifle bullets swept in a storm of lead right among the black mass of men crowding the forecastle. Seizing the moment, with a loud cheer the now inspirited crew dashed on, over the dead and dying, and the broken pirates leaped madly over the bows. Many dropped into the sea, but swimming, were picked up; the boats shoved off, crippled, and pulling but few oars, a ringing cheer from the crew following them just as the frightened girl found herself on deck.

Hughes stood by the gun, his clothes torn, and his face black with the smoke; the peculiar smell of blood was perceptible, mixed with the odour of the gunpowder, and Isabel feeling it became sick and weak, just as a dark form, bounding from the main chains, leaped on to the quarter-deck. A loud shriek burst from her lips, as the Malay leader threw himself on Hughes. Partially overpowered, the soldier grasped his powerful foe by the throat. They swayed to and fro, struggling and fighting; the frightened girl rushed forward, the Malay striking wildly at her with his dagger. With a scream of pain Isabel fell on the deck just as a tremendous blow from the broken spar, given with a hearty good will, smashed in the Malay’s skull, both he and the soldier, who was held in the death grasp, falling to the deck.

“Hurrah for Old England!” shouted the excited captain, as he flourished the jagged and blood-besmeared spar over his head with one hand, and dragged Hughes clear of the dead Malay with the other. “See if any of the miscreants are below. A short shrift and a pistol bullet if you find any, my lads. Here, Mr Lowe, lend a hand with this lubber; he nearly did for me just now, but we are quits.”

A loud splash in the water told that the pirate had gone over the side, and every now and then a similar splash, with a “Yeo, heave ho!” from forward, marked the fate of a fallen Malay.

Carefully and gently Isabel was lifted from the deck and borne below by the steward and Hughes. Dom Maxara was forward, staunching a severe wound from a Malay creese in the shoulder. Wyzinski, who during the hand-to-hand combat had fought like a tiger, and received a stab in the leg, now remembered he was a missionary, and, though weak with loss of blood, was engaged smoothing the passage of one of the crew from the world his soul was quitting. Four men killed, and almost every one of the crew wounded, three severely, were the casualties on board the brig, while those among the pirates were never known, but must have been very severe.

The Malay had dealt his blow wildly, his intention being revenge, for Hughes's grip held him by the throat, and the savage pirate was choking as he struck. The creese had entered Isabel's arm above the elbow, making a nasty jagged wound.

They placed her on the crimson cushions in the cabin, Masters, the steward, bathing her head with water, while the wounded arm hung down, the soldier kneeling near her, and doing his best to bandage it. His was a curious figure as he knelt by her side, for both face and hands were nearly black with the powder and smoke, his dress torn in many places, and what had been a shirt showing very many tokens of the bulky pirate's terrible grip. All this was forgotten in the anxiety of the moment, and there the two were in the almost deserted cabin eagerly waiting for returning consciousness. Isabel's face was pale and bloodless, and her teeth firmly clenched. There was no doctor on board the brig.

"Masters, I wish you would step on deck," said Hughes, "and send Wyzinski here."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the man, rising, and handing the basin and sponge to Hughes.

"And, Masters, just ask Captain Weber for some arnica."

The man disappeared up the hatchway. On deck all was bustle, the crew being busily engaged removing the traces of the late bloody affair. He found the missionary forward, but unable to leave a wounded seaman, so Masters knelt by his side and joined in the fervent but simple prayer over the dying man. An oil lamp gave out a feeble light in the fore-cabin, showing in one corner a large white sail. The heavy folds covered something, which bulging out here, falling in there, took the shape of the human form. The dead lay there, while, breathing heavily, his hand plucking at the coverlet, the dying seaman passed slowly away.

His shirt was open, showing the jagged, ragged hole made by the Malay creese in the broad, hairy breast.

The man spoke, but his tones were low. Masters leaned over him, and caught the faint eager tones.

"Tell the skipper to heave up the anchor, and get into blue water. I know these fellows, and they'll come back."

"Ay, ay, Sedley," answered the steward, "I'll tell him, sure enough."

"Trouble not yourself about the brig, my poor fellow," said the missionary. "Prepare to meet your God."

The man rolled restlessly from side to side, the hand ever plucking at the coarse blanket.

"I've done my duty," he said. "There's no one left to ask after me in the old house at home, so I may slip my anchor as soon as I like."

"Pray with me, Sedley," replied the missionary, and the faint light glanced and flickered over the dark cabin, making the white sail seem to take strange shapes, sometimes even to move; for the feeble daylight began to mingle with the yellow rays, and the dying sailor's lips parted in prayer, as he tossed wearily from side to side. It was a sad and solemn spectacle.

A heavy step was heard coming down the fore-hatchway, and a moment later Captain Weber stood by the man's berth. He was without the tarpaulin hat he usually wore, and his forehead seamed with a broad bloody gash.

"Ay, ay!" ejaculated the old seaman. "Four of them under yonder sail, and here goes a fifth."

On deck the tread of the men was heard, the splash of the water as it was dashed about the stained decks, the loud, careless laugh, and now and then the "Yeo, heave oh!" followed by a splash, as the dawning day showed some corpse, hitherto overlooked, lying stiff and stark among the spars and rigging with which the deck was strewn.

The dying man appeared to revive; he looked around him.

"Heave up the anchor, captain! Fourteen years of Jack Sedley's life has been passed off this here coast. Heave up the anchor, and make sail on the old bark! Them murderous beggars will—"

The man fell back heavily, a rattle was heard in the throat, the eyes became glazed, a long breath was followed by a deep silence; again the chest filled, as though by a laborious effort, the eyelids twitched nervously, a heavy sigh, and the seaman's course was run.

Captain Weber turned away, passing the sleeve of his coat over his eyes, and so smearing his face with the gore which still flowed from the wound in his forehead, as he slowly left the cabin.

The steward did not come back; but gradually the blood resumed its wonted course, and Isabel's consciousness returned.

"Where is my father?" she asked. "What has happened?"

"The brig has been attacked by pirates. They are beaten off, and your father is safe."

"Santa Maria! my arm, how stiff it feels! Ah, now I remember," she continued, half rising, and a look of honour overspreading her countenance.

"But for your scream," replied Hughes, "I should have been taken by surprise. The smoke of the gun was in my eyes, blinding me, and so I could not save you from the felon's blow."

The wounded arm, with its stained bandages, the kneeling figure, all begrimed with smoke, the certainty of her father's safety, and of the departure of the pirates, seemed to strike the girl's imagination. A smile passed over her face.

"Isabel," said the soldier with a sudden burst of passion, his emotion mastering him, "I have loved you from the first

time I ever saw you!”

The black eyes had been gazing on him with a wild vacant look, as the girl lived over again, in imagination, the terrible scene she had witnessed on deck, when the bulky form of the Malay leader had so nearly borne her lover down; the day, too, when on the banks of the Zambesi he had stood between her and a terrible death; and now the tension of her nerves giving way, she sobbed deeply and convulsively.

“I have loved you ever since I saw you, Isabel, and strange to say it is the only love I have ever known,” he continued, breaking the silence.

The heavy, convulsive sobs shook her slight frame, but she made no answer.

“Left an orphan when a mere child, joining my father’s regiment when a youth, I have never known what even a parent’s love may be, and it seems now as if the devotion of a whole life were concentred on you, Isabel.”

Again the soldier paused, and the sobs of the girl were alone heard in the cabin. The grey light of dawn was showing itself down the hatchway, and through the ports. The same grey dawn which was lighting the dying seaman’s long journey, was gradually creeping over the lover’s dream.

He took her hand carefully, gently, for it was the injured arm; he looked up into her face.

“Isabel, can you return a soldier’s love?” he asked, eagerly.

The head fell on his shoulders, the hot tears deluged his hand.

“Dearest Isabel, speak!” he urged, as he passed his arm round her waist.

“I can—I will!” whispered the girl. “But, oh, for pity’s sake be silent now.”

And he was silent, for his heart was full of sweet emotions, while Isabel sobbed on, and the grey light grew more and more perceptible.

“And your father, Isabel?” at last asked her lover.

“He never denied me anything; my happiness is his; and here he comes.”

Dom Maxara and the missionary at this moment entered the cabin. The former had only just heard of his daughter’s wound, and as it had been exaggerated, his face, pale from loss of blood, showed great anxiety. Rising, the girl threw herself into her father’s arms.

“Oh, father, I am so happy!” she sobbed.

The old man’s grey hair mixed with the dark tresses of his daughter, as he bent over and soothed her, Wyzinski standing for a moment as if astonished at the scene.

“Pardon me, Dom Maxara, you had better conduct the Dona Isabel to her cabin, and I will dress the wound. It is but slight, and I am a bit of a surgeon.”

“I thank you, Senhor,” replied the old Portuguese, again assuming all the stateliness of manner which usually characterised him. “Come, Isabel.”

Isabel de Maxara turned, gave one look at her lover—a glance teeming with gratitude and love, even though the eyes were running over with tears, as she held out her hand. Hughes pressed it to his lips, and the next moment she was gone.

“The Dona Isabel might have a cleaner lover,” observed Wyzinski, after a long silence.

It was the first time Captain Hughes had been conscious of his dirt-begrimed, ragged condition; would he have risked the confession he had made, had he been aware of it?

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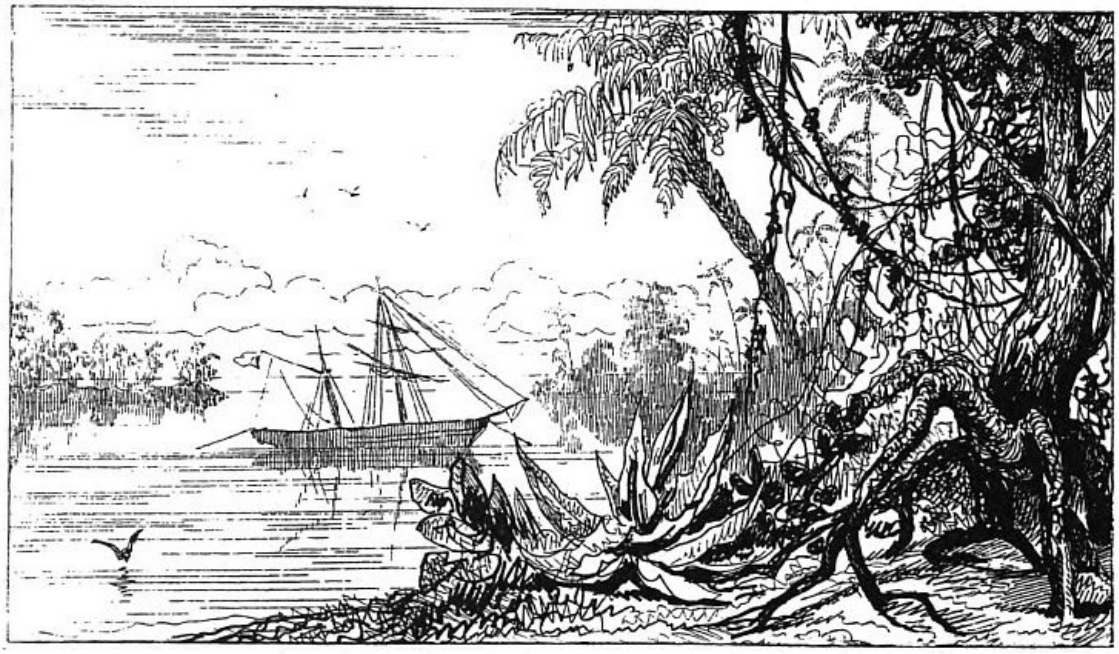
### The Day after the Fight.

The day was well advanced, and the fierce rays of the African sun were pouring on the “Halcyon’s” decks, as she lay at anchor in Saint Augustine’s Bay. On shore the parrots could be heard chattering and screaming, the long cry of the peacock sounded from the woods, while on board every sign of the late bloody fight had been removed. The “Halcyon’s” crew had been reduced by five deaths, and many of the men were hardly able to work from the effects of weakness. Still everything was going on well. The fore-topmast was in its place, the main-topgallant-mast replaced, and the standing and running rigging nearly finished. A new jib-boom had been rigged out, and the only spar wanting was the fore-topgallant-mast, which could be easily done without. The mate had weighed the spare anchor, and the brig now rode to a single one, and that was hove short. The crew were busy bending new sails, and no one who had looked into St Augustine’s Bay that afternoon could have imagined that the vessel which lay so quietly riding on the calm waters, had just escaped from shipwreck, and her crew from murder.



ST. AUGUSTINE'S BAY. [Vol. II. p. 84.

"I know where the rascals hail from," said Captain Weber to the missionary.

The old seaman had a broad bandage round his forehead, and Wyzinski walked with the help of a stick. Leaning over the taffrail at some little distance, Hughes and Dom Maxara were in earnest conversation, the blue smoke from the noble's cigarette rising in the air.

"I should not have believed in piracy in this age," replied Wyzinski.

"Ay, but several vessels have been closely followed by a low rakish black schooner, of small tonnage, but very swift. The 'Dawn,' a full-rigged ship I spoke in the latitude of Cape St André, had some difficulty in getting away from her."

"Is she armed?" asked Wyzinski.

"The 'Dawn's' people said not, but as the ship happened to be crowded with coolies, it is possible that the schooner would not show her metal."

"And you think that the Malays were part of her crew?"

"I feel sure of it. The schooner has run into some of the little bays of the coast, and is now doubtless lying within a few miles of us. This night she will make a second attempt."

"And will find the Bay empty."

"Certainly. In two hours I shall be ready to heave up the anchor, warp the brig well up with the entrance to the Bay, and profit by the breeze, which generally blows from the eastward after sunset."

"It would be necessary to move on another account, Captain Weber."

"Ay, ay; forty-eight hours would bring some of those fellows up from the bottom bobbing about us, the big chap whose skull I scratched, among the rest."

"He gave you some trouble, did he not?"

"I should have mastered him single handed," replied the old seaman, "if I had not been trampled on and crushed by both parties. I never quite lost consciousness, but I was very near it when the big villain dashed away on to the quarter-deck."

"Mr Lowe," continued the captain, "heave up the anchor, and let me know when you are ready for the warp."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the mate, whose left arm was in a sling, going forward.

Captain Hughes, his arms folded, was leaning over the taffrail, when the clink of the capstan made itself heard, as the sailors shipped the bars, and to the merry tones of the flute began heaving up the anchor. Dom Maxara was standing erect beside him, his tall figure and noble bearing telling of a proud and haughty nature.

"Isabel has told me what has passed between you, Senhor Capitano," continued the noble; "but though I will never thwart her will, you must remember we know little of each other."

"Ours has scarcely been a ball-room meeting," returned the English officer, in a tone scarcely less haughty than that of the Portuguese.

"That I am willing to concede, and more, for on one occasion at least my daughter owed you her life, but even that is not a debt on which a noble caballero counts. Are you aware that Isabel, on her father's side, descends from the oldest

dukedom of the land, that of the princely house of Cadaval?”

His listener bowed stiffly, and the proud noble continued—

“Are you aware also that her mother was of the race of the Guzmans of Castille, and that in her is concentrated the purest Spanish, with the oldest blood of Portugal?”

“Well, as to that,” replied Hughes, who could not help smiling, though feeling very anxious, “I can count pedigree with any man, only instead of the Guzmans of Castille, I must refer you back to the rude hills of the Cymri and the chieftains, my ancestors, who wore their golden torques, when the Druids raised their altars in Britain, and before even the Romans knew the land.”

The speaker’s voice showed pride and dignity fully equal to that of the noble, though there breathed through the words a spirit of mockery and cynicism.

Dom Maxara bowed courteously. “I can hardly perceive the analogy between your skin-clad ancestors and the chivalrous barons of my land,” he replied coldly.

“I regret to hear it, Senhor,” said the soldier, with some show of humour, “and it yet remains for me to learn how as to birth and old lineage I am so immeasurably your inferior,” he continued, sharply. “The boon I ask of you is great, so great that a lifetime of devotion will not pay my debt, but in other matters,” and here the delicacy of the subject striking him, he paused. “In a word, Senhor Maxara, my fortune is small, very small, and resumes itself thus:—A captain’s commission, an income of five hundred a year besides, and an old name, and old house in Wales. In worldly means I am not rich, but in love for Dona Isabel I will not yield even to a father.”

“And she has told you that your love is returned, has she not?” asked the noble.

“She has led me to hope it may, and that hope is the loadstar of my existence; and one with which I will never part.”

“Listen, Senhor Hughes. My father, Dom Antonio Mendez de Maxara,” said the noble, speaking slowly and deliberately, “was a rich man. Added to a proud name, he enjoyed large estates. When I married into the noble house of the Guzmans of Castille, few had a brighter prospect than myself. My father mixed himself up with the political parties of the land. He was unfortunate, and, like many another, plunged more deeply into intrigue. Not content with that, he must needs join the Guzmans in their schemes against the Queen of Spain, thus not only rendering himself obnoxious to the Portuguese Government, but hated and feared by the cruel and treacherous Narvaez.

“Years passed on, Isabel was born, and her mother paid for the young life with her own.”

The noble paused, and seemed buried in sad reflections as the cigarette smoke curled upwards.

“Run that warp forward, clap it on to the capstan,” shouted the clear voice of the captain. “Heave with a will, my lads. The old barky knows her way out into blue water. Run the boats up to the davits, Mr Lowe.”

The brig’s head, now the anchor was clear of the ground, slowly fell off under the strain put upon the warp, and she moved through the water in the direction of the entrance.

“Keep all fast with the boats,” called Captain Weber. “We may have to tow the hussy out. There’s not a breath of wind, Mr Lowe. Look handy with that maintop-gallant sail, my lads. We shall need it before the moon rises. Send a hand to the wheel.”

All was bustle on the brig’s decks, while aloft the busy topmen were bending new sails, splicing the rigging, and completing their work, which had been hastily but effectually done. The creak of the oars in their rowlocks was heard as a boat pulled out for the entrance, to see that all was clear to seaward. Still the old noble seemed immersed in thought. At last he spoke again.

“The moment came,” he said, “when Narvaez triumphed. A traitor was found who had been for many years my father’s intimate friend, had shared his plans and his purse. Bribed with gold and promises, the man placed a long political correspondence in the hands of the minister. It became plain that my father had dreamed of freedom both of religion and of government. This might have been passed over, but he had gone further, and desired a federation of the two countries, Spain and Portugal, under a popular Republic. This was his crime, and the two parties then fighting for power became united against the common danger.

“Forced to fly, my father had nearly reached the French frontier, when he was struck down by the hands of hired assassins. A desultory and useless rising took place at different but isolated points. In these I had taken part, burning to revenge a father’s death. I managed, with great difficulty, to escape; but my property and estates were lost, and I but retained sufficient to enable me to live, and to place Isabel with a relative, the Superior of the Convent of the Augustines, in Paris. Passing into the service of France, I won a commission in the Foreign Legion, serving in Algeria, in Italy, and Austria. I rose to the command of my regiment, when, some months since, I was enabled to return to my country, was received with favour, a small portion of our forfeited estates restored, and the mission I am now accomplishing given me.

“Ah! Isabel, my child!” continued the noble, as at that moment she appeared on deck, and he bent to kiss her high forehead; “I have been burthening our friend with the tale of our family misfortunes.”

Dressed in a light muslin with a flowing skirt, her dark hair heavily braided, with the high comb, and mantilla, Dona Isabel would have looked beautiful enough; but with the left arm bound up and worn in a sling made with a crimson Andalusian scarf, and the air of fatigue and languor which late events had caused still hanging over her, Hughes thought he had never seen her look so lovely.

Nestling in between her father and her lover, Isabel passed her right hand through the arm of the old noble, who looked down fondly into her face.

The brig’s stern was now no longer pointed towards the land, for she was moving slowly along parallel with it. The click of the capstan, as the sailors stamped round with a measured step, was heard, and the vessel was slowly drawing up with the entrance to the Bay. The parrots were screaming on shore and the gulls overhead, the last rays of the

evening sun tinging the tops of the fan-like leaves of the ravinala trees, just as the “Halcyon” arrived abreast of the “Onglake” river, which here discharged itself into the sea.

“It is a beautiful scene,” said Isabel, “and who could believe that it is the same quiet Bay which a few hours since rang with the demoniac yells of those horrible pirates!”

“If we have any wind it will come towards sunset, the captain says, and we shall shape our course for the Cape,” said Dom Maxara. “What leave of absence remains to you, Senhor Enrico!”

The name seemed singular to Captain Hughes; it was the first time he had heard it used; but it was, after all, decidedly prettier than plain matter-of-fact Henry.

“About eighteen months,” replied he, “which could easily be prolonged.”

“And have you any plans for the future, Enrico mio?” asked Isabel, raising her large dark eyes to his face.

If “Enrico” seemed pleasant from the mouth of the stately old noble, what was that first “Enrico mio” from those ruby lips?

The noise of the boats as they were manned, the dropping of the oars into the water, the unshipping of the capstan bars, and the preparations for casting off the rope used to tow the vessel’s head round, now told that the “Halcyon” had reached the entrance of the Bay.

“Set the fore-topmast-staysail, let fall the foresail, get the fore-topsail on her, Mr Lowe. Cast off the warp; give way, my lads, give way cheerily in the boats,” shouted the captain, as he stood on the quarter-deck. “Starboard—hard—let her feel the helm. Steady! so.”

The brig’s head slowly payed off, as she felt the strain of the boats’ towing, and her jib-boom pointed right for the entrance of the Bay. The horizon had been reported clear, nothing being in sight, and sail after sail opened its wide expanse, while the long breathings of the ocean began to be felt, and the idle canvas flapped to and fro in the calm.

“Have you any plans for the future, Enrico mio?” reiterated Isabel.

Hughes had been gazing steadily down into the deep blue water, totally regardless of all that was passing around him.

“I was thinking,” he said, “of Wyzinski’s tales, of the sad remembrances this place has for him; and contrasting them with the startling events, but bright memories, it will have for me. The name of Saint Augustine’s Bay will ever be dear to me.”

The blood mantled in Isabel’s cheeks as she answered—

“When the Senhor has done with his pleasant memories of the past, perhaps he will deign an answer to a poor maiden’s question.”

The men had strained at the oars until the stout ash staves creaked and bent in the rowlocks. The dark hull of the brig had slowly forged ahead, and at the moment Isabel spoke, the “Halcyon” had passed the entrance of the harbour, and was rising and falling on the long gentle swell outside. She did not feel the wind, being under the shelter of the coast; but slight cat’s-paws were playing on the water about half-a-mile ahead, and so the boats continued towing, while on board the main-topgallant and main-topsails were being sheeted home.

“There is our last sight of the Bay,” said Hughes, sighing. “It must now live only in the memories of the past. Plans—no, dearest Isabel; I have been enjoying the present without care for the future.”

“And now the fairy dream is over, what do you intend to do when we reach the Cape, Enrico? Surely I have a right to ask,” said Isabel.

“If you have eighteen months’ leave of absence, Senhor,” said the noble, “come with us to Portugal for your answer; you can make your arrangements in England.”

The Senhor Enrico could not have wished for a pleasanter invitation, and he eagerly closed with it.

“That topgallant sail is drawing, Mr Lowe; cast off the tow-rope, recall the boats, and hoist them in. Tell off the watch, and send the crew to supper. Let the steward give them an extra ration of grog. Take a pull at the starboard tacks and sheets. Lay her head to the west-south-west.”

The wind, which was very light, was from the eastward, consequently the brig, her yards rounded in, was running free, the boom-mainsail was hauled out, the heavy folds of the mainsail let fall, and the jib hoisted. One by one the studding-sails were set, and the black hull once more supported a towering mass of white canvas. With all this the “Halcyon” only just held steerage way, the wind coming in hot puffs from the distant mountains of the Amboitmena range, at times filling the canvas and making the bubbles fly past as the “Halcyon” felt the breeze, then dying away, while the useless sails flapped heavily with the gentle roll of the waves.

Her captain seemed silent and anxious, and would not leave the deck. Dinner had been announced, but Captain Weber had only dived below to reappear again in a few minutes, and, telescope in hand, was sweeping the coast line with his glass. He bad evinced no signs of anxiety to his guests, but as he paced the lee gangway of the brig, he showed no such reticence to his mate.

“One hour’s good blow from yonder mountains and we should be well clear of this coast,” he said.

“Do you think, Captain Weber, the fellow dare attack us again after the taste he had of our quality last night?” inquired the mate.

“If the scoundrels could get possession of the brig, they would soon find the means to arm her,” replied the captain; “and the west coast of Madagascar is one series of indentations, coves, and bays, fit refuges for these sort of craft.”

“The clouds are resting on the top of the mountain range, sir; I fancy we shall have more wind just now. How far do you reckon we are from land?”

“About ten miles,” replied the captain. “Turn the hands up on deck, Mr Lowe. Haul up the mainsail, the brig has hardly way on her, and send the men aft. We must bury our dead.”

The moon was low on the horizon, shedding a dim light on the ocean, and making the long line of the Madagascar coast look black and indistinct as if seen through a haze.

Soon ranged, side by side, on a grating abaft the main chains, lay five forms covered with the ship’s ensign. On the quarter-deck stood the passengers and the remainder of the crew, while the missionary, in a clear distinct voice, read slowly the impressive burial service. All were uncovered, and the tears streamed down Isabel’s face, as she looked on the inanimate forms of the brave fellows who had died to save her from worse than death. The captain laid his hand on the Union Jack, the mate made a sign, and four sturdy men advanced, placing their shoulders under the grating. “We commit their bodies to the deep, in the sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life,” and as the solemn words rang out on the night air, the splash of the falling bodies in the sea followed. A stillness seemed to gather around, and the service for the dead finished, the crew retired to their different duties, for the time, at least, saddened and depressed, and the quarter-deck was soon left to the captain and his mate.

Slowly they paced it to and fro in eager but low conversation. The puffs of wind came down a little steadier, and the “Halcyon” was moving through the water once more. The night was beautifully fine, the stars shining brilliantly, but the moon just sinking behind a distant spit of land broad on the larboard bow. From time to time the sound of the ship’s bell, tolling the hour, was heard, the creaking of the blocks and ropes, and the mournful flap of the sails as the brig rolled lazily on the long swell. All at once the mate stopped suddenly in his walk, looked earnestly towards the coast line, and then, without speaking, raised his finger and pointed towards the setting moon. It was just sinking behind a patch of forest trees, their long tapering fan-like leaves distinctly marked against the light, while, sweeping past, the spars of a small vessel could be seen, the thin whip-like sticks plainly visible against the sky. Next, the long, low black hull drew clear of the land, and distinctly revealed against the light the spars and rigging of a small schooner. Not a rag of canvas was shown, and yet slowly and with a gentle caption the dark mass glided on into the night, right on the path which the brig was taking.

The two seamen looked at each other.

“I thought as much. It is the pirate!” ejaculated the captain, with a deep sigh.

“If they had chosen their weather, it could not suit them better.”

Stepping aft, the captain glanced at the compass.

“Round in the weather-braces and sheets, Mr Lowe. Port, you may, Hutchins; keep her dead to the west.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied the man, as the spokes flew through his fingers; and the ship’s head falling off, the wind was brought nearly aft, the two vessels thus moving on almost parallel lines.

“Can you make him out now?” asked the captain, as his mate rejoined him on the quarter-deck.

Long and anxiously did the officer addressed peer into the night. The missionary joined the group, and was made acquainted with what was passing.

“There she is,” said the mate, “right on our quarter. Look! in go her sweeps, for she has made sail, and is standing on the same course as ourselves, keeping way with us under her foresail, mainsail, and jib. That craft could close with us any moment, sir. Shall I rouse the crew?”

The captain did not speak; but stood, his elbows leaning on the weather bulwarks, looking in the direction of the schooner.

“If it is the vessel you suppose, she knows we carry guns,” remarked Wyzinski; “but does not know how many. She will wait for daylight.”

“You are quite right,” replied the captain. “Leave the men quiet, Mr Lowe. We will keep the watch together, and may God send us wind,” and here the old seaman reverently lifted his cap, “for yonder is a dreadful foe.”

The sound of the bell tolled out the hours, the wind, which had freshened, towards morning died away; but all night long the three anxious watchers paced the narrow limits of the brig’s quarter-deck. Time after time did the captain turn to the compass and take the schooner’s bearings. It was useless, for there, under easy sail, exactly where she had first been made out, on the brig’s weather quarter, the white canvas of the pirate could be seen, never varying a point. It was evident she was waiting for daylight to close with her prey.

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**The Pirate Schooner.**

Day dawned slowly, the breeze having slightly freshened towards morning, but still the long, low line of the Madagascar coast lay astern. The ocean was quite calm.

“Sail ho!” shouted one of the crew. On the quarter-deck, the captain, the mate, and Wyzinski still kept their anxious watch.

“What do you make her out, Williams?” asked Captain Weber.

“A schooner, sir, under easy sail, standing to the westward.”

Again the captain took the bearings of the dangerous-looking vessel, but with exactly the same result. There she was still on the brig's weather quarter, and apparently in no sort of a hurry.

"The wicked-looking craft has the heels of us." remarked the mate; "but we shall have a cap full of wind before long, and then we may tell a different tale."

"She sees it too; there goes her fore-topsail. She is making sail," said the captain; then, addressing a man who happened to be passing at the moment, "tell Captain Hughes and the foreign Don I should be glad to speak to them," he added.

The schooner showed no flag, but setting her fore-topsail, edged a little nearer the wind, so as no longer to be running on a line parallel to the brig, but on one which would eventually bring them to the same spot. The two passengers soon stood on the deck.

"I have sent for you, gentlemen," said the captain, raising his tarpaulin as he spoke, "to decide on our course. You see yonder schooner?"

All eyes were turned to the long, low black hull and the white canvas.

"Well, I have every reason to suppose she is a pirate, whose crew have committed great ravages in these seas. Several vessels have been chased by her, and one or two having a great number of passengers on board, the little craft, which sails like a witch, has neared them sufficiently to make this out, and has then put up her helm and made sail. But several vessels which are over due at different ports have never been heard of, not a vestige of them and their crews ever having been found. They have simply disappeared."

"But we are armed," replied Hughes, "and are double yonder schooner's tonnage."

"I know nothing of her armament; no one does," replied the seaman. "The vessels she has boarded, whose crews could tell, have, I repeat, mysteriously disappeared from the face of the ocean. The captain of the 'Dawn' told that when off the island of Mayotte, away to the northward here, a brig was in his company. The two sailed about equally. One night pistol shots were heard, and when morning broke there was no brig, but where she should have been a low, rakish-looking schooner was seen."

"But what had become of the other?" asked Hughes.

"The pirate had carried her, taken all that she wanted, and scuttled her, making the hull serve as a coffin for her crew."

"And this you think is the fate the wretches in yonder craft reserve for us?"

"No, I think that they are quite aware of the value of my cargo, which consists of ivory, gold dust, and ostrich feathers. If they can get the brig, they will doubtless fit her out as a sister scourge of the ocean, selling her cargo."

"And the crew?" asked Hughes.

"Will walk the plank one and all. For the lady, such a fate would be too great a mercy."

The captain's weather-beaten countenance looked pale and anxious; Hughes covered his face with his hands, and his strong frame shook as he thought of Isabel at that very moment quietly sleeping below. The missionary was explaining the situation to the Portuguese.

"And now, gentlemen, your advice. But this I must premise. Yonder piratical curs shall never have the brig. I have, several kegs of powder aboard for trading purposes, and so sure as my name is Andrew Weber, I blow her to pieces rather than she turns pirate."

The soldier dropped the hands which had shaded his face. He gazed long and earnestly at the white sails of the wicked-looking craft, which was now fast creeping up with them. His look was one of high determination and courage.

"There can be but one way, Captain Weber. Haul your brig up to her proper course, arm your crew, load your guns, and let us meet yonder pirate. We cannot fly. Your powder will be a last resource."

"And you, gentlemen," inquired the captain, "are of the same advice?"

"There can be no other course," was the reply.

"Mr Lowe, send the crew aft, one and all."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the mate, cheerily.

The captain paced his quarter-deck moodily and in silence. Dom Maxara went below, while Hughes and the missionary looked gloomily over the ocean.

"My lads," said the captain, "yonder schooner is a pirate. For months her people have plundered and massacred inoffensive ships and their crews. They are the same Malays we met in Saint Augustine's Bay, and we purged the old barky's deck of the rapscallions. We have lost five of ours, but their death was avenged. Yonder blackguard comes with murder and piracy in his hold. He has a full cargo of both, but so long as Andrew Weber lives, this brig shall never be his. We will fight to the last man, and that last man, mark me my lads well, that last man, or boy, no matter which, fires the powder in the magazine!"

A loud cheer burst from the crew.

"And now, my lads, to your arms! Mr Lowe, in with the studding-sails, take a pull at the lee sheets and braces, starboard you may, bring her head west-south-west!"

The wind at last was freshening, the sea was calm, and the “Halcyon” was making some four knots an hour; but the very smoothness of the ocean was against her, for her breadth of beam, rounded sides, and greater tonnage would have told in her favour hod the waves been rough; the schooner naturally labouring more in such a case.

As it was, everything favoured the latter, save that over the land hung a heavy cloud, which had been growing denser and denser. Its edges were ragged, and the captain often looked towards that quarter, conscious that in it lay his only hope.

The two vessels were now rapidly approaching each other, the black hull of the schooner becoming every moment more and more distinctly visible.

“Show our colours,” said the captain, and the Union Jack streamed out from the peak halyards.

“She makes no reply,” remarked the mate. “The bloody-minded villains have no flag to fight under.”

“Look here, Mr Lowe,” said the captain, “that craft is in no hurry; she is handing her fore-topsail again, and there goes her flag!”

“Fiery red, by George!—nothing less than blood will satisfy them.”

Half an hour would bring the two vessels within hailing distance, and Captain Weber made all his dispositions. The arm-chest which had been sent below had been again hoisted up on deck, and placed under the charge of Captain Hughes.

The two nine-pounders were heavily loaded, and the men had breakfasted.

“Mr Lowe, I intend, if yonder villain will allow me, to pass under his stern, giving him the contents of our two guns, and then luff right up into the wind, and away on the other tack.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied the mate; “a stern chase is a long one.”

“If we had the good fortune to cripple him, we should be safe; but have the men ready to run the two guns over, and fire as I go about. Send Adams to the wheel, and let the men stand by the sheets and braces.”

Mr Lowe was a steady, cool, courageous officer, and his dispositions were soon made. All was quiet on board the brig as she slipped through the water; while the schooner, her decks literally covered with men, came up rapidly, evidently intending to board.

Captain Weber stood on the weather quarter, as the wicked little craft came sweeping up, her enormous mainsail well filled, and her sharp bows cutting the water like a knife. She had a flush deck fore and aft, and forward was built like a wedge. There appeared to be no ports.

“Schooner, ahoy!” shouted he, as the two craft neared each other.

A musket-shot was the reply, which missed. The captain raised his hand, and the roar of the two nine-pounders was heard. Down came the schooner’s foresail, as she flew up into the wind, and a yell of vengeance, mingled with cries of pain, rose from her crowded decks.

“Run the guns over!” shouted the captain. “Man the starboard head-braces! Tend the boom-sheet! Haul on the weather-braces and jib-sheet! Hard a-port, Adams, hard a-port!”

Shooting up into the wind, the brig payed round on her heel, the two guns being again fired into the schooner’s bows, as the sails filled, and the “Halcyon” stood on the other tack.

“Hurrah, my lads!” shouted the delighted captain. “We’ve given her a taste of our metal.”

A spattering fire ran along the schooner’s decks, the balls striking the brig’s bulwarks, but without doing any damage.

All seemed confusion on board the smaller vessel, the halyards of whose foresail having been shot away, and nothing save the jib counteracting forward the overpowering pressure of the enormous mainsail aft, she had flown up into the wind, with her sails flapping and shivering. The crew were shouting, gesticulating, and running here and there.

The “Halcyon,” on the contrary, stood steadily on her course, from time to time firing the nine-pounder from her quarter-deck, but, from want of practice of her crew, without doing any apparent damage.

The shot soon began to fall short, and the “Halcyon,” tacking once more, lay her course with a gentle wind from the eastward, and a smooth sea. Three miles of salt-water were between her and her antagonist, before the schooner’s foresail was again set, when the vessel once more made sail on a wind and with her gaff topsails, fore and mainsail, fore-topmast staysail, and jib, seeming to fly through the water, making three feet for the “Halcyon’s” one, going well to windward. The glass, however, still showed a vast amount of bustle and disorder on her decks; and Captain Weber, rubbing his hands, dived down below into the cabin to breakfast.

“Call me at once if there is any change on deck, Mr Lowe; but I think that fellow’s had enough of us,” said the jubilant master.

“Ay, ay, sir,” said the mate, taking charge of the deck.

“Keep a bright look out on yonder jagged cloud; it will take in our flying kites for us before sunset,” were the captain’s last words as he disappeared down the hatchway.

Below, the table had been laid for breakfast by the steward, who, with all a sailor’s carelessness, had proceeded with his ordinary duty, just as though nothing out of the common way had happened. In the cabin the passengers were gathered, if such they may be termed, for the scenes of peril through which they had passed had so identified them with

the brig, that they seemed to look upon her as their home, while the captain, quite unused to carry passengers, and having seen the men of the party fighting as if under his orders, and Isabel wounded on his decks, had got quite to consider them as part and parcel of his crew.

Captain Hughes appeared thoughtful and preoccupied; but the rest, the master included, revelled in the idea of danger past.

“We lie our course, and shall soon have plenty of wind,” he remarked, drawing towards himself a massive English ham, which he proceeded to carve. “I only wish I had a few more guns, and I would not let that blackguard off so easily.”

“You think we shall have a storm?” asked Wyzinski.

“It is just the season for it in these seas,” replied the captain, “and yonder cloud over the land will make itself felt before long. The mercury is falling in the barometer rapidly.”

“Do you think our guns did much damage among the Malays?”

“No. It was a lucky shot that brought the villains’ foresail on deck; but even in this smooth sea it needs practice to make gunners, and my lads have had none.”

“But you think the pirate has left us?” It was Captain Hughes who put the question, anxiously.

“The fellow is hugging the wind instead of running down to us; and as he completely outsails us, it is a proof that he does not wish to close.”

“How do you account for the great confusion on board her? With so strong a crew, the foresail should have been hoisted directly.”

“The lubbers can fight like savages, but can’t sail their ship, that’s all,” said the captain, laughing.

Steps were heard coming down the hatchway, and the mate opened the cabin-door.

“The schooner is edging nearer us, Captain Weber,” he said, “and there is some long black object on her decks I can’t quite make out.”

“I’ll be on deck in a moment, Mr Lowe. Steward, give me a small glass of brandy to finish with.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said the seaman, as he raised the glass, “here’s to our voyage, and—”

The word was never spoken, for a distant but loud report, followed by the rending of wood, interrupted him. For a moment the old seaman stood like a statue, the next he was on deck.

The first glance explained to him the reason of the continued confusion on board the schooner, which a moment before he had sneered at as a proof of incapacity. The pirate had gone to windward, and now lay on the brig’s weather quarter, the tack of her mainsail hauled up, quite out of the reach of her fire. Her crew had been busy getting up from her hold a long eighteen-pounder, which was shipped amidships, and worked on a swivel. The first shot had struck the “Halcyon’s” bulwarks, just abaft the foremast, leaving a long white strip, where the wood had been torn away.

Both captain and mate looked at each other, for here seamanship was powerless.

“The bloody-minded villains!” ejaculated the mate.

“They have us at their mercy,” sighed the master. “Sailing more than three feet for our one, there they can stick and pound away at us as they like.”

“Shall we try our range, Captain Weber?”

“Do so, but it is quite useless,” was the reply, as the seaman leaned his elbows on the weather bulwarks, and gazed steadily at the schooner.

“Take good aim, my lads, and fire when you are ready.”

The light report of the gun, differing so greatly from the loud heavy thud of the eighteen-pounder, was heard, and the master noted the hall as it flew from wave to wave, scattering the spray, but finally dropping with a splash into the sea, a few hundred yards short of the schooner.

“I thought as much,” growled the captain. “The scoundrels have well calculated their distance.”

A puff of white smoke from the schooner’s deck was followed by the heavy boom of the eighteen-pound gun as the ball came whistling through the air. Captain Weber held his breath for a moment, looking anxiously at his spars, but the projectile, being aimed too high, passed between the masts, pitching into the sea beyond.

“It’s hard lines, Lowe, to serve as a target to those scoundrels,” he said; “and yet I see nothing for it.”

“Our only hope is in yonder cloud. If it would but come on to blow, the sea would get up quickly, and that craft would have her aim spoiled.”

“Could you not tack and stand towards her?” asked the missionary, who at that moment came upon deck with Dom Maxara.

“It would be useless. Yonder schooner lies up to the wind a couple of points nearer than we can do. It is the advantage her fore and aft sails give her; besides, she has the heels of us, and can choose her distance and position. We

have nothing to do but to hold on and trust to chance."

Again the white cloud of smoke on the schooner's decks, and once more the iron messenger came flying over the wave on its deadly mission. The ball struck the brig's quarter, and glancing upwards, broke its way through the deck, covering it with splinters. The man, Adams, was at the helm, and the spokes flew through his hands as he tottered for a moment, and then fell heavily forward. The mate sprang to his place, and, seizing the wheel, brought the brig rapidly on to her course, while two seamen hurrying aft bore away the wounded man, a dark stain on the white deck marking the spot where he had fallen, a large splinter having struck him on the temple.

"We must think of your daughter, Dom Maxara," said Captain Weber. "The brig is utterly powerless; but it is better that these fellows sink us, than that they put foot on her decks."

Dona Isabel sat in the cabin, where the breakfast things yet lay on the table, while beside her was Captain Hughes, his arm passed round her waist. The tears were standing in her eyes, and her cheek was pale, for the soldier had been telling her what sort of people the schooner's crew were, and what fate would be theirs if captured. The tale had been as delicately worded as possible, for it was a hard one even from a lover's mouth.

"Cheer up, Isabel," he continued; "there is always hope so long as we keep the Malays at a distance; and if we could only have wind we might yet escape."

"I had hoped to have lived for you, Enrico," replied Isabel, her head resting on her lover's shoulder. "I can, at least, die with you."

Dom Maxara entered the cabin, seating himself beside his daughter. Placing her hand in his, she repeated—

"We can at least die together."

"There is still a little hope," said the anxious father; "the breeze is freshening, and with it the sea is getting up, disturbing the schooner's aim. The wind may yet save us. Should it fail us, there is one thing remaining."

"And what is that, father?"

"As you said, to die together, Isabel, sooner than that a daughter of the Guzmans of Castillo should become the cast-off slave of a Malay pirate."

The tears had been standing in Isabel's eyes, and as she now turned them on her lover, there was a look of ineffable tenderness in the large black orbs.

"A strange meeting ours has been, Enrico; a strange life we have led together, living years in weeks; but you were quite as near death, my promised husband, when first we met, and yet you stand here by my side."

"There is still hope, Isabel; every moment it increases with the rising sea," replied Hughes.

"Hope or not," continued the excited Isabel, speaking hysterically, "they shall see that the daughter of sunny Portugal knows how to die. We shall never tread our dear land again."

The loud thud of the pirate's long eighteen-pounder was here heard, and all held their breath, listening for the crashing of the timbers, but no such sound followed.

"And I who thought to show you, Enrico, the vineyards and the orange blossoms of fair Portugal. It is hard, father, to die so young."

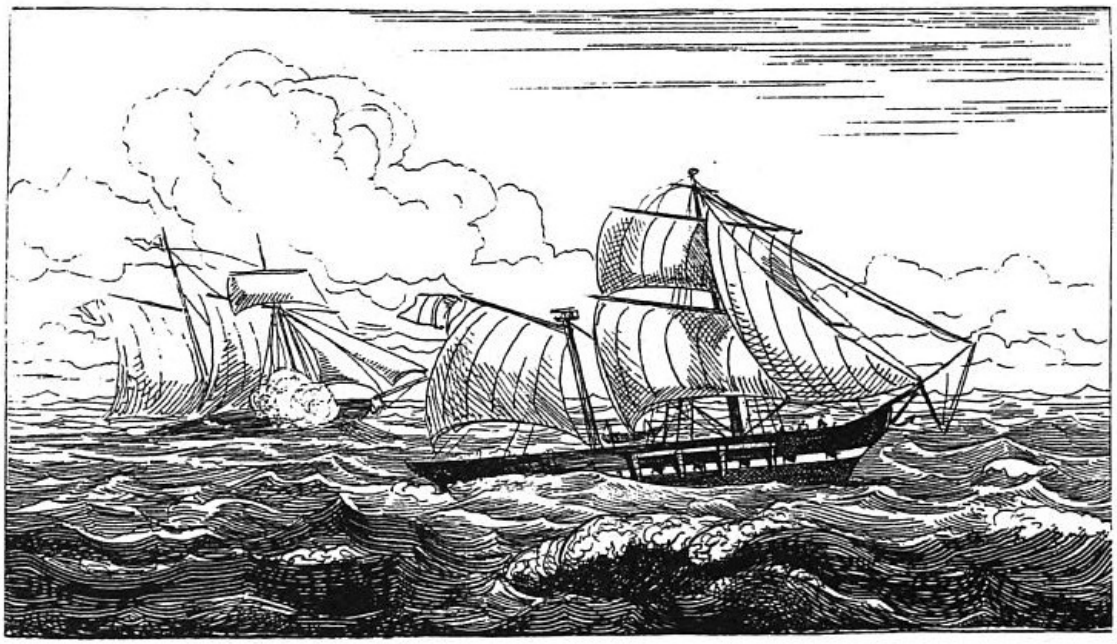
The old noble's face worked convulsively, but his eyes were dry. Isabel had once more sat down between her father and her lover, her head resting on his shoulder; but one hand clasped in that of the noble. The soldier's face wore a sad and dejected appearance; but there was determination in the firm lines of the closed mouth and contracted brow.

"Isabel, this is foolish. What men could do we will do, and have done. I would give what remains to me of life that you were not in this ship. What was a few short hours since the joy and pleasure of my existence, is now turned to bitterness and grief. We have done all men can do, I repeat, and, if needs be, we must perish together sooner than that worse befall us."

Again the loud thud came down on the wind, followed by several sharp cracks like rifle reports, with the crashing of wood and the tramp of men, Captain Weber's voice dominating the confusion.

Isabel was engaged in prayer, her eyes were closed, for the riot above, produced by the tumbling masts, was something fearful. The tramp of feet on the deck, and the hurrying to and fro as the captain shouted to his men to clear away the wreck of the brig's spars which she had lost from the fire of the enemy, added to what for a few minutes seemed inextricable confusion.

Dejected and discouraged, Hughes had remained below, taking no notice of what was passing on deck, and perfectly aware that his presence was useless. He sat looking into Isabel's face, and quietly waiting for the time when the schooner should bear down on the helpless brig to take possession, and the moment for the closing actions of life should come. Beside them sat the old noble, his face showing signs of deep emotion, as he too grieved, not for himself, but for his daughter. She looked very beautiful as she lay back, her head supported on her lover's shoulder, her lips parted showing the white teeth, the eyes closed, and the long dark lashes wet with tears, with one hand clasped in her father's.



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“Captain Weber would be glad to speak to you, sir,” said the steward Masters, touching his cap.

“I will come,” replied Hughes.

Gently placing Isabel in her father’s arms, the soldier leaned over the half unconscious girl, and pressed his lips to her forehead, then turned to go.

The action seemed to rouse her, for rising suddenly, she threw her arms round him. “Enrico mio, do not leave me. If die we must, let us die together.” A flood of tears came to her relief, and she sobbed hysterically.

“I will return, Isabel—fear not,” he said, as he gently unloosed the arms which held him, and led her back to her father. “There may be some better prospect in store for us. I will return.”

When Captain Hughes reached the deck, he at once saw that if their chance of escape before was small, it had greatly diminished. An eighteen-pound shot had buried itself in the heart of the main-topmast, the wind was coming in hot puffs from the land, and the sails just at that moment feeling a heavier strain than usual, the wounded mast had gone over the side with a loud crash, carrying with it sails and yards, and now floated astern clear of the brig, leaving her running before the wind, with only her main fore and fore-topmast standing, the stump of a splintered spar marking what had been a stout main-topmast.

To windward lay the wicked-looking schooner which had done all the mischief, and astern the dark, dense, ragged mass of clouds from which the heavy puffs came now and then moaning over the sea. A hot haze had crept over the ocean, not having the appearance of clouds, but still veiling the sun.

“See,” said Captain Weber, laying his hand on Hughes’ shoulder, pointing to the schooner as he did so; “see, she hauls down her main tack, and is running down to us; she has us completely at her mercy.”

“Can we do nothing with our guns, Captain Weber?”

“Yes, we may fire them once as the villains board. You see all is ready.”

The captain pointed to the two nine-pounders, which were loaded to the muzzle. The men were armed, and went about their duties with a dogged sullenness which showed their stern determination.

“Lowe will have charge of the forecastle, and I, with your friend, take the quarter-deck, the crew being equally divided.”

“You will let me fight by your side?” replied the soldier.

“Not so,” answered the old seaman. “Yours is a sterner duty. Any one can fight when his blood is up, and death sure, whatever happen. I am going to lower the Spanish Don and his daughter into the hold, and your station will be beside them.”

“And do you for a moment think I am going to be shut up like a bandicoot in a hole, while others fight for life and liberty?” indignantly asked the soldier.

Captain Weber grasped Hughes by the hand, looking into his face, and pointing to the schooner as he spoke:

“The crew of yonder pirate are not human beings. They are steeped in murder and crime. Our fate is death, sure and certain death. Maddened by the destruction of their comrades, by their defeat in yonder Bay, no torments will be spared us. It will not be simply walking the plank, but the worst torture those practised villains can invent, which awaits us.”

“Look at her white sails, and tapering spars, how beautiful she is, as she sheers down on us. Is all this possible?”

“More is possible,” replied the master, “Death will be our fate, but not the lady’s. A life-long servitude of the vilest description on board yon floating hell will be her fate!”

Captain Hughes covered his face with his hands, and his tall, sinewy frame shook with emotion. The loud boom of the eighteen-pounder, and the crashing of the shot as it plunged into the brig’s bows, the rending and riving of her timbers, were unnoticed.

“There are ten barrels of powder in the hold; to you, as the man most interested in it, I give the charge of the magazine. The barrels are piled one on another. Yours should be a cool head and a determined hand. When the last hope is over, when the brig is carried, as carried she must be, but then only, fire your pistol into the nearest keg, and rid the seas of yonder miscreant, whose white sails bear him to his doom.”

A rattling peal of thunder came from the dark mass of clouds, while a vivid flash of forked lightning seemed to bury itself in the waves.

The soldier’s face was pale as that of a corpse; as he removed his hand, the lines of the mouth twitched nervously.

“Your orders shall be obeyed to the letter,” he said, as he struck his open palm into that of the captain.

The two stood for a moment on the deck hand in hand, looking into one another’s eyes. The stern, determined face of the old seaman showed no trace of feeling as he spoke.

“Do not think, my friend, that I feel nothing. This was to have been my last voyage. The brig was half mine. We shall disappear from the face of the ocean, and in their home, in the mountains of Cumberland, a mother and her two sons will remain in ignorance of what far-away place holds the husband’s, the father’s bones.” Suddenly changing his tones, “Now, my lads, rig out a chair,” he continued, “and we will lower the lady out of harm’s way. Captain Hughes, will you tell Dona Isabel we are ready?”

It is a terrible thing, that waiting for death, to those in the full enjoyment of health and strength. When it is met face to face in the excitement of the fight, in the crash of battle, or the chaos of elemental strife, it is terrible enough. When it comes to the worn and exhausted frame, after months, perhaps years, of agony and suffering, as a liberator, as a kind and merciful friend,—even then it is feared: that step into the vast and unfathomable abyss of the future; that new world, whence none have returned. But here it was far otherwise.

Life, health, strength, all were there; and take but away from the face of the ocean that dark, beautifully moulded hull, with its long tapering spars, and canvas as white as the driven snow; take away that floating pandemonium, with its beautiful outside appearance, and its crew of men hardened in crime, and steeped in blood and murder; and not only health, strength, and life were there, but high hopes and happiness were the lot of those who were on board the dismantled brig.

Isabel had regained her courage. Her long hair floating behind, her eyes showing no trace of tears, she had walked along the deck leaning on her lover’s arm. The crew looked at her pityingly as she passed. More than one strong man shook his clenched fist in the direction of the pirate, as Isabel, her foot on the first step of the ladder, took her last look at the scene around her. There lay the schooner, rapidly nearing the brig, which was now running dead before the wind. Far astern, a long green line on the lead-coloured sea marked the coming squall; ahead, far as could be seen, the dark-coloured ocean, over which the hot haze seemed to hang heavily, while the splintered mainmast, and torn bulwarks alone showed the dire distress of the brig’s crew. The pirate had ceased firing, for the sea was rising rapidly; the black squall, too, seemed coming up like a racehorse astern, and it was time her bloody work was finished. Isabel passed forward, one squeeze of the hand—for not a word was spoken—and she was carefully and gently sent down into the hold, her father following; the old noble having taken a formal leave of all, thanked the crew, raising his hat with punctilious politeness as he was lowered away. None now remained except the soldier. Round his waist he wore a belt, in which were placed two six-barrelled revolvers. Beside him stood the missionary, his pale, thoughtful face calm as usual, not a trace of emotion visible. He held in his left hand a heavy double-barrelled rifle, and, as he grasped his friend’s with his right.

“Hughes,” he said, “you have the hardest task among us. We shall fight to the last, relying on you, on your calmness and determination. No entreaty, no delusional hope must move you.”

“Ay, ay,” muttered the seaman, “you may trust him.”

And it was evident he could be trusted, even in this dire extremity. His face was deadly pale, but the firmly compressed lips, the determined look, the high, broad, clear forehead, all told their own tale, as, without a word, he wrung his friend’s hand, and seizing the rope which dangled free, swung himself from the deck and dropped hand over hand into the hold below.

“To your stations, my lads, and we will rid the seas of the villains yet!” shouted the captain.

The brig carried little cargo, and that of a light description. Boxes and bales were neatly ranged in her hold, and piles of elephants’ tusks were to be seen here and there. A large dark lanthorn threw a small circle of light around, but beyond this all was darkness. Ten barrels or kegs containing powder had been placed end on, near each other, forming two tiers. Several had been broken open, and the wood loosely replaced.

Walking carefully towards the pile, Hughes removed the head of a cask and verified the contents. There lay the mass of black glittering coarse grains, which were to send them to their doom. Seated on a heavy case near was the Portuguese noble, and at his feet in prayer, her large black eyes tearless and raised to heaven, kneeled Isabel, the dim light just showing the two, as Dom Maxara leaned over his daughter, his grey hair mingling with her raven tresses. Having replaced the heading of the cask, the soldier looked to his pistols, examining the caps and the lock, then replacing them, walked to Isabel’s side and knelt down.

All seemed still on deck, and the noise of the rushing water could be heard as the brig surged on through the seas. Half an hour passed, each minute seeming an age; for it was a fearful thing to be caged there in the darkness, knowing nothing of what was going on. Sometimes the father’s heavy sobs could not be restrained, as he leaned over his daughter; but Isabel’s eyes were dry, and she prayed fervently; the deep darkness in which the hold lay out of the feeble rays of the lanthorn, completing its resemblance to the tomb. A loud shout and a spattering fire were indistinctly heard, telling that the last moment was near; then the rushing sound of the wind as the brig heeled over before the strength of the squall, two shots, a long cheer, with the words, “Starboard! hard a-starboard!” shouted from the deck. Gasping Isabel

in his arms, Hughes rose calmly and deliberately; not a word passed, all power of speech had left him. One kiss, one long last kiss, and he strode calmly and deliberately towards the fatal pile. Passing his hand over his eyes, he removed the heading and plunged his fingers into the black mass. A loud shriek from Isabel rang out as she rushed across the space which divided them, and threw herself into his arms. Rising, the old noble steadied himself by a pile of cases, his eyes seemed glaring out of their sockets as he strained them in the direction of the powder casks. Then came a terrible shock, the crash of splintering wood, the roar of the tempest, which had burst in fury over the doomed brig, and amidst all, one loud, despairing cry, as though the last united effort of a hundred voices. Pressing his lips to those of Isabel, his left arm encircling her—

"Mine, Isabel, in death if not in life," he murmured, as he thrust the muzzle of the cocked pistol into the powder cask.

The hatchway opened, the light streamed down into the dreary dark hold, and he knew the pirates were upon them.

His arm tightened round Isabel's waist, his eyes glared upwards, and his finger contracted on the trigger.

"Hold your hand, Hughes!" were the words which came to his ears, shouted in his friend's voice. "Hold your hand! God, even at the last moment, has looked down upon us, and we are saved!"

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**The Pirate's Fate.**

His passengers in the hold, Captain Weber, fully relying on the soldier's promise, and certain his brig could never fall into the hands of the pirates, had made his last dispositions. An old sailor named Porter was at the wheel, the crew, as it had previously been determined, were divided into two watches, one under the mate on the forecastle, the other with Wyzinski, commanded by the captain. The break of the quarter-deck had been fortified with a number of bales and boxes roused up from below, an opening for the nine-pounders having been left. The same arrangements had been made for the forecastle, and the companion ladders removed. The "Halcyon" surged along, the wind aft, under the little sail she could show, but the schooner was coming up, hand-over-hand, the wind over her quarter. The brig already felt the coming squall, and, had she not lost her masts, would have cared little for the pirate. Hauling down his foresail under his mainsail and jib, the piratical craft came sweeping up with the diminished sail. It was a beautiful sight as her low black hull drew through the waves, her flush decks crowded with men, and the long eighteen-pounder slewed fore and aft. Feeling the first puffs of the squall, she heeled over, showing the bright copper nearly to her keel, while the water swirled in jets from her wedge-like bows. On she came, driving through the seas until she was a couple of lengths only from the brig, and then a discharge of musketry, and a shout to heave-to followed.

"Run up the Union Jack," said Captain Weber, in deep guttural tones, "we will show them the temper of the old flag yet."

"Do you see yonder fellow at the wheel? If I did not know to the contrary, I should say it is the very man who led the attack in St Augustine's Bay," exclaimed the missionary.

"You are a dead rifle shot," replied the captain, speaking slowly and deliberately, "are you not?"

Another hail from the schooner followed. She was now, as has been already said, running under her mainsail and jib, and yet fore-reaching on the brig though her main tack was hauled up, her crew once more getting the eighteen-pounder ready to discharge before boarding.

"I am," replied Wyzinski, the schooner's hail being unanswered.

"Pick off that man when I raise my hand. Remember, sir," added the captain, speaking sharply and sternly, "remember, sir, I am about to play my last stake, and all depends on your aim."

Leaving Wyzinski, the seaman stood by the wheel, his eyes fixed on the schooner. It was evidently her intention to pass under the brig's bows, and range up under her lee using her gun before boarding. So near were the two craft that a biscuit could have been thrown aboard either.

"Port a little. Luff you may, Porter—"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the man. "Luff it is, sir," and the schooner passed ahead.

"Now!" shouted the captain, raising his hand. The double report of Wyzinski's rifle followed. The bulky Malay, shot through the back, loosed his hold of the wheel, the spokes flew round as he threw up his hands, and with one long unearthly yell fell forward dead on the deck; the schooner, as Captain Weber foresaw, under the pressure of her enormous mainsail, flying up into the wind, and almost crossing the brig's fore-foot.

"Starboard! hard a-starboard!" roared the captain, as the whole fury of the squall struck the two vessels. Dashing madly onward, the "Halcyon" tore through the water as with one broad sheer to port she neared the black hull. For a moment her decks seemed to overshadow those of the doomed craft, while her broad bow, with all the force of the tempest driving her, struck the schooner amidships.

"Hurrah!" shouted the master, in his excitement, "Hurrah! To Hell with the pirates!"

The shock was tremendous, as the brig bore down her small antagonist bodily, burying her beneath the sea. The crashing sound of splintering wood followed, a hundred half-naked yelling figures were grouped on the schooner's decks, the next a few floating spars lay astern, a few drowning wretches cried for the mercy they themselves had refused, and the "Halcyon" passed on her way. Half-a-dozen Malays had escaped, as, clutching at the ropes and gear which hung from the jib-boom broken with the shock, they scrambled on board, to meet the cutlasses of the enraged crew. Their bodies were hove overboard, and then not a vestige remained of the dreaded pirate, the scourge of the Indian sea.

Leaping from the quarter-deck, Wyzinski hauled at the hatchway, shouting down it to his friend below. He was just in time, for but another moment and the brig, disembarrassed of her enemy, would have been blown to atoms; as it was, a wild cheer burst from the crew when five minutes later Hughes was hoisted on deck, his pistol black with the loose powder into which it had been thrust, and his face pale with excitement.

“We are in the hands of Providence, dear lady,” said the captain, as the whole party sought the cabin. “With a half-dismasted ship, a heavy gale in prospect, and a lee shore, there is much to be done; but the great peril is over. You can clear the deck, Mr Lowe, of all the boxes and bales we roused up. I don’t think the pirates will trouble us any more. Take the foresail off her, and send the carpenter aft.”

The captain had his hands full on deck. Scudding before the wind is ever a dangerous thing, because the waves following so fast are apt to break on board, if the vessel is not propelled through the water with a speed greater than that of the following sea.

In the cabin, that cabin which they had never thought to see again, the whole party knelt, and led by Wyzinski, returned thanks to Heaven, for their lives thus almost miraculously spared. The missionary prayed long and eloquently, for it seemed to him that his had been the act which had resulted in sending the whole crew of that terrible vessel to the bottom. True, life, and more than life, was at stake; true, also, that the schooner, with her low, black hull and white canvas, had been a scourge in those seas, still the loud despairing shriek which rose on the air, as the brig’s bows buried themselves in the frail timbers of the lightly-constructed vessel, rang in his ears, and though an act of necessity, it was none the less a terrible one. A fearful crisis in the lives of all had passed by, and with the sense of relief came that of deep gratitude to the hand which had turned aside the terrible fate so lately hanging over them. The missionary, then, prayed long and fervently, and never had he an auditory, more disposed to join him with heart and soul. A long life may be the soldier’s destiny, a bright career that of the Portuguese noble, a happy lot fall to the share of the dark-eyed maiden whose face is now buried in her hands, as she follows the missionary’s words, but never can any of the three actors in the scene forget that moment, when with the muzzle of the pistol buried in the powder keg, the forefinger bent on the trigger of the cocked weapon, one second would have hurled into eternity not only themselves but the entire crew.

On deck the scene was a wild one. The wind had gradually freshened, and the sea in consequence risen, the ocean, far as the eye could reach, being one sheet of green, crested with white foam, the brig rolling through the waves under her fore-topsail only, at a great rate. Two serious holes in the hull, caused by the entrance of the eighteen-pound shot, had been plugged in a makeshift manner, it is true, but still they had been boarded over.

Notwithstanding all this the party in the cabin was a merry one. So hopeless, so utterly desperate had been their situation that morning, that all the danger of a lee shore, all the discomforts of a small vessel during a heavy gale at sea, were forgotten. The old noble, too, had accepted the position which had been made for him. After late events, more particularly the half-hour passed in the brig’s hold, it was impossible to think of Captain Hughes as anything but his daughter’s affianced husband, and as such he had been frankly and fairly accepted. The marriage was to take place on their arrival in Portugal, and the whole party to proceed to Europe together.

The captain sat poring over an Admiralty chart laid before him on the table. The old noble was dozing in one corner, the missionary communing with his own thoughts and Isabel and her lover talking in low tones. The roar of the wind was heard even in the cabin, the creaking of the ropes as the gale tore through them, and now and then a wave larger than common would break over the brig, deluging her decks.

“Why don’t you run for Delagoa Bay, captain?” said Hughes, as the seaman rose, placing his hand on the table to steady himself.

“We are far to the southward of Delagoa Bay,” replied he; “the only port available is Port Natal.”

“Then run for that,” rejoined Hughes.

“It’s a nasty coast, and there is a bar there of which I am afraid. It was of this I was thinking; for some of those makeshift spars may leave us at any moment, and then I must lie-to.”

“Is the harbour dangerous at all times?” asked Hughes.

“Most certainly not; but with an easterly gale there can be no communication with the shore. I do not know the harbour, and have never been there but once, which makes the attempt, if I am forced to it, the more dangerous.”

“But you have been there once, and consequently, with a seaman’s instinct, know the place,” said Hughes.

“I will tell you how I know it, and what that knowledge is worth,” said the captain, seating himself beside Isabel, “and then when I go on deck you can tell the story to Dona Isabel. She may be very anxious to set her pretty little foot on land, but hardly in the same way I did. Some years since I was first-mate of the brig ‘Vestal,’ sailing under the command of Captain Bell. We dropped our anchor on Thursday morning, just off the bar, close to Port Natal. The following one it began to blow, and all that day the gale increased, just as this one has done, and from the same direction. Steward, just mix me a glass of grog. Will you join me, captain? Better had than wish you had. No—well, you have not to pass the night on deck, as I have—but to continue: All that unlucky Thursday the gale steadily increased, and the sea came rolling in mountains high. Near us lay a schooner called the ‘Little Nell,’ and further to sea a steamer ‘The Natal.’ This latter got up her steam, and under a full head went out. It was a glorious sight to see her as the waves swept her decks, and sometimes she seemed more under water than above it. The schooner parted from her anchors, and ran right across the bar, thumping heavily, but she was light, and managed to cross, though she stripped all the copper from her bottom, and had to be docked. Towards eight o’clock, our anchors parted too, and we drifted bodily in, the big waves pounding at our brig, and sweeping clean over us.”

“But why did you not try to run over the bar like the schooner?” asked Hughes.

“You shall hear,” continued the captain, leisurely sipping his grog. “Our skipper lost his head. I do believe we might have run over the bar, and, at all events, the crew have been saved, but no,—all went against us. He let go his third anchor on the bar itself. Wood and iron could not stand the fearful sea running there. She struck right between the breakwaters, the sea dashing clean over her, and the brig thumping heavily. The masts went over the side, and at last one enormous wave turned her over on her broadside, we clinging to the upper bulwarks. It was a fearful sight, for we could see the lights moving about on shore close to us. The hurricane never diminished, and the seas made a clean breach over us, carrying away from time to time some of the crew. We held on our best, for, so near land, we could not think we should be left to perish, but we waited in vain.”

“Could not a lifeboat live in that sea?” asked Hughes.

“Ay, ay, but the lubbers had none, and for anything I know have not got one yet. Lashed to the bulwarks, we waited for help all through that fearful night, but when the grey light of day came, we saw that there was no hope. I and a sailor named Hesketh determined to take our chance. We lashed ourselves to a stout spar each, and tried hard to persuade the others to do as much, but they would not. The captain was nearly speechless, and did not seem to know what he was doing. It was a fearful moment when we two threw ourselves into the raging ocean.”

“You could both swim, I suppose?” asked Hughes.

“Ay, ay; we could swim, but what use was swimming in such a sea? The first wave rolled us over and over, like corks, but could not sink us. We remained several hours in the water, every moment expecting death. I was insensible most of the time.”

“Did you remain near each other?”

“No, after the last shake of the hand as we jumped overboard, we parted company. Two lads found me rolled on the beach like a log, and help being forthcoming I was kindly treated and restored, but it was weeks before I could get about. The sailor, Hesketh, was a good deal bruised, but managed better than I did.”

“And the captain and remaining crew?” inquired Hughes.

“Perished. Not a trace of the brig remained. Captain Bell, belonging to the port, and Captain Wilson of the Point, the landing agents, and other authorities, had fires lit, and did what they could, but there was no lifeboat, and save myself and Hesketh, brig and crew went to Davy Jones’s locker, stock and block.”

“I can easily conceive your antipathy to an anchorage at Port Natal during a gale of wind,” remarked his hearer.

“If our jury masts only hold, and the gale don’t increase, we shall do very well; and now I’m for deck, and I would advise Dona Isabel to turn in. Good night, Senhora,” said the old seaman, rising, and in his heavy leggings, waterproof, and broad sou’-wester, clumping up the companion into the rough night; and when the clear ring of the brig’s bell came from the forecastle, striking eight times, the cabin was empty, and a solitary lamp shed a feeble light as it swayed to and fro, the brig pitching heavily, her timbers groaning and creaking, the gale roaring over her decks, and moaning through her rigging.

Towards midnight, Captain Weber and his mate came below, the steward mixing for them two stiff glasses of grog.

“How’s the barometer, sir?” asked the mate, as he passed the sleeve of his coat over his mouth, after having taken a good pull at the steaming liquor.

Captain Weber stepped into his own cabin, remained some minutes, and then came out again, looking very grave.

“We have not had the worst of it yet,” he replied; “the mercury has fallen since four bells struck.”

The chart was placed on the table, and the ship’s position verified.

“There’s nothing for it, Lowe,” said the captain, “with a falling glass, a lee shore, and a heavy gale, there’s nothing else for it. Heave the brig to until morning.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” replied the officer, rising, and draining the last drop in the tumbler, “it’s a good moment too, for there seems a lull.”

The mate went on deck, leaving Captain Weber poring over the chart. His broad-brimmed sou’-wester lay on the table, his coat was open, the wet dropping from it, and his grey hair was dripping with salt brine.

A momentary bustle on deck was heard. A noise of trampling feet, and a few hoarse words of command. A heavy sea struck the ship, flooding her decks; a cabin-door opened, and the steward was called; but still Captain Weber remained poring over his chart. Hours passed by, and at last the anxious man rose, and went into his own cabin once more. His face was very grave when he came out, for the mercury in the barometer had again fallen, and it now stood so low as to foretell a hurricane.

Morning broke slowly over an ocean whose long, green, angry looking waves were lashed into boiling foam. Not a sail was in sight, but the thin haze hung over the sea. The brig was doing her best, hove-to, under a closely reefed make shift main-topsail, and fore and main-staysails, the gale, if anything, having diminished in fury.

“It is a grand sight, Isabel,” said Hughes, as towards ten o’clock the whole party stood on the quarter-deck, looking over the wild, angry ocean, the speaker holding on to the weather bulwarks, with one hand, the other being passed round Isabel’s waist, who clung to him for support. Dom Maxara stood at the break of the quarter-deck, looking the picture of misery, while the missionary under the lee of the companion, was gazing over the raging ocean, his face perfectly calm and composed. Near the wheel stood the captain and his mate, in their rough sailor dreadnoughts and dripping sou’-westers.

“Well, I will never wish to see a gale on the ocean again,” said Isabel; “but how warm the wind is.”

A report like that of a heavy gun was heard over the howling of the gale, which now came down with double force, and the white canvas which had been the main-topsail was seen flying to leeward, while the shreds and ribbons left in the bolt-ropes were beating violently about in the gale. Losing the sail aft which had so powerfully helped to keep her to the wind, the brig’s bows fell off, just as the whole weight of the hurricane came down upon her. Striking her broadside on, a huge wave bore her down on her broadside into the trough of the sea, pouring over the bulwarks, and flooding her decks fore and aft. The “Halcyon” was on her beam ends, with the full fury of the hurricane raging around her. The crash of splintering wood was heard over the roar of the tempest, as the fore-topmast, with its heavy top and all its gear, came tumbling down on deck, smashing in the planking of the forecastle, and driving out the lee bulwarks, as the heavy blocks and massive wood-work surged to and fro.

Slowly the brig righted, and the voice of the master was heard above the confusion.

“Steady lads; out axes, and cut away the wreck.”

Not a man moved, for some hundred yards away a monster wave, tipped with white, was rolling furiously towards the brig. The men were stunned by the suddenness of the misfortune.

The first-mate, seeing the imminence of the danger, sprang forward; seizing an axe, he and the missionary, who had quietly followed him, were soon busy cutting away the wreck. Dom Maxara had disappeared.

“Hold on, lads, hold on for your lives,” roared the captain, as the great sea struck the brig on her starboard bow, pouring over her decks, and burying her beneath the foam, and then passed away astern. “Cut away cheerily,” now he shouted, as the bright axes flashed among the tangled mass of ropes, for their hesitation was over, and the crew, led by the first-mate and the missionary, were now working well.

Two crushed and mangled bodies lay among the broken spars, but there was no time to look to the wounded, for the safety of all depended on the wreck being cleared away, and the brig got before the wind.

“Man the down-haul. Tend the staysail sheet. Let go the halyards. Haul down,” were the rapid words of command shouted by the master, as the main-staysail was hauled down.

Again a heavy sea poured over the brig’s bows, but as it passed aft, with it went the remains of the fore-topmast, with all its tangled mass of ropes and blocks. A moment of comparative calm succeeded, and the men lay out on the fore-yard. The close-reefed foresail was set, the stout sail threatening to blow bodily out of the bolt-ropes, as feebly obeying her helm, the brig slowly righted, the sail filled, her bows payed off from the wind, and the dismasted “Halcyon” flew before the gale.

“This is indeed terrible,” moaned Isabel, as, supported by her lover, she took her way below, following four of the crew who bore the body of her father to his cabin. Dom Maxara had been nearly dashed overboard as the huge wave broke over the brig, throwing her on her beam ends. Sorely bruised and shaken he had been unable to rise, and each succeeding wave, as it swept the decks, had rolled him to and fro, surging about among the broken timbers and tangled rigging.

Flash after flash of lightning, instantly followed by peals of thunder, succeeding each other so closely as never to seem to die wholly away, now followed, and all day long the hurricane continued to sweep the face of the Indian Ocean, until, far as the eye could reach, the sea was one boiling mass of foam.

The brig rolled awfully, and with four men at the wheel, yawed wildly. The great thing in scudding is to keep the vessel going, with a velocity superior to the following wave. If this be not effected, then she is pooped, the seas overtaking and flooding her, whereas if she be not kept dead before the wind, and continually met with the helm when yawing to starboard or port, the scudding vessel broaches to, and down she goes at once.

Towards evening the gale broke, the main-topsail was set closely reefed, and the clank of the chain pumps was heard, in the stillness of the night, telling their own tale. The haze cleared away, the wind gradually fell, and with it the sea, but even yet the brig rolled fearfully.

On deck Hughes and the missionary were working with the men, encouraging them at the pumps, for there is no duty a seaman dislikes more than that. The captain, fairly worn out, had rolled himself in a great coat, and was sleeping heavily, coiled up against the rails of the quarter-deck. His mate was standing near the wheel, and the brig was dragging slowly and heavily through the seas. Above the clear blue sky and the bright stars, and around the ocean, with its surging waves, while on the stillness of the night came the sharp clank of the chain pumps: Towards morning the reefs were shaken out, and Hughes came aft.

“The water is gaining on us,” he said, moodily, addressing the mate. “Had the captain not better be roused?”

“What’s the use? we cannot do more than has been done. We shall sight land by daybreak, and I hope run into Port Natal, if the wind holds.”

“Have you heard anything of Dom Maxara?” anxiously asked Hughes.

“Nothing; but he got a terrible mauling. When I saw him, he was lying between the pump and the mainmast with his thigh broken.”

“Is there any one else hurt?”

“Yes,” returned the mate; “poor Stapleton has been severely crushed. That huge sea dashed them both on deck and stove in all our boats.”

“Is not that day breaking, away to the eastward?” asked Hughes.

“Yes; and if the wind will only hold, we shall soon sight the land, for with the leak gaining on us, short-handed, and nearly dismasted, the sooner we make a port the better,” answered the mate, as, wearied and moody, the soldier turned, and went below.

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**The Raft.**

Through the dim, grey light, Hughes took his way down the companion, entering the brig’s little cabin. If things had seemed gloomy on deck, where the cool morning breeze was blowing, and the dying gale moaning through the broken rigging, how much more desolate all seemed here as he paused and looked about him. The hatches were on, the deadlights shipped, and a lamp, with its long wick unsnuffed, swung wildly to and fro. Down the companion came the first faint sickly streaks of the coming day. The soaked carpets, the crimson seats drenched with salt-water, and the broken cabin furniture, were the natural results of the few minutes the brig had been lying on her beam ends. A small table had broken from its lashings and, fetching way, pitched right into a large mirror, and there it lay broken among the shivered glass. The crew were now so short-handed that the steward was working at the pumps, whose metallic clanking sound

was plainly heard all over the vessel.

Pausing a moment as he glanced around, Hughes realised the scene, and then, passing on, knocked at the door of a small cabin.

The knock was low and timidly given. It produced no reply, so, turning the handle, he entered.

He stood in the Portuguese noble's private cabin, and he became at once aware that the injuries which Dom Maxara had received were of a graver character than the mate had led him to suppose. In point of fact, the broken thigh caused by being jammed in between the pump and the brig's mainmast was not all, for several ribs had been broken, by the heavy blocks which had been rolled to and fro, and some severe internal injury had been received. What was even worse was that there was no doctor on board, and so there on the tumbled bed lay the injured noble, his grey hairs falling on the pillow, while by the bedside, her face buried in the clothes, sat Isabel fast asleep. Several large stains of blood marked the sheet, and the sick man's eyes, though closed, seemed sunken, and the lips deadly white. The morning was breaking fine and calm.

Kneeling down beside her, after carefully closing the door, Hughes passed his arm gently round the sleeping girl's waist. She awoke with a start, glancing round her with a terrified look, as she pushed back the long hair from her face and forehead. For a few moments, so deep had been the sleep of fatigue and exhaustion, she knew not where she was or what had happened, but as her startled gaze fell on the narrow bed, the whole of the sorrowful present returned to her. Dom Maxara was breathing very heavily, and with great difficulty.

"Oh, Enrico, how wicked I have been," she exclaimed. "How could I go to sleep?"

"How could you avoid it, dear Isabel, after such a time of mental and bodily fatigues. Has he spoken?" asked Hughes, looking up into her face.

"No, he has never moved, never opened his eyes; but I don't know how long I have been asleep," was the reply. "What is the news on deck? If we could only get him ashore, my dear dear father!"

"The gale is completely broken, the sea rapidly falling, and we shall soon have a dead calm, Isabel; but the leak is gaining on us, some plank must be started, and there is ten feet water in the hold."

"Is land far off?" asked the girl, whose face looked pale and careworn. "If we could only get him to land."

"We have no boats, and no means of landing. The brig is nearly motionless, and will soon be quite so. If we had wind we might run her on the coast; but at present it is only a question of how many hours we can float. The captain talks of a raft."

"Land ho!" was heard shouted on the forecastle.

"Where away?" was asked from the quarter-deck.

"Broad on the starboard bow, sir, nearly ahead."

The shout seemed to rouse the sick man. His eyes opened languidly, and so heavy and stertorous was the breathing, that the clothes rose and fell with the labouring chest.

Dom Maxara had regained consciousness, but it became evident that some severe internal injury had taken place, and that death was not far off. Isabel leaned over him, and kissed the white lips.

"Land is in sight, dear father; the weather is fine, and we shall soon reach it," she whispered, placing her hand in his.

The old man closed his eyes, and prayed; he then motioned with his hand, and Hughes gave him some teaspoonsful of weak brandy and water.

This revived him, and the cushions being arranged, he managed, though with much pain, to make himself heard.

"I shall never land, my daughter," he said, "never. Isabel, at the foot of my bed you will find a tin case, bring it."

The weeping girl did as she was told without a word.

"Enrico," continued the dying man, slowly and feebly, "all my papers are there. Whatever property I have is left to my daughter. Isabel, I am leaving you fast."

The girl knelt by his side, sobbing bitterly, but without speaking.

A long pause ensued, during which the clank of the chain pumps, the swish of the water, the loud voices on deck, and the stertorous breathing of the dying noble, mixed with the passionate sobs of the sorrow-stricken daughter.

"Isabel," said Dom Maxara, at last, "I would give you a protector. Enrico, I would give you my daughter, ere I leave you."

"Oh, dear father, think of yourself, think not of me," sobbed the heart-broken Isabel.

"I am thinking of myself. Enrico, tell your friend the missionary; ask him to come here."

Wyzinski was soon found; and there, in the small cabin, the marriage service was read, Captain Weber, whose eyes were wet with tears, being present. Isabel's voice could hardly be heard through her sobs, as she murmured the responses of the English Church. Wyzinski closed the book, and the wife's head rested on her husband's shoulder. They knelt by the bedside, the missionary praying fervently and long.

All had faced death together more than once; but here it was gradually approaching before their eyes, slowly but surely, and on that account the more terrible. The captain had left, his presence being urgently required on deck, and the low, earnest tones of the missionary sounded impressively in the cabin of the dismantled brig. By the bedside the newly-married couple kneeled. In Isabel's bosom a deep and unswerving affection had long since taken root; she had read, and read truly, too, the heart of her lover; had seen, from the first, his affection for her, and had understood the plain blunt straightforward language in which the expression of it had been couched. For her own future she entertained no doubt, now that the storm was dying away, and land in sight.

"See, Enrico, he revives," she murmured.

"It is the effect of the stimulant," replied her husband.

A violent spasm seemed to shake the dying noble's whole frame from head to foot. Extending his hands, he laid them on the heads of the two kneeling beside him; his eyes were lifted to Heaven, his lips moved, and he made an effort to speak. It was useless, for no sound issued from the white contracted lips. Again the convulsion fit passed over his frame, the head fell back on the pillow, and the arms dropped heavily. The rush of the water, and the heavy clank of the chain pumps, mixed with the sobs of the orphan and the low earnest prayer of the missionary alone broke the silence of the death chamber.

On deck the men were still working hard, and the clear water poured from the brig's scuppers, but there was no cheerfulness shown; they worked, it is true, but sullenly, mechanically, and without hope. The line of coast was visible from the forecastle, but the wind had fallen, and though now and then a puff would fill the foresail, yet the brig hardly had headway, rolling heavily, and seeming to right herself slowly. Everything betokened calm, the sun pouring upon the brig's water-sodden decks, and the jagged stumps of her masts. The land was in sight, but there was no disguising the facts that her boats were smashed to pieces, and she herself was, despite the efforts of her crew, sinking under their feet.

"I see no other way," said Captain Weber, who now stood talking to his first officer on the quarter-deck. "We must have started a plank; mark how clear and green the water flows from her scuppers, and that long lazy roll."

His mate took off his cap, leisurely scratching his head. "Ay, ay, sir," he replied, "either one of the yards has poked a hole through her bottom, or one of that scoundrel's eighteen-pounders has done more damage than we thought."

"She is settling down fast, Lowe. If we had only a breeze we would beach the old barky, but it is impossible."

"Quite impossible, Captain Weber. If you will take my advice, knock off the pumps, and set all hands to work to make a raft. Let us save what we can," earnestly replied the mate.

Captain Weber's face was very sad. With the brig was lost the savings of a life, and he carefully turned over in his mind all the circumstances. He looked over the side and noticed with a sigh how deep the "Halcyon" lay in the water, and how sluggish was her motion. He noted the idle sail as it hung against the broken foremast, and the clank of the chain pumps came to his ear, as the clear salt-water flooded the deck.

The old seaman groaned.

"There is nothing for it, Lowe," he muttered. "Keep the pumps going; half the hands will do the work. Serve out a good allowance of grog. Get the masts out of her, and let us have them alongside. The old brig won't miss them."

"Ay, ay, sir," cheerfully replied the mate, walking aft among the men.

"Morris," continued the captain, addressing the carpenter, "send up all the spare spars you have, and we will use the planking of the forecastle to make a staging for the raft. Rig out a pair of sheers amidships."

All was now bustle aboard the brig. The men, who had worked at the pumps sullenly, because they knew that despite all they could do the leak was gaining fast on them, now found themselves employed in securing their own safety. The remains of the fore and mainmast were soon floating alongside, and, with a number of spare yards and heavier spars, formed a solid basis to work upon. Across these were placed a second layer of lighter spars, and the whole secured firmly. The planking of the deck forward, where it had been partially torn up by the grinding of the fore-topmast, was easily removed, and completed a kind of deck, raised two feet at least above the water. A royal yard was rigged as a mast, and stancheons were fixed round the edges of the platform, through which ropes were run. The arms were got on deck, and the best being selected were, with a liberal supply of ammunition, placed on the raft. Some loose sails were thrown in, provisions of every kind added, and as there was room for treble the number of men on the floating spars, several heavy cases, the contents of which were known only to the captain, were stowed away on the raft.

Night came on, and one by one the stars shone out. A long gentle swell was all that remained of the late storm, and the brig, barely rising to it, rolled clumsily and heavily. The men had behaved well. There had been a question raised, when they were tired of the pumps, and found that, work as hard as they might, it was useless, of breaking into the spirit-room; it had been soon disposed of, however, and each and all had worked cheerfully.

Crew and passengers were on deck. Isabel had been speaking in a pleading tone, while the dark mass of timber alongside was as yet not tenanted.

"I cannot bear to think of what remains of my poor father being left here. We are close to land; let me, at least, see him laid to rest in African soil."

"Dearest Isabel, your wish is law to me, and the desire is a natural though I think a wrong one. We don't know when we may reach land, and the sad sight will but increase your grief. Believe me, dearest, it is useless."

Isabel looked up into her husband's face.

"My first request," she murmured.

The look was irresistible; and Hughes walked forward to where Captain Weber stood, among his crew, completing his last dispositions.

“Captain Weber, can we not take the remains of Dom Maxara on shore for burial?”

“What use will it be? The old barky, with all she contains, will soon be at the bottom of the sea, and so much of my future and hopes go with her, that I should not much care if I went also.”

“Still, it is the daughter’s wish,” urged Hughes.

The men stood grouped around on the deck, the pumps had been left, and the brig was rolling so heavily on the swell that it was time to leave her.

“Well, well! be it as you wish. Here, Anderson, and you, Forrest, come here;” and the seaman gave his directions.

The two sailors hesitated. They joined their comrades. A low whispered conversation ensued. He who had been called Forrest stepped forward, and scratching off his tarpaulin, twisted it in his hands.

“Well, what is it, Forrest?” asked the captain.

“Please your honour, if so be as I may make bold, we’ve had a run of ill luck of late.”

“I know that, none better; but what has that got to do with you?”

“The gentleman has lost the number of his mess, d’ye see, and it’s an onlucky thing to begin a new voyage with a corpse aboard.”

“Ay, ay, Captain Weber,” chimed in the rest, “we dare not set sail on yonder sticks with never a keel beneath our feet, and only a rag of canvas for sail, and that, too, with a corpse aboard.”

The group of men were standing at the gangway, and the captain turned to them, speaking in a loud voice.

“Your duty, Forrest, is to obey my orders. The ship is sinking under our feet, but while a stick of her remains floating they shall be obeyed. Do your duty.”

The men turned, but seemed mutinous, and once more the muttered conversation began, when, gliding down the ladder, Isabel stood among them. She had heard what passed.

“I was wrong, Enrico; tell these brave men I was wrong. My father could not have a nobler coffin than this. Speak to them, Enrico.”

Hughes did so, and a hearty cheer was given by the crew.

“And now,” said Captain Weber, greatly relieved, “we must leave the poor old brig. Are you ready?”

“I would say good bye to my father, Enrico,” murmured Isabel; “have we time?”

The three entered the little cabin, the missionary having joined them, and they stood for the last time by the side of the dead. A lamp burned feebly, lighting up dimly the small bed where the body lay. The grey hairs were carefully combed out, the eyes were closed, for a daughter’s hands had been busy there. The features wore a composed, but haughty look, and one or two deep stains alone told of the violent nature of his death.

Isabel sobbed bitterly, while the missionary prayed. The door opened, and Captain Weber entered. Stooping over the dead form, Isabel imprinted one long kiss on the cold lips, and, in an agony of grief, cast herself into the soldier’s arms.

“Enrico,—thou alone art left to me,” she sobbed.

Captain Weber threw the broad folds of the Union Jack over the dead; the light was left burning, and the party—Isabel sobbing as if her heart would break—passed through the deserted cabin where the water was already washing about, and, reaching the deck, went over the side on to the raft. It was time, for the brig was very low in the water, and as the captain stood on the gangway, the last man on deck, an explosion took place below. It was the pent-up air forced by the increasing mass of water to find an escape, blowing down the screens and bulkheads. The old seaman raised his hat, took one look around him, and then stepped on to the raft. “Shove off, my lads,” he cried, as with long planks ripped from the deck and hastily fashioned into sweeps, the men bore her away from the brig’s side.

“We must get a few fathom away before the old barky makes her last plunge, Lowe.”

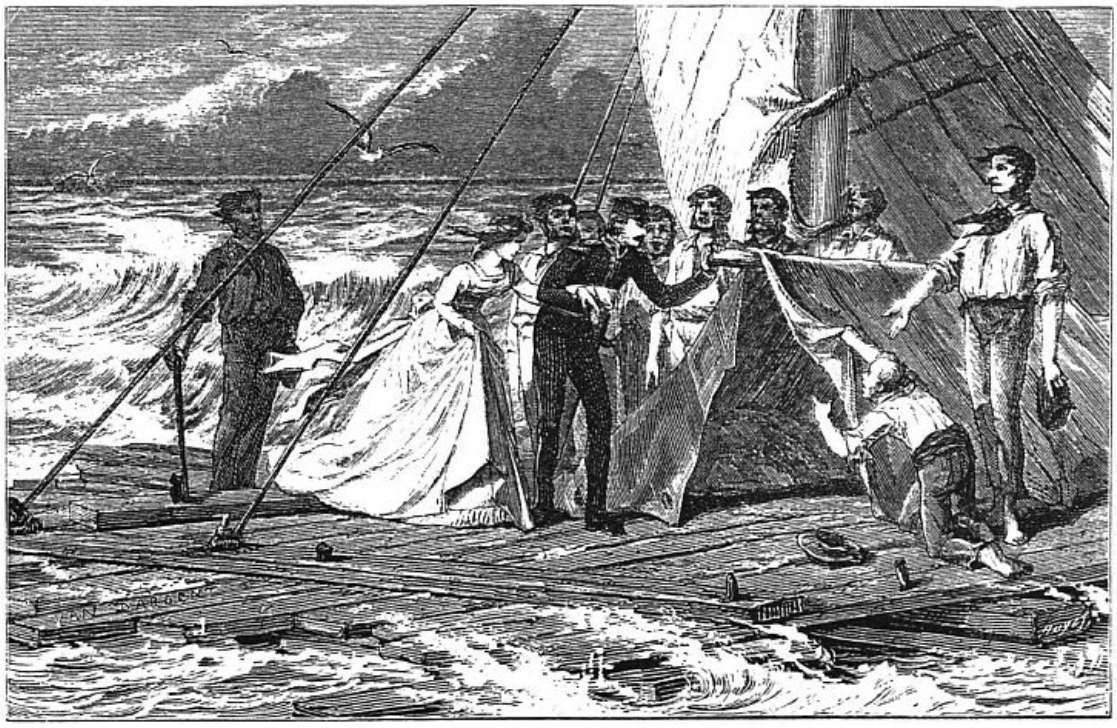
“Ay, ay, sir; ship the sweeps, my lads, and give way.”

There was not a breath of wind, but the growing coolness of the air told of morning being near, for in tropical climates the coldest hour of the twenty-four is ever that which precedes dawn.

The sweeps were long and clumsy, and as the royal which had been set as sail was wholly useless, the motion of the unwieldy raft was necessarily very slow. Two men were at each sweep, and there were four of them, yet the raft barely moved through the water. Captain Weber sat on a case, his head leaning on his hands, and his face turned towards the “Halcyon.”

The starlight was not bright enough to show the tears that rolled slowly down his weather-beaten cheeks. On a heap of sails, nestling by her husband’s side, his large military cloak thrown over her, sat Isabel, and she too was looking towards the dark mass of the sinking vessel. The seaman mourned his ship, the home of many years, the companion of danger of every kind; Isabel’s cheek was wet too, for she mourned a father’s loss, and her eyes were eagerly, turned to a dim, faint ray of light shining from one of the ports. She knew that it came from the cabin where her dead father lay. The sweeps fell with measured cadence into the water, the men pulling in stern silence, until they were about five hundred yards away, and then, without, any order from any one, they ceased rowing. The grey dawn was slowly breaking over the ocean as the brig gave one wild roll to port. She seemed unable to right herself, and those on the raft drew a long breath, as she partially did so. The water, in her hold rolled heavily forward. Down went her bows, down, down into the salt sea,

as lurching heavily and slowly to starboard, she disappeared, the sea boiling in foam around her.



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“My father! oh, my father!” cried Isabel, as she clasped her hands together and sprang forward, as though to join him, but her husband’s strong arm was round her, drawing her gently back.

“Give way, my lads, give way, the old barky’s bones are better there than if the crew of the accursed pirate schooner had trod her decks,” said the captain, deliberately turning his back on the spot, and passing the cuff of his coat over his eyes.

The sun rose in all its splendour over the Indian Ocean, sleeping quietly and calmly under its rays. There were plenty of sails, and an awning was constructed, which gave shelter to all, and slowly and wearily the day wore on.

So long as it remained calm there was no danger, and tedious as their advance was it remained but a question of time as to when the forty miles which separated them from the land should be passed. But night set in before half the distance had been overcome, and there was a dull moaning sound over the ocean, the sailors’ eyes telling them that the scud was flying from the westward, a wind which, if it set in, would infallibly blow them off land. All night long the men toiled at the heavy sweeps. They were fairly worn out with fatigue, some of them sleeping at the oars. The captain, his mate, and passengers all took their turn, but towards two o’clock the first puffs of the westerly gale were felt, and the captain, seeing the utter uselessness of prolonging the struggle, gave orders to ship the sweeps, and for the men to lie down. Isabel had long since cried herself to sleep, and on board the raft none but the captain and Hughes watched as morning dawned over the sea.

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**Sail Ho!**

On board everything had been done to promote the safety of its occupants that could be effected. The lashings of the timbers had been carefully overhauled and strengthened under Captain Weber’s own superintendence, while the boxes and cases of provisions, which had been lowered on to the raft before pushing off from the sinking ship, had been arranged so as to form a kind of walled cabin over which a heavy sail had been spread as its roof. A light studding sail formed the door, which could be brailed up or let down at the desire of the occupant. The weather continued moderate, and though a green wave would occasionally break on board, no great discomfort had been as yet experienced.

It had been a sad moment when the sweeps were unshipped, and when the line of coast became fainter and fainter, until at last its outline was no more distinguishable, and nothing was to be seen but the wide expanse of ocean, on which the frail raft rose and fell. The gulls and Mother Carey’s chickens were their sole companions, and the sun rose without a cloud, daily to pour its blaze of light over the calm waters of the Indian Ocean, and then to sink to rest, setting, as it seemed, in the waste of waters. Soon the stars would peep forth, and the gentle breeze which had prevailed during the day, die away into calm; no sound disturbing the stillness, except the occasional spouting of a whale near the raft, the whish of the breaking wave, and the creak of the spars as they worked together.

At first the men bore this well, for there were no watches to keep, no sails to tend, and provisions of all kinds were plentiful. Calm weather was to be expected after the late series of heavy gales, and they were sure to be picked up. They must be rapidly nearing the shores of Madagascar, too, and the men amused themselves by spinning long yarns about the savage inhabitants of the island, between the intervals of smoking, eating, and drinking. The dawning of daylight was ever an anxious moment for all, and every eye eagerly scanned the limited horizon in quest of the coming ship. The light grew gradually stronger; the wing of a gull was taken for a sail. A feeling of delight, of hope, spread through the hearts of all. The delusion was exposed as the sun tipped the tops of the waves with its light, and, do what they would, despondency took the place of hope. At first none would acknowledge this feeling, each trying to cheer up the other; but the men became gradually restless and uneasy, the tale and the laugh were less frequent; the few orders which were given them were obeyed, it is true, but slowly and listlessly, and it became evident that the confinement to so limited a space was telling, and that the crew were becoming demoralised.

The morning of the third day since the loss of the “Halcyon” had dawned, and the raft still rose and fell on the gentle swell of the ocean. The studding sail was brailed up, and Isabel was seated at the open entrance. Captain Hughes was lying on the spars at her feet, while close by Weber and his mate were endeavouring to prick off their position on a chart, which was spread on a barrel. The men were just finishing their twelve o’clock dinner, and the raft was slowly driving through the water before a gentle westerly breeze.

On a box between the two at the entrance of the improvised cabin stood a chess-board. The pieces were ranged in position, but the interest of the game seemed languishing.

“You might have checkmated me, last move, Enrico,” said Isabel. “Either you did not care to do so, or you are thinking of something else.”

In fact Hughes had been gazing up into the speaker’s face, and had forgotten all about the game.

“A game at chess on a raft in the Indian Ocean is another thing to one in a lady’s drawing-room,” remarked the missionary, who had been looking on at the play, with a smile on his face; “and yet,” he continued, “it has been much the same kind of game as usually takes place between a lady and gentleman thinking only of each other.”

“Oh, how I should like to have my foot once more on the carpet of that same drawing-room!” exclaimed Isabel. “This eternal hoping against hope is dreary work.”

“We have known worse moments together, Isabel,” remarked Hughes, who had raised himself from his elbow to a sitting position, and was gazing intently over the waves.

“I dare say I am impatient, Enrico; but everything seems to go wrong. First of all the storm, and then, when safely moored in the land-locked bay, where everything seemed so quiet, the frightful affair with the Malays. I think I can hear their terrible yells yet.” And the girl covered her eyes with her hands.

Hughes had risen, and was leaning moodily against a pile of boxes, and still gazing over the sea.

“No sooner,” continued Isabel, “had we made all right than the pirate schooner was upon us, and, as if that was not sufficient, the storm which caused my dear father’s death followed.”

“To me, Isabel, there seems still one bright point in all the black past you are looking into,” replied Hughes, as his gaze left the distant horizon, to fix itself on Isabel’s fair face.

Raising her lustrous black eyes, and returning the look with one of deep confiding tenderness, Isabel placed her hand on his arm, as she continued—

“But just as we were close to land, when I could see the undulations of the coast line, and mark the clumps of trees on the shore, to be driven away,—and now this fearfully monotonous life, ever rising and falling on the waves. One of these days we shall see Madagascar, and just as we are about to land, be blown to sea again.”

“Sail ho!” shouted Hughes, in a voice which startled every one on board.

“You are right!” exclaimed Captain Weber, starting to his feet. “See there away to the westward.” And he laid his brown hand on the mate’s shoulder, pointing in the direction named; and, sure enough, no bigger than a man’s hand, like the wing of some far-away sea-gull, a small patch of white appeared on the horizon.

A hearty cheer burst from the missionary’s lips, and it was taken up by all on board. The men, however, did not evince much satisfaction. They were sorry, it may be, after all to change a life of idleness for one of toil; or they knew, perhaps, that the passing sail might not come near.

However this might be, certain it is, that after gazing on the white speck which told of coming help, one after another sat down in a dogged, sullen manner, as though they cared little about the matter.

Grouped round the entrance to the little cabin, Captain Weber, his mate, and passengers began the midday meal, and it was a more cheerful one than usual. Provisions were plentiful, and Mr Lowe had reported the strange sail to be nearing them rapidly.

“She is working to the southward on a wind,” remarked he; “and if she makes a long leg will run us slap aboard.”

“See the union jack set over our mainsail, Mr Lowe,” returned the captain, “it will not help us along much, but will make us more easily seen. They don’t keep a very bright look-out on board yonder craft, I’ll be bound.”

“Ay, ay, sir. Come, my lads, make sail on the frigate,” said the mate, laughing, “we’ll soon run yonder fellow aboard.”

The flag was hoisted, the whole party watching anxiously. The sun shone brightly on the white canvas of a full-rigged ship, which was coming bows on towards them. At the door of the rude cabin Isabel sat, her hand clasped in that of her lover-husband, her head resting on his shoulder, and her eyes intently fixed on the ship.

“How beautiful she looks as she heels over to the breeze,” she murmured. “Surely, they see us now.”

“The ship is more than ten knots away,” replied Captain Weber, “and if even the look-out saw us, and most probably there is none, we should only be taken for a gull or albatross.”

“Could we not make them hear us?” asked Isabel.

“Impossible,” replied the master; “but we will try. Now my lads, a good hearty cheer,” he shouted. “Hip! hip! hurrah! One cheer more; fancy yourselves at the Jolly Tar in Portsmouth Harbour. Hooray! Why, I have heard you make twice the row when I wanted you to knock off shouting,” he said, as the cheer died away. In point of fact, the crew seemed too idle even to exert themselves for their own safety.

“See,” said Isabel, “see, they hear us!” and she clasped her hands together as she spoke with delight.

Captain Weber and his mate knew better. There were, indeed, indications of a bustle on board the ship. The sun was shining brightly full on her white canvas, and even the dark mass of her hull could be made out, as she came careering through the waves, with all sail set to her royals on a taut bowline. Then her sails shivered, the black bows came sweeping up to the wind, the yards were braced round, as the ship, now on the opposite tack, every moment lessened the chance of those on board the doomed raft.

“One effort more, my lads; stay a moment, they’ll be coiling down the sheets and bowlines just now. Are you ready? ‘Ship, ahoy! ahoy! aho-o-o-y!’” roared the captain with all the force of his powerful lungs, producing a shout, with which the voices of all on board joined, even the feeble treble of Isabel being heard.

It was useless; the ship neither heard nor saw them, but kept calmly and steadily on her course, leaving them to their fate. Towards sunset her royals only could be seen on the horizon, and when the stars shone forth, the raft was once more rising and falling in helpless loneliness on the waves of the sleeping ocean, slowly dragging on her way.

Isabel had retired, and cried herself to sleep. Hughes had thrown himself, as was his wont, before the opening of the cabin, and was quite motionless. Near him lay several recumbent forms wrapped in cloaks or tarpaulins, while the men, grouped together, were, or seemed to be, sleeping.

He had bitterly felt the cruel disappointment of the morning, and, though it was nearly midnight, was in reality wide awake. A low confused murmur reached him, and he listened attentively.

“I tell you he has all the gold aboard, Phillips; enough to make men of the likes of we,” were the words which came to his ears.

“For the matter of that, Gough, he’ll die hard, the old beggar, and some of us will lose the number of our mess.”

“All the more gold for them as remains,” muttered the man Gough.

“Well, if so be as we are to go in for the yellow boys, why not now? They’re all caulking soundly.”

“No, yonder ship may be within hail to-morrow morning, and a fine mess we should be in,” answered the ruffian.

Hughes at once became aware that mischief was brewing, and determined to discover what it was. Slowly he dragged himself onwards, inch by inch, until he lay in a position where he could hear well. The two were sitting up, wrapped in their greatcoats, and spoke low and cautiously. The pale light of day was just breaking over the waves as hours later Hughes regained his position, gently and cautiously. Tired with watching he fell fast asleep, and it was broad daylight when he was aroused by Captain Weber shaking him by the arm.

“Rouse and bitt, my lad,” said the old seaman, laughing. “The bare planks seem to suit your humour. We want your place for breakfast.”

There was no lack of water round about them, and while he made his hasty toilet the soldier determined on the course to be taken. An attempt to possess themselves of the gold would certainly be made that night, and, as Phillips had said, Captain Weber was not the man to give it up quietly, “I have a few words for you, Captain Weber, before breakfast,” he said, as that officer passed near him.

“Heave ahead, my hearty, I’m not pressed for time,” was the reply.

“Have you noticed how sullen the men seemed yesterday, how apathetic they were when the ship went about?” asked Hughes.

“It is the natural consequence of this state of relaxed discipline and idleness,” replied the master.

“One more query. Have you not gold in these cases, in some of them at least. Are we not nearing Madagascar?”

Captain Weber turned sharply round, looking the speaker full in the face, and paused a moment as if in astonishment, ere he replied.

“Yes, I have gold dust in some of them, and if yonder ship had only stood on for an hour longer, the dust might have served me to fit out another vessel, and give me another chance; but why do you ask?”

“I lay awake nearly all last night. You know I have always thrown myself before the entrance to the little cabin.”

The seaman nodded his head.

“Well, about four o’clock this morning, I heard two of the men talking. Yonder red-bearded, blear-eyed fellow who is whittling a stick as he whistles, was the principal speaker.”

“Ah, Gough,” replied the master, “he is the worst character on board; it was Gough tried to persuade the men to break into the spirit-room, when tired of the work at the pumps. I can believe anything of him.”

“Well, he held out a dazzling picture of life in Madagascar. He talked of the warm welcome given by the Queen of the island to the English, he painted a life of luxury and ease, instead of one of toil and privation, saying we might sight the island any moment.”

“The scoundrel!” muttered the old master between his clenched teeth, “I see it all now.”

“He told of the gold on the raft, and how with it they might be kings and nobles in the land. How the wind was dead fair, and they had but to stretch forth their hands to help themselves.”

“Not while I live—not while I live, the mutinous scoundrel,” growled the seaman.

“You are not intended to live,” replied the soldier. “We were all to die, unprepared, and therefore incapable of resistance. Adams and Simmonds were to share our fate, the raft to be seized, and the loss of the brig to cover that of the crew and passengers.”

“And Dona Isabel?” inquired the captain.

“Was to die to secure her silence,” replied Hughes, shuddering.

“A pleasant lot of fellows; and when is this infernal plot to be carried out?”

“Last night was fixed for its execution, but a fear for the return of the ship we saw yesterday prevented it, and now it is determined that it be carried out to-night.”

“We may see a sail again to-day, and if we do, we are saved; but again, we may not,” muttered the captain, “and we must be prepared for the worst.”

“We had better, at all events, show no suspicion, but go to our breakfast as usual.”

“I will consult with Lowe; do you tell your old comrade,” said the captain, moodily, as the two moved away.

The simple breakfast was laid out before the cabin-door just as usual. The steward acted as cook, and Isabel superintended her breakfast table on the raft, with all the natural grace she would have shown, had she been in her father’s house in sunny Portugal.

Her face was sorrowful, as she advanced to meet Hughes, for yesterday had indeed brought her a cruel disappointment. So sure had she felt of rescue, that the blow had been very severe.

“Did I not tell you, Enrico, all is against us? Oh, I dreamed that the ship we saw yesterday had come back, and so vivid was the dream, that I lifted the sail expecting to see it,” she remarked.

The breakfast finished, Captain Weber and his mate rose to consult the chart.

“Wyzinski, help us to clear away, and we will get out the chess-board. I want to speak to you. You can lean over us as we play.”

“What on earth is wrong now?” exclaimed Isabel, fixing her large black eyes on her husband’s face.

“Hush, Isabel!” returned Hughes, throwing himself down on the planks, “a great peril hangs over us. If there was a chance of rescue, I would have said nothing about it, but the day wears on, and the horizon is clear.”

Isabel looked up. “All seems calm, there is no sign of storm about,” she remarked.

“Peril!” repeated Wyzinski, as he stooped over Hughes and moved a knight on the board. “Check to your king and castle—both. It and I are old friends.”

And Hughes told his tale, while the game proceeded in a most irregular manner.

Captain Weber sauntered up, and looked knowingly at the board, though he did not understand anything about it.

“Have you spoken to Adams and to Morris?” asked the missionary.

“Yes, and they are prepared—and what is better, yonder in the cabin is the arm-chest securely locked. It was a lucky thing I placed it there. The villains are unarmed.”

“They have their knives—there are eleven of them, and we count how many?” quietly asked the missionary.

“Seven,” answered the old sailor; “but Adams is still very weak. Will you open yonder chest, pretty one,” he continued, for he ever addressed Isabel by that endearing epithet; “will you open yonder chest, and push the revolvers within my reach with your foot.”

Wyzinski took her place at the chess-board, as Isabel rose to do as she was desired, and the captain having placed a couple of pairs of revolvers in the pockets of his monkey jacket, moved forward among the men, talking and chatting as if nothing was wrong.

It was Sunday; the breeze died away towards evening, and the missionary read the service of the day in the makeshift cabin. He possessed a fine, clear voice, and, aware of their great danger, his hearers found the beautiful litany of the church more solemn, perhaps, than usual.

To Isabel it was all very strange, but as the sun sank to rest among the ocean waves, she joined in the rites of her husband’s creed with a simple, and confiding faith, not understanding them, and night gradually gathered round the crew of the raft. Inured to danger, and now fully armed, one after another of the little party lay down to sleep, and soon all was quiet on board.

The wind had fallen, and with it the sea, the motion of the spars becoming less and less. The night was warm, the stars were shining brilliantly, and the moon, in her first quarter, was rising over the ocean, making a long narrow strip of silver on the waves. The sail was raised at the opening of the cabin, and on the planking before it sat Isabel. Her husband’s arm was round her, and her head leaned back on his breast, the long hair uncared for, falling on the planks which formed the deck, while the starlight shone on her face, and twinkled in her black eyes. The sail of the raft just drew, but barely so.

“How quiet all seems, Enrico; except the splash of the waves, there is not a sound abroad.”

“Yes, many years hence we may talk of this. Does it not seem strange to be floating about on a few sticks in the middle of the ocean? Hark! do you hear that?”

A loud noise, like the blowing off of steam, was heard.

“It is a whale, Isabel.”

“I did not know there were many of them here,” said the fair girl, again leaning back, for she had started up in alarm at the noise.

“There are plenty of an inferior description to those caught further north, and further south,” replied Hughes. “But tell me of your own country, Isabel, a land I do not know.”

“No; we will have it the other way about, Enrico. Tell me of our home among your native mountains, and of the strange customs and manners of the people.”

“But they are not strange, and there is no difference between them and others, save that they are of more ancient race and speak an older tongue than the English. True tradition lives among the time-worn mountains of the Cymri.”

“Well, tell me one of them, Enrico mio.”

With that faculty of enjoying the present, without thought of the future, inherent to the Spanish and Portuguese nature, Isabel seemed to have forgotten her position, even the dread peril which menaced them from the evil humour and greed of the dissatisfied seamen. All was merged in the present, in the quiet beauty of the night, the starlight which glistened in her eyes, the long thin quivering strip of moonlight dancing over the calm ocean waves, and the presence of him she loved best.

The soldier was well armed. From his childhood he had been accustomed to scenes of danger; his manhood had been spent in a country where the European carries his life in his hand, and all on board the raft seemed quiet. The men might have renounced their treacherous purpose.

“Well,” said he, falling into the humour of the moment and drawing the thick cloak so as to cover Isabel more completely, while he looked down on the fair face turned up to meet his gaze, “I had an ancestor, who, for the sake of his religion, which was yours, lost lands and property that ought to have descended in direct line to us. Shall I tell you of this?”

“Do, Enrico mio,” replied Isabel, nestling nearer to him.

“There is an old mansion near the sea shore in North Wales. It is a small farm-house now, Isabel, and though many hundreds of people who go year after year to the two well-known towns of Conway and Llandudno pass it often, though they remark its old Elizabethan windows, its twisted chimneys, and queer odd look, none ever take much notice of it, because near it stands the lordly house of Gloddaeth, surrounded by its sweeping woods and noble park. Yet it is just of this old farm-house I am going to tell you.”

“Don’t talk of trees and parks, Enrico; it makes me feel such a longing for land,” said Isabel.

“It was a curious pile in the days of which I speak, that old house of Penrhyn, with its uncouth rambling style of architecture, belonging to no age in particular, but a little to all. The principal part of it, however, had been built in Queen Elizabeth’s time, and, as I have said, many of the queer gables and twisted chimneys yet remain. Before it lies the sea, and away to the right a chain of magnificent mountains, sweeping into the very heart of Snowdonia. The Denbighshire range, and the long low hills trending away to the mouth of the Dee, give a charm to the landscape, while the broad lands of Penrhyn lie stretched around. The woods of Gloddaeth and Bodysgallen add to the beauty of the scene, and close to the house a chapel, in good repair, the ruins of which still stand, then told of the religious faith of the Pughs of Penrhyn.

“Between them and the powerful family of the lords of Gloddaeth a feud existed, and the Sir Roger Mostyn of that day had added to it by forcing his neighbour to remove the stone cross which formed the only ornament of the chapel. The owner of the place, Robert Pugh of Penrhyn, was old, and a mere tool in the hands of a wily priest, Father Guy. This latter was a dangerous man. Bred in the Jesuit ‘Collegio dei Nobili’ at Rome, he had by accident inherited his brother’s titles and part of his estates. The rank Sir William Guy never publicly assumed. Wholly absorbed in his religious views he had visited many countries, and had in his fanaticism longed even for the crown of martyrdom.

“The small Catholic community, existing by sufferance only in the heart of this wild Welsh land, had attracted his attention, and he had asked and obtained the small chaplainry of Penrhyn, soon acquiring a complete ascendancy over the owner.

“The tenants of the place, as well as those of Coetmore, were at his disposal, old Robert Pugh’s only son and heir, Henry, being affianced to Lucy Coetmore. Help had been promised by the Earl of Shrewsbury and other Catholic nobles in England, so the fanatic priest had determined to raise the standard of revolt, and thought he saw his way to success.”

“And Lucy Coetmore, Enrico, was she beautiful?”

“You shall see her picture yourself, Isabel. It hangs in the entrance of Plas Coch, on the banks of the Conway;” and Hughes paused, for the memory of the quiet valley and the flowing river, with its grey ruins and old Roman remains, came over him as he glanced at the waste of waters, while their helpless position struck him in contrast with a sickening sensation.

“What a curious red star that is down in the horizon!” he remarked. “I could almost fancy it goes out sometimes; but to continue—

“Lucy was a tall stately heiress; her hair was not like yours, Isabel, but of a golden brown, and her eyes blue and full

of melancholy softness, her complexion of that transparent white and red so seldom seen united with strong constitutions. The white was the enamelled white of ivory, and the red was the blush of the wild rose. The charm of her beautiful face and well-turned head was heightened by the graceful neck and slender figure. Lucy was a Saxon beauty."

"And did she die young?" languidly asked Isabel.

"She did; leaving one daughter, who married my great grandfather, and through whom the property came into my family; but now we must leave Penrhyn for a time, dearest.

"It was ten o'clock in the morning, and Sir Roger Mostyn sat in the great hall of Gloddaeth. There was the ample fireplace with its old-fashioned dogs, the panelled and carved oaken walls and roof. There was a balcony at the further end, where the white-haired harpers played, and sang tales of war and love; curious antique mottoes were blazoned on the walls in old Welsh characters. There, too, were the arms of the Mostyns and the Royal device of the Tudors, with the red dragon grinning defiance to the world. Sir Roger seemed uneasy as he threw open the latticed window and let in a glorious flood of sunshine and fresh air into the ancient hall. On the terrace beyond several children were playing, while before him, for many a mile, lay his own broad lands. The woods of Bodysgallen and of Marl were waving in the wind. There were the grey towers of Conway Castle and the glancing river, the noble background of the Snowdonian Mountains closing the view, with the splendid outline of old Penmaenmawr as it sank with one sheer sweep into the sea."

"I don't want to hear of all that, Enrico," said Isabel, slipping her hand into her husband's. "I don't care for waving trees, old ruins, and rivers—at least not here."

"Well, I don't think Sir Roger Mostyn did either at that moment, for his face was clouded with care.

"'And so, Griffith,' he said to a man who was standing near the door, 'that was all you learned?'

"'It was, Sir Roger; but not all I saw. Susan was as close as a miser with his gold, and though I slept in an out-house and only returned half an hour since, she would tell me nothing.'

"'And you say great preparations were on foot for the reception of guests?'

"'Messengers were coming and going, Sir Roger, the whole night long; the butchers were busy slaughtering; all was bustle and excitement.'

"Thou art a poor lover, Griffith, if this is all thou couldst obtain.

"'About twelve o'clock, Sir Roger,' continued the fellow, reddening, 'I heard the tramp of men, and looking out, I saw a company of about fifty. They appeared to obey a word of command, were dressed in grey frieze, and armed. The windows of the chapel were a blaze of light. I learned that they were Irish from the Isle of Man.'

"'Very well, Griffith; send the steward here;' and Sir Roger leaned on the sill of the latticed window in deep thought. The children called to him in their play, but he did not see them; the birds sang and the leaves rustled, but he did not hear them.

"There you are, Enrico, with your birds and trees again, and we on the broad ocean, with the sea below us, and the blue sky overhead.

"Yes, but there is love in both cases. As to who is in love on board the raft, you know as well as I do," and the speaker bent over the form nestled on his bosom, and kissed the fair forehead.

There was a moment's silence, and one of the apparently sleeping men lifted his head, glanced around, and then, as Hughes continued his tale, dropped again on the deck, uttering a heavy curse.

"Father Guy had brought over a strong body of the Catholic peasantry from Ireland, the cutter which landed them lying in a snug little bay near the farm. It is such a beautiful spot that bay, Isabel, formed by the hills dying away into the sea, and the rugged sides of the Little Orme."

"Now, Enrico, I won't have it. Tell me of anything except rocks, trees, and birds," murmured Isabel.

"Well, night had set in. The stars were gleaming round the twisted gables and chimneys of Penrhyn, but the windows of the little chapel were a blaze of light. Inside it some twenty noblemen were assembled, the last relics of the Catholic religion among the mountains of North Wales. The altar was decked out for mass, the long tapers lighted, the fragrant incense floated on the air, while, in the full splendour of his robes, stood Father Guy.

"He was speaking eloquently and earnestly, just as a man, wearing a heavy horseman's cloak, glided in through the doorway of the chapel.

"His audience were so wrapped up in the words they heard, and in the powerful appeal to their feelings so carried away by his eloquence, that he only remarked and recognised the intruder, who was no other than Sir Roger Mostyn.

"'Yes, my sons,' concluded the old priest, 'prompted by the Master of Iniquity, they would deny us the worship of our God, they would destroy religion by the introduction of schismatic doctrines. They would make the tenets of an ancient and holy Church subservient to the will of an earthly king, putting off and on its principles at pleasure, like to a raiment. I say unto you, that death is a meet reward for these usurpers of our Church—that he who aids not in the holy work set on foot this night belongs not unto us. Go forth, my sons, uphold the banner of the Church: let its enemies perish from the face of the earth, and, as a sign unto you that the God of our fathers is with you, turn, and behold whom he has delivered into your hand.'

"The long, white, transparent fingers pointed towards the doorway, where Sir Roger Mostyn stood.

"It was a strange scene that chapel blazing with light, as, dropping his cloak, Sir Roger strode into its centre, dressed in the uniform of his own regiment of Yeomanry.

“‘Away with him,’ cried the priest, and a score of blades leaped from their scabbards.

“‘Silence, gentlemen,’ said the baronet, no way dismayed, his voice sounding clear and sonorous above the tumult, ‘the place is surrounded. I have but to raise my voice, and the soldiers enter. Disperse while there is yet time.’

“The conspirators looked into each other’s faces with blank amazement. Some moved towards the door of the chapel and, returning, told that men wearing the Royal uniform were outside.

“‘It shall not be said that we, the last remnants of the faithful in this land, put our hands to the plough and turned back,’ exclaimed Robert Pugh of Penrhyn. ‘Philip Wynn, fall in our men. Forward, gentlemen.’”

“Is that the star you mean, Enrico?” asked Isabel, interrupting the tale, as she pointed to the westward; “it does not set, and seems larger than it was. Can it be on land?”

Midnight, the hour fixed for the outbreak, had long passed, and all was as yet quiet on board. The voices of the speakers ceased as both concentrated their gaze on what seemed a red star, for Hughes did not like to wake the sleepers for nothing.

A form moved at the far end of the raft. It was the man Gough, who raised himself gently on his elbow, listening cautiously. Hearing no noise save the swish of the waves, he pushed one or two of the men who, wrapped in their coats, were fast asleep, and then throwing the covering from him, he rose. The starlight gleamed from the blade of his long knife as he stole his way round the cases which formed the sea wall of the cabin. Step by step he advanced, but just as he rounded them, Hughes rose, his back turned towards the man.

“I will wake the captain, Isabel. I know not what it is.”

With a loud curse, the ruffian raised his arm, and the blow fell, with such force, that it precipitated Hughes, who was wholly off his guard, into the sea.

With a loud shriek, which aroused every one on the raft, Isabel rushed forward. Seizing her with his iron grasp by the hair, the murderer’s knife once more gleamed in the starlight, when a straightforward blow from Morris the carpenter struck him full between the eyes, knocking him overboard; while shriek after shriek from Isabel rang out on the air.

The men had now formed, and came on with their knives gleaming in the starlight, and a savage determination on their faces.

“Lay down your arms, my lads,” shouted Weber; “your plot is known, and we are armed.”

For a second the crew seemed disposed to obey the voice whose tones of command had so often rang in their ears.

“Come on, my lads,” shouted a burly sailor; “follow Jack Smith, and we’ll soon have the gold.”

A wild shout rang out, a pistol shot, and the speaker, struck right on the bridge of the nose by a ball from the captain’s pistol, gave a fearful scream as he spun round in his intense agony; dropping the knife, he uttered a volley of hideous imprecations, then came an appalling yell, and he fell dead.

The men were startled, two of their leaders were gone, while opposed to them, and fully armed, stood the captain and his party.

Isabel lay senseless on the planking of the cabin, and the seamen held a hurried consultation together.

Meanwhile, in the sea, a fierce struggle had been going on. His left arm pierced by the knife, which had sought his heart, but in the darkness missed its aim, Hughes had risen to the surface after his first plunge, the body of his antagonist Gough falling on him as he did so, both instantly grappling.

The soldier’s arm was powerless, as with a savage shout, and deep guttural oath, Gough pinned his enemy by the throat; dashing back his head against the rough planking of the raft, while with his clenched fist he dealt him blow after blow.

Clutching wildly and impotently at his aggressor, Hughes felt his strength failing. Soon his head was below the water again, he struggled to the surface, his senses were rapidly leaving him, and the fierce exulting shout of his enemy rang vaguely in his ears. Down came the sledge-hammer blows on his defenceless head, the man Gough fighting like a fiend, roaring in his fury, and biting like a wild beast at his foe, as he once more tore away his victim’s hold and pressed his head below the raft. The water gurgled in his ears, the savage shout mixed with the noise of the waves as he went down, when suddenly the grip on his throat ceased, his antagonist’s eyes rolled wildly; with a yell of agony, he seemed to leap half his height from out of the wave, and then all around it became reddened with his blood.

A violent struggle followed, making the sea boil for a moment, as a monstrous shark disappeared with its prey, and the strong arm of the carpenter seizing the drowning man by the collar, drew him from the ocean crimsoned with the blood of his antagonist, and cast him, stunned and senseless, on to the planking of the raft.

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**The Rescue.**

Isabel, recovered from the state of insensibility into which she had fallen, on seeing all at once the quiet of the night turned into a scene of murder and of bloodshed, had taken refuge in the cabin. She paid no attention to what was going on around her, but sat on a pile of sails, rocking herself to and fro, and moaning as she did so. Several balls passed through the canvas screen, but she paid no attention to them. She had seen her husband, the last friend left her, stabbed as she believed to the heart, and thrown into the sea. What was the result of the fight now to her, and yet, as she saw even in her misery the helpless body drawn from the ocean, and cast on to the raft, she rose, and threw herself beside it, sobbing bitterly in her anguish of heart.

A few minutes’ pause had ensued after the fearful death scream of the mutineer, Smith, had rung forth on the night

air, for the seamen consulted together, and the result was soon seen.

On they came with a fierce shout, but this time, taught by experience, they divided into two parties; one, attacking the captain and his men in front, received their fire and were soon beaten back, losing one of their number, the uncertain light alone saving them. The second, under cover of the diversion, dashed into the cabin, and rifled the arm-chest, which they broke open.

“Now, my lads, it’s our turn,” shouted one of the men as he loaded and fired, hitting the carpenter Morris, who fell uttering a deep groan.

Three of Captain Weber’s small party were *hors de combat*. The carpenter was fast bleeding to death. Hughes was lying senseless on the planking of the raft, while Adams, whose wound had broken out again, was in a helpless condition. The ultimate result of the struggle seemed no longer doubtful.

“It’s but a question of time, Lowe,” said the captain. “I’ve always been kind to the lubbers. Let the scoundrels have the gold—I’ll tell them so.”

“Let me go among them, sir.”

“No; it is my duty, and Andrew Weber is not the man to shirk it.”

Holding up his hand, and putting down the revolver he had in his grasp, he walked quietly towards the end of the raft where the men were gathered together.

He saw at once what he had not known before, namely, that through some negligence they had got at the cases of spirit, and had been drinking heavily, and he felt all hope was gone. Had they been sober an appeal to their better sense might have availed—as it was he knew it to be useless; still there was no other chance left.

“My lads, we’ve been too long together to be murdering each other this way. I’ve never done you wrong. Tell me what ye want,” he said.

“We want the gold, you old porpoise, and we’ll have it; and we want the raft, and we will have that, too,” was the reply.

“I don’t care about the gold, Phillips,” replied the old seaman. “It’s all that remains to me, and I had hoped to fit out another craft with it; but the moan’s soon made. Take it.”

“Too late! Too late, damn ye!” howled the drunken seaman. “Back to your quarter-deck, or take the consequences. I say, aft there, look out for squalls!”

“Phillips, do you remember when I took you on board at Saint Helena? You were half starved, and in rags. If I go back, we will fight it out to the last man. All you can get is the gold, and I say ye may have it.”

“Your quarter-deck speeches won’t do here, my hearty. Back to your people, I say!” The man’s eyes were blazing with drink and fury.

Captain Weber was turning away. “Phillips,” he said, as he did so, “you have a wife and children over yonder—what do you think they will say when they hear of your being hung as a mutineer?”

The taunt was too much for him. With a howl of rage, the drunken sailor raised his pistol, and the muzzle was within a foot of the old seaman’s head, as he pulled the trigger. Standing tall and erect, with a smile of withering scorn on his features as the report rang out, Captain Weber seemed for a moment unhurt; then, with a reel like that of a drunken man, he fell, close to the spot where Hughes lay, Isabel kneeling beside him. The ball had struck him on the temple, and he was dead before he touched the planks, his head hanging over the side, and his long white hair washing to and fro in the sea as the raft rose on the swell.

Uttering a wild savage shout, the drunken sailor sprang over the corpse, followed by his comrades in crime. The rubicon of blood was indeed past. Another instant, and the scanty band, now greatly reduced in numbers, would be swept from the raft. The shouts and execrations of the seamen, maddened as they were with fiery spirit, rang over the calm, quiet sea, as, swinging his clubbed musket round his head, Mr Lowe, now the senior officer present, met the mutineers half way. Phillips, with a deep oath, again fired, as the mate struck the ruffian with all the power rage could give to a muscular arm, knocking him off the raft with the force of the blow. Once more the swish of the water was heard, as the sea around boiled into foam. The senseless body was tossed to and fro like a cork, half a dozen huge fins appearing above the water. Suddenly it was drawn down, reappeared, and then the wave was red with blood, as the sharks tore their prey piecemeal.

“Come on, ye ruffians, and meet your doom!” yelled the triumphant mate; but hardly had the words passed his lips when a dull heavy report came booming over the ocean.

A deep dead silence ensued, then a wild cheer burst from the mate’s breast.

“Hurrah!” he shouted. “We are saved, my lads,—saved at last!” as he drew back from his exposed situation, and joined the rest.

A distant flash was now seen, and then once more the boom of the gun came over the ocean, this time replied to by the successive reports of the guns and pistols of the mate’s little party, fired one after another into the air, sending each a spirt of flame into the darkness of the night, while far away a small fiery star rose and fell to the motion of the waves, the same which had so engaged Hughes’s attention at the moment he received the treacherous blow from the mutineer Gough. It was a whaler’s light.

The men, now frightened and partially sobered, attempted no further violence. They seemed thoroughly cowed, saying not a word, even when the mate walked unarmed among them, and commenced throwing overboard deliberately, one after another, bottle after bottle of the fiery spirit they had stolen, and which had caused all the mischief. Without it,

the pernicious counsels of the man Gough, and his almost as black hearted ally, Phillips, had never been listened to.

“I say, Mr Lowe, you’ll let us poor beggars down mild, won’t you? It was that damned rum did it all,” said one of the now humbled seamen.

The mate spoke never a word, but pointed silently to the body of the captain, as it lay on the planking, the long white hair moving in the wash of the sea, and the blood slowly welling from the shattered forehead. It was a ghastly sight, as the faint starlight revealed it to the sobered crew.

“It was that lubber Gough,” muttered the man; “Phillips and he have gone to Davy Jones. I say, Mr Lowe, you’ll log it down to them, not to us; we were all three sheets in the wind.”

“It’s not for me to decide,” replied the mate; “you’ll all have justice, and that looks to me like a rope rove through a block at the fore-yard arm. What had he done to you that he should lie there, you damned mutinous scoundrels?”

“I say, my lads,” replied the still half-drunken man, “what’s the use of this kind of thing? If as how we are to blame for the skipper’s death, when we was as drunk as lords—if so be as we are to be yard-armed for what Gough and Phillips did, why let’s go overboard, says I.”

“I say, Mr Lowe,” humbly interposed another and more sober man, “we had nothing to do with this here matter. Them two bloody-minded villains promised us rum and gold. We deserve all we’ll get, but you’ll not be down on us too hard, will ye?”

“No, I’ll not,” replied the officer. “Collect the arms, Forest, and return them to the chest.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered the man, obeying at once.

Every half-hour a gun from the whaler boomed over the sea, telling of her presence; but it was evident that not understanding the firing, her crew thought it safer to wait for daylight.

Isabel seemed stupefied with grief. Her senses were stunned by this last crowning misfortune. The missionary had now joined her, and by the feeble light had soon found that life was not quite extinct in his friend’s battered frame.

With the help of two of the mutineers, Hughes had been carried into the cabin, and laid on the spare sails; some weak brandy-and-water had been given him, and the blood washed from the pale face and clotted hair.

“It comes too late,” muttered Isabel, as she bent over her husband’s body. “It comes too late. What to me is yonder ship? Father and husband, father and husband gone!” she moaned.

“Hush!” said the missionary, as he sponged away the blood with a handkerchief; “hush! he is not dead, only half drowned, and stunned.”

The sailor Gough had, in his drunken fury, beaten his antagonist’s head against the jagged ends of the spars. The yielding water had softened the shock, but as the two leaned over him, and the grey dawn stole across the ocean, his head presented a terrible spectacle. They poured more spirit and water down his throat, and gradually the colour came back to his face. He opened his eyes, looking wildly around, and as he did so, the light of returning consciousness came back to them.

At this moment, the boom of the whaler’s forecastle gun was again heard, as her men, who had in the darkness of the night seen only the flash of the pistols, now caught sight of the raft, her head yards being at once braced round, and her bows brought as near the wind as possible. The sound struck the injured man’s ear.

“It is help, it is safety,” whispered Isabel. “Enrico, it is a ship!”

The soldier’s eyes closed, his lips moved, and the blood mounted slowly to his cheeks. “My Isabel, my beloved!” he murmured. A flood of tears poured from Isabel’s eyes as she threw herself into his arms; and the missionary left the cabin, drawing down the sail as he did so over the opening.

The raft did not show such proofs of the deadly fight which had taken place on board of her as might have been imagined. The dead body of the old captain was carefully placed amidships, near his boxes of gold dust; that of the carpenter, Morris, beside it, for he too was dead. Adams, whose splinter wound had broken out once more with the excitement of the fray, was looked to. The mutineers who had fallen had been disposed of by the sharks, whose large fins could yet be seen from, time to time, as they moved slowly round and round the raft, seeking for more prey.

“We might have knowed what ’ud come on it,” said one of the now humble seamen, as he dashed a bucket of water over a large red patch of blood; “I never seed them chaps, but I knowed as Davy Jones a wanted some on us.”

And so the morning dawned over the ocean, and the diminished crew on board the raft; the wind still light from the westward, and the sail yet dragging her almost imperceptibly through the water. Slowly the first streaks of light spread over the waste of ocean, as the haggard, worn-out men, pale from excitement and from the effects of drink, looked out eagerly for the ship, which they knew was near them.

“There she is, right to leeward,” said one of the seamen; and as the light every moment became more intense, there she lay sure enough.

“A full-rigged ship hove-to under two topsails, fore-topmast-staysail, and driver,” said Mr Lowe.

“Look, she sees us,” cried Wyzinski, as the main-topsail yard was rounded in, the sail filled, and the ship gathered way—the Union Jack being run up to the gaff, and a white puff of smoke from her bows preceding the thud of the gun.

The studding sail was gently raised, and Hughes, leaning on Isabel’s arm, joined the group. A few buckets of cold sea water had done wonders for him, though his head was still swollen and contused, and as he sat down on the spot where his tale had been so terribly broken off, the sun’s higher limb emerged from the waste of waters to the eastward, and

tipped the waves of the Indian Ocean with its rays.

“There is hope dawning on us at last, Isabel,” said he, pointing first to the rising sun, then to the white canvas of the ship, as the first beams shone on it.

“There goes her foresail and mainsail. By Jove!” exclaimed Mr Lowe, “she must be strong handed, for they’re away aloft.”

Sail after sail was shown on board the ship until she was standing on close hauled, with everything set to her royals.

“There’s down with the helm!” muttered one of the men, as the ship’s bows came sweeping up to the wind, her canvas shivering, then filling once more as her yards swung round, and she stood on the other tack.

“Ay, ay,” replied the man Forest, “she’ll work dead to windward, and then bear down on us. Why the devil didn’t she find herself here away yesterday?”

“What a store of memories the last few weeks have given us, Enrico,” remarked Isabel, as she tore a strip of canvas to make a sling for the wounded arm, which was becoming painful.

“So it ever is with our lives,” answered Hughes, as the arm was made as comfortable as possible. “Shadowy memories of sunshine and storm, ever driving over the mirror in which we see the past; but the future, dearest,” and he pointed towards the pyramid of white canvas, “the future will be our own.”

“May God grant it, for we have been cruelly tried,” answered Isabel.

Slipping slowly through the water, the whaler did exactly as the man Forest predicted.

She was a dull sailer, and the time seemed long and weary to those who watched her on board the raft with intense anxiety. So precarious had been their late position, so changeable the events of their life, that they could not believe in safety until they should actually feel its existence.

The whaler was now dead to windward, and the raft still going slowly through the water before the breeze. The two bodies, namely, those of Captain Weber and the carpenter Morris, lay side by side amidships.

“Take the sail off her, my lads,” said the mate, and he was obeyed with ready alacrity, the canvas being stripped from the stump of a mast, and thrown over the two corpses.

Paying round, the whaler wore, and slowly handling her loftier canvas, her huge hull came rolling along, heading straight for the raft, her crew shortening sail as they came on.

Slowly she neared it, and a score or more of men might be seen clustering in her rigging, or gazing over her bulwarks at the strange sight presented by the spars drifting along on the waves of the ocean.

“Raft, ahoy!” shouted a man, who was holding on in the mizen rigging of the ship, “what raft is that?”

“The wreck of the brig ‘Halcyon,’ lost in the late gale,” replied the mate, using his two hands as a trumpet.

“What was the meaning of the firing?” again shouted Captain Hawkins, master of the whaler the “Dolphin,” still misdoubting, for in those days pirates were not unknown off the coast of Madagascar.

“Mutiny and murder,” returned the mate, at the top of his voice, for all reply.

“Avast, there! Mr Lowe,” grumbled Forest. “Remember what ye promised us, sir.”

“I’ll heave-to and send a boat,” was the shout that came across the waters, and the next moment the necessary orders were given, and so close were the ship and raft, that the words of command were heard distinctly on board the latter, as the “Dolphin” came to the wind, and under her two topsails, jib, and spanker, lay hove-to. A boat was lowered, and half an hour later the mate of the “Halcyon” was telling his sad tale in the cabin of the “Dolphin.” Her late crew were in irons forward, her passengers cared for, the ship working her way for Port Natal, and the deserted raft, stripped to the spars themselves, floating miles astern.

The evil time at last seemed to have ended, for that afternoon the westerly breeze died away, and the “Dolphin,” with a fair wind, lay her course, dropping her anchor in the almost land-locked harbour, without an accident, landing her passengers and prisoners, and sailing again on her whaling voyage.

Six weeks had elapsed since her departure. The Bishop of Cape Town, who had chanced to be at Durban at the time, had, at the missionary’s request, again performed the marriage ceremony, which had so hastily been solemnised on board the sinking brig. The remains of the tough British seaman, Captain Weber, had been buried with all honour in the cemetery of the town, and the same slab covered him, his carpenter Morris, and old Adams. Mr Lowe, in charge of the gold dust, had left for England, as second officer of the barque “The Flying Fish,” which had put into Port Natal disabled by the gale which had so ill-treated the unfortunate “Halcyon.”

One afternoon, about six weeks after the sailing of the “Dolphin,” a small party of three stood on the beach at Port Natal.

A large steamer, with the blue peter flying at the fore, the union jack at her mizen peak, and a cloud of dense black smoke rising from her funnel, could be seen off the bar, while a boat, manned by four powerful men, rose and fell on the rollers close by the beach.

“Even at this last moment, Wyzinski, it is not too late. There are plenty of empty berths on board the ‘Saxon.’”

Hughes seemed greatly moved, and the missionary’s usually impassive face showed signs of deep emotion, which, it was evident, he suppressed with difficulty.

“No, old friend. No, it must not be,” he replied, his thin lips quivering as he spoke. “The work we have begun together, I will finish if I live. The ‘Ruined Cities of Zulu Land’ exist, and the dangers we have gone through have but opened out the way. Noti’s life lost on the banks of the Golden River, Luji’s sacrificed to save ours on the plains of Manica, must not have been given in vain.”

A deep silence ensued as Isabel, leaning on her husband’s arm, looked pensively over the sea. The sound of the steam-whistle was heard, warning the loiterers on the beach that their time was short.

“I go from this to depose on oath as to our discoveries,” continued the enthusiastic speaker. “I am sure of a welcome at Chantilly, and that shall be my starting point.”

“Well, well,” returned Hughes, sorrowfully, “you won’t forget the presents for Masheesh. How he wanted to come with us, poor fellow.”

“There goes a gun from the ‘Saxon,’ sir,” said the coxswain in charge of the boat, as the report of a light piece came to their ears, and a wisp of white smoke rose curling over the point.

“Good-bye, Wyzinski, good-bye,” said Hughes, as he grasped the other’s hand. “May God bless you! And remember, while we have a home it’s yours. You must eventually tire of your wanderings.”

“Shall I?” returned the other, as a slight smile curled his lip, though the unbidden tears were standing in his eyes, kept back only by his iron will “Hark my words: you will tire first of a life of inaction.” And the missionary touched Isabel’s cheek with his lips as he handed her into the boat.

One more grasp of the hand as the two men stood looking into each other’s eyes; one more deep “good-bye!” and Hughes sat by her side.

“Give way, my lads! give way, with a will!” exclaimed the coxswain, as the sound of a second gun came booming over the point.

“You will tire of the water-melons, Hughes,” shouted the missionary, as the boat shot away from land, “and when you do so, think of the Ruined Cities of Zulu Land, and your old comrade working alone.”

A wave of the hand came back for all reply, as Hughes passed his arm round Isabel’s slender waist.

With the calm serenity which so characterised the man, the missionary turned, and, instead of remaining to watch the boat, walked firmly though slowly away, never once faltering. The tears were still standing in his eyes, but no one marked them, as he moved with his firm springy step through the busy streets of Durban. The smoke of the mail steamer “Saxon” was yet to be seen, a black inky spot on the horizon, as he took his way from the town, bound for the banks of the Nonoti. He reached Chantilly in safety, and passed on thence, after a short halt, to the station at Santa Lucia Bay, there to organise a party destined to win once more from the forest growth the Ruined Cities of Zulu Land.

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**The Massacres of Cawnpore.**

Anyone who has been at the Cape, will remember the lofty height of the Lion’s Mountain, looking over the bay. It presents a striking object as the ship stands in, and the Table Mountain, without its fleecy covering, rises with its flattened summit cut clearly against the line of blue sky. Without has been purposely written; for if the fog hangs heavily on its top, or, in the words of the sailor, if the table-cloth be spread, then a blow is quite certain, and the very best thing to be done by the passenger is to leave the ship to pitch and roll at her anchors until the gale blows itself out, or, better still, to charter a horse, as the Jack Tars have it, for a ride to Wynebergh, where the vineyards lie, producing the famed Constantia grape.

Winding along by the sea side, and giving the most delicious little peeps over the ocean, the road to Wynebergh is exquisitely beautiful. Many take it for the romantic loveliness of its land and ocean views; others, because their business leads them in that direction; and not a few, because of the little road-side public-house, which lies about half way, and where the click of the billiard balls never seems to cease night or day.

Long before the traveller comes to that hotel, he will pass on his left hand a small house, embowered in trees, standing in its own grounds, sweeping down nearly to the sea. It is a pretty spot, with its white façade, its green shutters, and broad verandah, the wood-work nearly hidden by the clustering creepers and vines.

Bright flowers and green plots of grass, carefully mowed and watered, speak of European taste; and, in point of fact, the lovely little spot on the Wynebergh road, belonged to an English merchant, Mr Chichester, who, being absent in England was glad to let it.

It was a fine August day of the year 1857. The sun was shining brightly, and the breeze came from the sea. A fountain of water was playing in the sunlight, and the birds were singing; while the splash of the waves, as they broke on the beach, could be distinctly heard.

“Are you tired of our quiet life at the Cape, Enrico?” asked Isabel, who, seated on a rustic bench, was busy with some embroidery, Hughes lying on the grass at her feet, an open book near.

“Well, no,” answered he, yawning; “but I don’t see why we should wait the reply to all that mass of papers sent to Portugal.”

“I don’t speak English well enough yet,” said Isabel, laughing; but this was not exactly true, for she was using that tongue, and that her three months’ residence at the Cape had not been lost in this particular, was fully evident.

“We had trouble enough with that box of papers,” said Hughes, musing; “and as your interests are concerned, and your succession to your father’s property at stake, I suppose we must submit.”

“Submit,” replied Isabel, brightly; “it’s no very hard task, methinks. Suppose you tell me the rest of the tale you left

unfinished that fearful night on the raft; or shall we ride to Wynebergh?”

“Not the ride, certainly; I’m not equal to the exertion,” replied the soldier.

Isabel laughed heartily; and, as the bright silvery tone rang out Hughes, for the life of him, could not help joining though the missionary’s parting words came back to him.

“You will tire of the water-melons, Hughes, and when you do so, think of the ‘Ruined Cities of Zulu Land,’ and your old comrade working alone.”

The words had proved prophetic. Accustomed to a life of activity and exercise, his present existence seemed monotonous, do what he could to think otherwise. The pleasant life had no object.

“Well, then, finish me the tale, Enrico mio, and this time you may talk as much as you choose of birds and trees.”

“I don’t exactly remember where I left off, Isabel,” replied Hughes, once more yawning heavily. “A stab in the arm, and to find oneself suddenly knocked into an ocean peopled with sharks, in the middle of a quiet tale, does not conduce to the general comfort of the historian; however, I’ll try. Lend me that cushion.”

Placing his elbow on it, and looking up into the beautiful face bent over the embroidery, Hughes remained silent. Truth to say, as he watched the long black silken lashes, and traced the blue veins under the clear olive skin, he began to think himself the most dissatisfied of mortals.

“Well, Enrico,—and my tale?” asked Isabel, looking up.

“Let me see. The little chapel of Penrhyn was filled with the conspirators, and Father Guy had just made his appeal to them, pointing out Sir Roger Mostyn as their first victim. Mine is a true tale, and it happened there what always happens. They melted away like snow before the sun, as the trembling notes of a trumpet were heard outside the house—chapel and outbuildings being surrounded by the royal troops.

“Sir Roger had no wish to make prisoners, his only desire was to break up the plot; so in the confusion all made their escape except one, and that was my ancestor, the master of Penrhyn, who scorned to fly.

“Even the old priest was hustled away, still vomiting excommunications and threats. The chapel was dismantled, and the master of Penrhyn so heavily fined, that one by one his broad lands melted away, and were lost by his attachment to the Catholic faith.”

“And Lucy?” asked Isabel; “your tale is worth nothing without her.”

“Oh, Lucy was our saviour. She married the young heir of Penrhyn, inherited the estates of Coetmore, and they passed to us.”

“And the old priest—what was Father Guy’s fate, Enrico? Do you know?”

“Indeed, yes. His was a curious one. The country I speak of is now a populous neighbourhood. A large watering place has sprung up there, and the white houses and terraces of Llandudno replace the fishermen’s huts of St Tudno’s time; but few who go there now either know of or care for the curious deeds of the past.

“The ‘Wyvern,’ the cutter which had brought the Irish Catholics from the Isle of Man, still lay in the bay under the shelter of the little Orme.

“It is a curious spot, Isabel, and has a beautiful pebbly beach; the water is deep, and the Orme falls in one sheer sweep into the sea there, so that when the wind is from the north and east, the waves strike its base, and the foam flies scores of yards up its sides. A mass of rock has tumbled down, and lies in picturesque confusion in the centre of the bay. There are strange caves and holes in the rocks, and when the cutter sailed all supposed the priest had gone too.

“Days passed, and quiet crept again over the grand old land of Creuddyn.”

“You speak as if you like the country, Enrico?”

“And so I do,” replied Hughes, warmly. “I was born among its fine old mountains, and I love its old-fashioned, brave, honest-hearted race; but to continue. Days had passed when some fishermen at sea noticed a spiral wreath of smoke issuing from the face of the lesser Orme.

“They talked of this over the fire at night. Some laughed at the tale, but others of the older men remembered to have heard of a cave in the flanks of the mountain, long the abode of the foxes.

“They searched, and found a narrow, dangerous path, which yet exists. The Gloddaeth keepers know it, and know too where to track Reynard when their game disappears. The priest was found half starved, and fast asleep there.

“The news spread, the fanatic population was soon roused. The country people flocked from far and near.

“‘Let the idolater see his chapel,’ they roared, as the emaciated, careworn man was dragged into the centre of the green field, stretching before the house of Penrhyn to the sea. The aged priest was weak with hunger, and worn with suffering. Before him seethed a rude mob of infuriated peasants, and death was certain. This moved him not, but the chapel, despoiled, ruined, and half burned, caused the tears to roll down his thin cheeks.

“‘Ha!’ shouted a thick-set peasant, ‘ye doomed us all to death, let us see how ye meet your own;’ and he hurled a sharp stone at the feeble old man.

“‘I condemned ye not, children of darkness,’ said the priest, wiping away the blood from his eyes, and raising his tall, fine figure to its utmost height, his grey hair streaming on the wind. ‘I would have saved ye from the evil one, whose prey ye are. Ye cannot harm me,’ and a smile of withering scorn settled down upon his lips.

“From the skirts of the crowd to its centre, the whole became one seething, boiling mass. Knives gleamed in the sunshine. One moment Father Guy stood there, firm and erect, a smile of quiet scorn on his lips, and the fresh, breeze from the sea playing through his scanty grey hair and over his shaven crown; the next his body was whirling above men’s heads, it was pulled to and fro, torn here and there, until at length it was rived, piecemeal, by the infuriated crowd, and the Roman Catholic faith died out with the House of Penrhyn in Creuddyn.”

The tale was told, the speaker ceased, and for a moment all was silence, for the story had been a melancholy one.

The sharp angry bark of a dog was heard, then a step crushing the gravel as some one advanced.

“The postman, Isabel,” exclaimed Hughes, springing to his feet with renewed energy; “now for news!”

But there was only a paper and one letter, and both bore the Calcutta postmark.

“I know not a soul in the Presidency,” said Hughes, as he turned the letter, which was a very bulky one, listlessly in his hand. “I dare say it will keep.”

“Well, if you find it so fatiguing to read your own letters, at least read me the paper.”

The soldier tore the band and flung it from him, shaking out the sheet, and then threw himself on the ground in the same indolent attitude.

“What news will interest you, Isabel?” he asked; but before the reply could be given, his eye fell on the column headed “Latest Intelligence,” and all traces of apathy disappeared as if by magic, the words “Massacre at Cawnpore,” “Atrocities committed by Nana Sahib,” meeting his eye.

“Why, what is the matter, Enrico?” asked Isabel, laying down her work in alarm, for his eyes literally blazed with fury, as he snatched up the despised letter, and tore it open, reading therein the details of the terrible massacre of Cawnpore.

“And where is Cawnpore?” asked Isabel.

“It is a large station on the right bank of the Ganges, where a European force is generally quartered, and in whose neighbourhood a large number of my countrymen live. The native troops have revolted, murdered their English officers, while the trusted friend of the British, Nana Sahib, has seized the treasury, joined the rebels, and the revolt spreading, India has thrown off our rule, while the handful of English are being murdered piecemeal.”

“Surely, you mean killed in open warfare, Enrico? In our days people are not murdered wholesale,” said Isabel, opening her eyes widely with horror and astonishment.

“Listen to my letter, Isabel. It is from an old friend and officer of my own regiment, and after telling me that the corps has been ordered to join Sir Henry Havelock’s force, it says:—

“‘The proceedings at Cawnpore are a blot on humanity. The women, children, and sick were placed in barracks, which it was thought the enemy would respect. Their guns thundered night and day on Wheeler’s entrenchments, held only by a handful of men against the rebel army; but, not content with this, they threw carcasses filled with powder on to the thatched roof which they knew covered the defenceless women, burned it and them, shouting and laughing when they saw the flames.’”

“How horrible!” ejaculated Isabel.

“Ay: but this is not all,” continued Hughes, reading on. “‘Without water, without provisions, the cruel Nana offered terms, offered life and liberty. They were accepted, and then, in detail, the soldiers having laid down their arms, were murdered.’”

Hughes put down the letter, and a sorrowful silence ensued. He was thinking of his late months of idleness, while such events had been passing around him, and thinking of them, too, with regret.

Isabel was meditating also, but her thoughts were turned on the future, and on her husband’s duty.

Hughes again took up the letter. “‘They who met death,’” he continued reading, “‘were happy; but the prisoners suffered far worse. General Havelock, to join whom we are marching up-country, has beaten the rebels everywhere in detail, and as the news of his victories reached Cawnpore, the European prisoners were led out in small batches, the men were murdered, with every refinement of cruelty possible; the children were killed, their brains dashed out before their parents’ eyes, while wives and daughters were given up to the savage lust of the sepoys, only to meet death at a later period.’”

Isabel started from her seat, her eyes were bright as she walked to and fro, and she pushed her hair back from her forehead with both hands as she spoke.

“Have you done, Enrico?” she asked, her breath seeming to come fast and thick.

“All, except smaller matters of personal detail,” he replied.

“Read on to the last letter,” she said; and he obeyed.

“‘You are promoted to a Majority, as you will see by the enclosed Gazette. Colonel Desmond obtained leave, and started for England a few days before the explosion of the mutiny. Lieutenant-Colonel Sedley is sick, and will be sent down to Calcutta, his old wound having broken out. Could you not—’”

And Hughes paused, looking sadly at Isabel.

The latter stopped in her walk, bent down, and took up the letter which had fallen to the ground.

“Do you think so meanly of me? Do you believe me to be so unworthy of you?” she said, turning her eyes full upon him, and placing the document once more in his hands. “Read on, Enrico.”

“‘Could you not join at once on receipt of this? Don’t bring the Kaffir Bride, we have impediments enough already. You will have command of the old regiment, and we will gloriously revenge on these foul murderers the butchery of our women and children. Don’t hesitate an hour when this reaches you.’

“‘Ever sincerely yours,’

“‘Frederick Curtis.’”

“Always the same,” exclaimed Hughes. “He would have the command and sure promotion, but he thinks of me rather than himself.”

“And you will not hesitate a minute—no, not a second,” cried Isabel, the hot blood rushing to her face.

“Isabel!” said the soldier, in a voice which, despite all he could do, trembled.

“You will avenge the savage butchery. Shall I, a daughter of sunny Portugal, in whose veins flows the proud blood of Castille, bid you stay?”

He held her out at arm’s length, he gazed into her eyes, flashing with pride and indignation.

“Go, Enrico. The steamer leaves to-morrow at daybreak. Go: and come back to me covered with glory, as you will come.”

“And if I return no more, Isabel?”

“Still go, Enrico; and lead your regiment in the thickest of the fray. Tell them they fight for their wives and children; and when the murders are avenged, when what remains of the helpless prisoners are safe, when the flag of your country waves victorious in the land, come back to me, or,”—and for the first time the flushed countenance paled and the voice trembled—“or,” she continued, “Enrico mio, I will come to you;” and, bursting into tears, her beautiful head sunk on the soldier’s breast, as he clasped her fervently in his arms.

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**The Relief of Cawnpore.**

The news of the fearful outbreak in India had taken the English by surprise. The dreadful atrocities of Cawnpore, the massacres perpetrated by Nana Sahib, who had ever been looked upon as the Englishman’s friend, had carried a sense of woe and desolation to the heart of the land, but the first numbing sense of sorrow had passed, and many a gallant fellow was on his way to India to wipe out the stain, which the revolt of her Sepoy army had cast upon the time-honoured banner of England.

“Lucknow has fallen!” were the words which met Major Hughes as he hurried on to the front one bright November morning in the memorable year of 1857. Then came reports of the demise of Sir John Lawrence, and at last, when within a few hours’ march of the place itself, a rumour soon changed into a certainty, spread far and wide, announcing the death of the gallant Havelock. For a time the horizon of the Indian world seemed again clouded over by an event which was wholly unexpected. Lucknow had fallen before a small force, whose determined gallantry had carried all before it, but the man whose masterly brain had planned, and whose daring gallantry had carried out the advance through a country literally swarming with enemies, the soldier under whose direct superintendence the Secunderabagh had been stormed, and who had spared neither health, constitution, nor blood in the cause of his country, had consummated the sacrifice with his life. The gallant Havelock was no more. His body lay in a small grave in the Alumbagh. The flag of England was thrown over him in his death, and his country, though mourning her loss, found another, second perhaps to none, to step into the gap.

“You will take the command of your regiment this day, Major Hughes,” said Sir Colin Campbell, as that officer reported himself on the morning of the 26th November, 1857. “You will find the 150th attached to General Outram’s brigade, holding the Bunnee Bridge. Report yourself at once, and take your command,” he continued, rising as he spoke.

This order was given in the sharp tones of one who had not a moment to lose; and Hughes, saluting his superior, turned to carry it out, without a word.

The general’s tent was pitched in the Dil Kooshah Park, and the scene of confusion through which he picked his way was enough to confuse anyone. Regiment after regiment passed him. Infantry, cavalry, and artillery, all moving in one direction towards the Alumbagh, and it became evident that some great movement was going on. Ladies were to be seen wandering hopelessly about with children poorly provided for, only lately rescued from imminent peril. Guns lay here and there, which not being worth taking away, had been burst. Camp followers were shouting and quarrelling, and a scene of more inextricable confusion could hardly be imagined. Moving along with the crowd, Major Hughes found his way to the Martiniere, where lay Brigadier Little and a cavalry brigade. On the banks of the canal the 63rd Regiment and the 4th Sikh infantry were bivouacked, and soon he stumbled on the lines of the 93rd Highlanders, and of Captain Peel’s gallant Naval Brigade. The heavy dome of the Shah Nujeef mosque lay before him, its walls pierced for musketry, and breached by the fire of the British guns; and there stood the Secunderabagh itself, with its yawning breaches and shattered walls. The gardens of the doomed city had been destroyed, the mosques, houses, even to the European mess-house, had been in detail carried by storm. In one spot alone, the bodies of three thousand mutineers had been found, every corpse showing that death had been caused by the deadly bayonet. Major Hughes had proceeded thus far, and was just asking his way from a captain of the Royal Artillery, when down a roughly cut road, his horse white with foam, came an officer of the 9th Lancers.

Pulling up with a sharp jerk, which brought the tired animal on his haunches, and sent the light gravel flying in the air —

“You are Major Hughes, commanding the 150th?” he asked.

“I am; on my way to report myself as having joined.”

“You will find the chief in the Martiniere compound. Officers commanding regiments are directed to join him there. Evil tidings have arrived.”

Touching his horse with the spur the officer dashed on.

“Who is that?” inquired Hughes from his companion; “I saw him with Sir Colin.”

“Captain Ogilvie, of the 9th Lancers, aide-de-camp to Sir Colin Campbell,” was the reply; “and I’d advise you to be jogging. He himself must be yonder where you see the group of men.”

Retracing his steps, Major Hughes soon stood in the Martiniere compound. A group of officers of all arms surrounded Sir Colin. Colonel Hay, 93rd Regiment, was speaking as Hughes strode up, and just outside the group an officer dismounted, but holding his horse by the bridle, stood listening. The poor fellow’s uniform was torn and dirty, the horse, whose colour had once been grey, was now of a blue black with sweat and foam, his head was hanging down, and it was evident that steed and rider were dropping with fatigue.

A twisted scrap of paper was between Sir Colin’s fingers, his brows were knit, and the forage-cap he wore was pushed from his forehead.

“Bad news from Cawnpore,” whispered an officer of Hussars, as Major Hughes joined the group.

“What has gone wrong?” asked the latter.

“The Gwalior Contingent have attacked the city, and poor Edwardes yonder has managed to get through their lines, the bearer of urgent requests for help.”

“Silence, gentlemen,” said Sir Colin. “There is not an hour to be lost. The troops will break ground immediately, falling back from their position of Dil Kooshah and the Martiniere. Commanding officers of corps will at once make their preparations, and will move at daybreak, taking up their several positions on the plain below the city, exactly where each corps bivouacked before the attack. Good morning, gentlemen. Captain Gough, send the Quartermaster-General to me. Major Hughes, give this to General Outram,” he continued, handing him a note. The little crowd of officers melted away, and borrowing a horse from a captain of Lancers, Major Hughes rode through the confusion, towards the Bunnee camp, the position occupied by General Outram.

It was past midnight when he reached the lines, and was challenged by the outlying pickets, yet he found the General awake and watchful, for every now and then a heavy prolonged thud shook the air, telling of the firing of great guns, and though Cawnpore was forty miles away yet every man of the little army knew that the Gwalior mutineers, with a force far exceeding any which Sir Colin Campbell could bring against them, were pressing hard upon the handful of men who garrisoned the entrenchments.

Major Hughes delivered his letter. It contained an enclosure from Brigadier Carthew, telling a sad tale. One after another the different outposts had been taken, and given to the flames. The enormous force opposed to them was literally crushing out the handful of the defenders of Cawnpore, and unless immediate help came all were lost. Such were the details, of which he was the bearer, and they were disastrous enough. The note itself directed Brigadier Outram to move forward one portion of the force early the next morning, Sir Colin Campbell proposing to join the advanced guard.

“Major Hughes, you will be under arms by daybreak.” “Good night” were the only words which greeted him, as General Outram turned to his aide-de-camp and summoned his staff round him to make his arrangements for the advance.

“Take this to Brigadier Greathead. The 8th, the 2nd Punjaub Infantry, with the 150th Regiment will form the advance,” were the last words which reached his ears as he stepped forth into the night, to find his corps as best he might. A sentry, who had held his horse, pointed out the lines of the 150th, and taking his way to a large tent which he rightly conjectured to be the mess tent, the officers were soon roused, and flocking around him.

“Do you remember I said you were a lucky fellow, Major,” said Harris, as he shook his commanding officer warmly by the hand, “that night when we shot the tiger at Bellary?”

“I think you were the lucky fellow, then,” replied Major Hughes, laughing.

“Yes, but only fancy Colonel Desmond being sent home on sick leave. Colonel Sedley invalided from the effects of that ball through the lungs at Quatre Bras, and you joining just in time to take the command.”

“Well, it was lucky, I must own. And what has become of Major Ashley?”

“Hit in the neck at the storming of the Dilkhoosha House,”—replied Harris, now Lieutenant of the Light Company; “but here’s Curtis.”

“How are you, Curtis?”

“Glad to see you once more among us,” was the reply, as that officer, now the senior captain of the regiment, shook hands with him, “and where’s the Kaffir bride you promised to bring back?” he added, laughing.

And one after another flocked in, roused out of their well-earned slumbers by the hasty summons, glad to welcome an old comrade, and pleased to hear of the advance.

“I say, Biddulph, won’t we trounce those Gwalior chaps? They’d have done better to have stayed at Calpee, and they’ll know it when old Colin gets at them.”

“There goes the réveillé,” replied Biddulph, as the quivering notes of the bugle rose on the air, the morning light just breaking grey over the plain, showing the tents of the little force lying here and there.

“The 150th Regiment will fall in at once, and move off on the Cawnpore road, as soon as ready,” shouted a mounted orderly officer as he rode up.

“Major Hughes, the Brigadier desires you will cover your advance with the Light Company, and move on slowly, the sooner the better.”

Saluting as he spoke with his sword, the officer rode away to deliver his orders, and the work of inspecting their several companies went on rapidly by the regimental officers of the corps destined to lead the advance.

For the first time Major Hughes, as he sat on his borrowed horse in the grey dawn, found himself in command of the regiment he had entered as an ensign, and that too with an enemy of overpowering strength in his front. He thought of Isabel, his wife, “where was she now?” and then the memories of the past thronged quickly upon him; the elephant hunt on the Shire river, the “Halcyon,” the death of the old noble; and he had left that brave wife, who had herself been the first to bid him go alone, without a protector. What if he fell in the unequal fight which was to take place? and then on the sharp morning air came the subdued but heavy thud, which told him of his countrymen and countrywomen in dire peril, with the soldiers of the treacherous Nana gathering closely around them. The Adjutant rode up, giving in his report. Was there a quiver in the voice which gave the order, “With ball cartridge. Load?”

The regiment stood in column of companies, bayonets fixed and shouldered, the Grenadier company leading.

“By double files from the centre rear wing to the front. Two centre sections outwards wheel,” were the words of command, hoarsely shouted. “Quick march.”

By this manoeuvre, the two centre sections of each company opening out, permitted that immediately in their rear to pass through their ranks. Thus the Light Company, from being in rear of all, now became the leading one, advancing through the opened sections four deep at the double, each company closing its ranks, and following in its turn, the Grenadiers forming the rear guard.

“Captain Curtis, throw out the light bobs as skirmishers, and advance cautiously,” said Hughes, the men having cleared the Grenadiers, and again formed up as a company.

The notes of the bugle sounding the Light Infantry call to extend from the centre, floated on the air; the light company obeyed it, spreading across the country, their right flank resting on the left of the skirmishers of the Punjaub Infantry, their own left on the right of the Light Bobs of H.M.’s 8th Foot, the whole regiment moving off along the Cawnpore road just as the bugles of the different brigades rang out on the plain, and the guns of Colonel Bourchier’s battery of Horse Artillery came jingling along in rear.

“How slowly we move on, with the halt sounding every moment, Curtis!” said Major Hughes, as he sat on his horse at the head of the regiment, speaking to his senior captain, towards midday of the 27th of November.

“Slowly indeed, and our force is weak, in artillery particularly. Two troops of Horse Artillery, the Naval Brigade, one heavy field battery, and three light ones, with the 4th, 5th, and 6th Infantry Brigades, and a handful of cavalry, seem a small force.”

“The more the honour for us; they shall hear of us with pride in the old land,” answered Hughes. “If ever we meet those scoundrels of Nana’s with the bayonet, we will teach them a lesson.”

The regiment was halted near the village of Onao, on a slight eminence, and the two officers looking back could see the long tortuous march of the little army, while far away, far as the eye could reach, the plain was covered with the vast horde of camp followers, which is the great pest of a march in India, mixed with camels and baggage waggons.

The jingling of accoutrements was now heard, as, at a sharp trot, a splendid regiment of English cavalry moved to the front.

“Look out, 150th, there’ll be sharp work for you soon!” shouted the officer commanding, as he rode past, his words replied to by a cheer from the men.

“Major Hughes, call in your light company!” shouted an orderly officer, as he dashed on, not checking his horse. “The Lancers will act as videttes.”

Almost at the same moment, the bugles of the 8th Regiment on the left, and the Punjaub Infantry on the right, were heard, sounding the recall, as an officer of Hodgson’s Horse came up at a hard gallop from the front.

“Bad news from Cawnpore!” he shouted. “Wyndham’s hard pressed; all his outposts driven in, and hardly able to hold his entrenchments!”

“Steady, men, steady!” called Hughes, as a thrill of excitement ran through the corps.

“Orders for the 150th to press to the front!” shouted another orderly officer, as he galloped past.

“One Hundred and Fiftieth, attention! Shoulder arms! Slope arms! By your right! Quick, march! Steady, men! Officers commanding companies, look to your distance!” were the words of command, as the whole force moved on leaving Onao after a couple of hours’ halt, and still following the Cawnpore road.

Sir Hope Grant now rode with the advance, and the cavalry videttes on the flanks had an idle time of it, for not the trace of an enemy was to be seen, while every hour caused the heavy cannonade in front to be heard louder and louder.

The morning of the 28th dawned, and Sir Colin Campbell’s force encamped on the banks of the Ganges, with the city of Cawnpore in its front. A bridge of boats had been thrown across the river, as it afterwards appeared, and this bridge had, by some unaccountable oversight, been overlooked by the mutineers.

“Where are Major Hughes’s quarters?” asked a mounted dragoon of Hodgson’s Horse, before daylight, on the morning of the 29th, making the inquiry of an out-picket of the corps.

“Yonder,” replies the man, pointing to a tent, whose single pole was surmounted with a small fluttering flag.

The man rode on. Before the tent door lay several servants fast asleep. The one nearest the trooper, as he checked his horse near the tent pegs, was lying on his face. The dragoon, leaning from his saddle, pricked the sleeper gently in the bareback with the point of his sword, intending to rouse him; but, thus rudely woke from deep sleep, the man thought at once that a snake had bitten him, commencing a series of howlings, which at once effectually roused the occupants of the tent.

“What on earth is the matter?” asked Hughes and the adjutant of the regiment, who had both thrown themselves down on the ground to sleep, dressed as they were.

“Just stop that fellow’s bellowing, Reynolds, will you?” said Hughes, as he advanced to the mounted orderly, who, saluting, handed him a written note.

“Brigadier Hope’s Brigade will hold itself in readiness to carry the bridge at eight o’clock a.m., on the morning of the 29th.”

Here followed details as to the formation of the various corps.

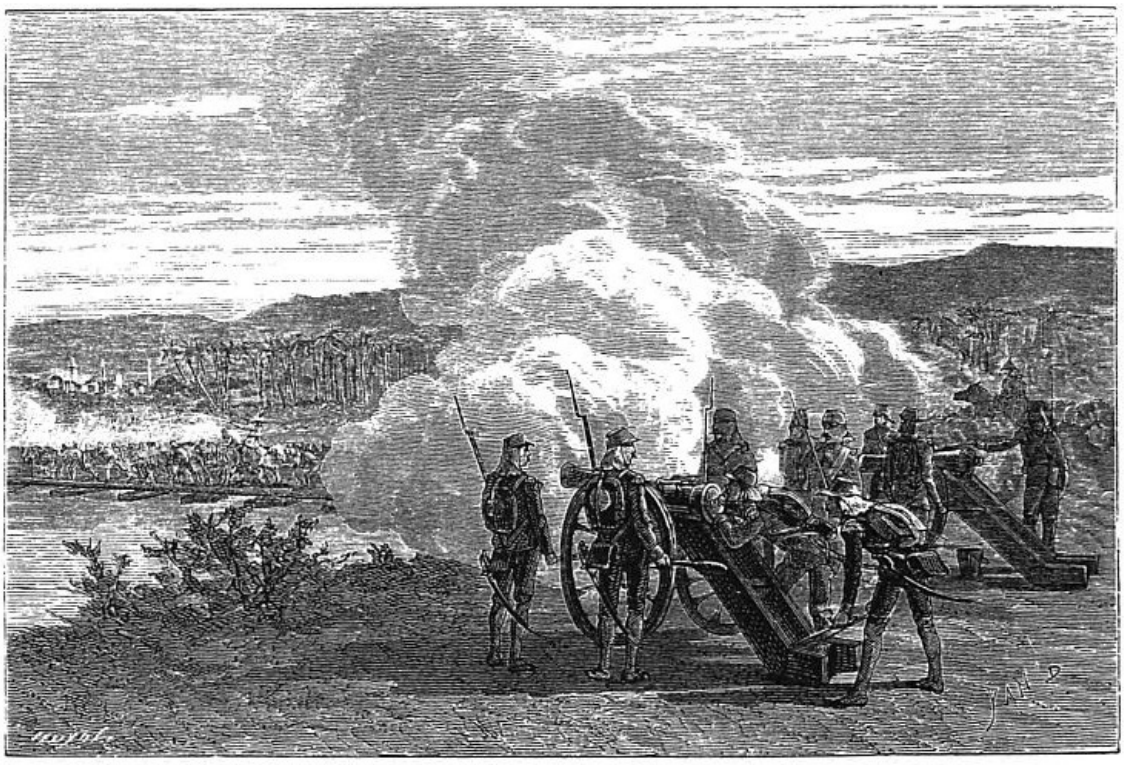
“Let the orderly sergeants fall in, Reynolds,” said Major Hughes, as he handed the trooper a receipt, and half an hour after, the 150th broke ground at the quick step, but in perfect silence, moving across the flat plain towards the Ganges, here spanned by a bridge of boats, the approach to which was covered by the guns of the Naval Brigade.

“There’s Remington’s Horse Artillery,” said Reynolds, pointing to a battery; “and there are the dragoons.”

“Commanding officers of regiments to the front!” was the order now given.

“You will content yourselves, gentlemen, with your assigned positions; your orders are first to gain then to hold your ground, and act purely on the defensive. The 150th will have the honour of carrying the bridge,” said Sir Hope Grant.

“At this moment a heavy gun was fired from the camp, when, and, as if in answer to it, Peel’s Naval Battery opened fire, and shortly after, Wyndham’s from the entrenchments, replied to by the artillery of the Gwalior rebels.



CARRYING THE BRIDGE AT CAWNPORE. [Vol. II. p. 236.

“You will push your pickets on to the banks of the Ganges Canal. And now, Major Hughes, show us the way.”

The next instant Hughes was at the head of his regiment, and dashing over the bridge at the double. The fierce cannonade still continued; but whether from apathy or want of forethought, the English column was not meddled with, but quietly allowed to pass the bridge, and establish itself in the buildings called the Dragoon Barracks, and those adjoining it. This at once opened a communication with Wyndham’s force, and left the road to Allahabad free, enabling Sir Colin Campbell to send away his enormous train of women, children, wounded, and non-combatants, over the bridge of boats thus secured by the gallantry of Major Hughes and his regiment. The object was gained, as hour after hour, and day after day, passed the long files of those who had been the little army’s greatest encumbrances, the helpless women and children.

It was early morning, and singularly enough a heavy fog had settled down on the banks of the Ganges, while a cool breeze was driving it along in densely packed masses, sometimes lifting a little, but only to settle down more heavily than ever on the domes and minarets of Cawnpore. It rolled among the long lines of white tents, and along the canal banks, while a heavy dull explosion, coming from the town, seemed to shake the dense vapour from time to time, and show a lurid patch near the guns. Then came the crashing sound of splintering wood, and tumbling bricks, telling that the mutineers of Oude had found out their mistake, and were cannonading the Dragoon Barracks, where the 150th Regiment had entrenched themselves. In the English camp all was quiet. The possession of the bridge of boats, and of the line of

the canal, had given Sir Colin what he wanted, communication with Wyndham's entrenchments, and also with Allahabad, and so enabled him to rid himself of the most fearful accumulation of non-combatants an army was ever called upon to encumber itself with.

"I feel uneasy, I know not why," said Major Hughes to his adjutant, Lieutenant Reynolds, as they stood within a roughly constructed barricade, near the race stand, his regiment supplying the main picket, posted close to the Trunk Road, leading to Allahabad.

"Who holds Saint Salvador House?"

"A strong detachment of our 53rd, Major," was the reply.

"It's a nasty morning, Reynolds, just visit the outlying pickets, and tell Biddulph to keep a sharp look-out."

The adjutant wrapped himself in his cloak, and went out into the rolling fog, and his superior officer, leaning against an upright post, his drawn sword in his hand, listened eagerly for any passing noise.

He began speculating as to the chance of an attack on the important post he held, covering the road by which the wounded, the ladies and children were making their weary way towards safety. Isabel was safe in her little home looking over the Indian Ocean, but there were many Isabels among that sad column, equally dear to others, and whose safety was in his hands.

"Captain Robertson," he said, speaking to one of a group of officers, who were laughing and chatting near, with their swords drawn, "get the men under arms at once. Pandy will never miss such a chance of surprise as this fog gives him."

The picket, consisting of about two hundred rank and file, were soon under arms, and the grey dawn was just breaking through the mist, when suddenly the explosion of a single musket was heard, followed by several others, then a heavy volley from the front.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Hughes, with a sigh, as though his breast was relieved of a great weight.

Firing as they were driven in, the officers and men of the outlying picket were now to be seen through the dense mist as clearing away from the front of the line; the well-trained fugitives dashed round the flanks and re-formed under cover of the race stand.

"Steady, my lads, aim low!" shouted the major, as a dark, dense mass of men loomed through the fog, and from the race stand and the stockade near, came the quick, sharp fire of the English musketry, poured at twenty paces distant into the serried ranks of the mutineers.

Staggered by the volley, the attacking party for an instant fell back, the sharp cry of pain, mixing with the yell for revenge, as confident in their numbers, they poured in volley upon volley, and again advanced, literally swarming round the English outposts.

The guns of Wyndham's entrenchment were now heard, replied to hot and fast by those of the Gwalior mutineers, while their Artillery from the town opened a heavy fire on the Dragoon Barracks. Fearfully overmatched, the 150th fought on, the bayonet doing its deadly work, while the clubbed muskets came crashing down on the heads of the assailants as they appeared above the stockade, the deep oath, the loud shout of triumph, the yell of pain, and the scream of agony, mixed with the rattle of the deadly volley poured into the dense files of the rebel force.

"Remember, my lads," shouted Hughes, "the safety of the women and children are in our hands," as his sword descended on the dark shako of a man who had just gained the race stand, and was firing his pistol into the ranks of the 150th. "Ye fight for your wives and your children," he shouted, as the man, with a deep groan, fell back, impaled on the clustering bayonets of his friends below.

A loud cheer answered his words, taken up by the defenders of the stockade, but now a second column of the enemy, nearly a thousand strong, came dashing along. They were fresh men, and pouring in a volley as they came, they took the little force in flank, seeming to bury it under their heavy mass, as they dashed on. The fight became a *melée* now.

Major Hughes had received a ball in the shoulder. His adjutant lay on the planking of the stand, with a bullet through his forehead, his fair hair bedabbled in a stream of blood, the groans of the wounded, the sad, pitiful cries for water, rang around him, while the heavy guns from the town and entrenchment, combined with the rattling volleys of musketry, to make a fiendish uproar, such as few had ever heard.

There was no time for thought, it was a hand-to-hand struggle now, but still the loud cry, "Ye fight for your wives and children, men!" rang out, answered by a feeble cheer, from race stand and stockade, and a storm of yells from the swaying, panting crowd of assailants below.

The day was dawning clear now, but the cheers from the stockade became more and more feeble, as man after man went down. No time to load, but the bayonet and clubbed musket are doing their work, doggedly, desperately, and in silence. The British force is melting away, when hark! the feeble cheers from the battered race stand are at last answered, as a long line of tall shakoes and red uniforms comes into view in rear. It was his regiment, the 150th, commanded by its senior captain, Curtis.

"Hurrah, my lads, we are safe now!" shouted Hughes, as he swung himself from the rear of the stand, a desperate leap; and the next moment, without his forage-cap, his face streaked with blood, and begrimed with smoke, stood among his men. "Halt!" shouted his powerful voice, as he waved his sword in his right hand, his left hanging powerless.

"Men of the 150th, prepare to charge!"

The muskets came down with a clang, as of one man.

"Charge;" shouted Major Hughes, and round the stockade, round the stand, with a loud howl for vengeance, came the British line. The shock was tremendous, for the men fought like fiends, while from the two positions which had been

so hotly contested, the bright flashes of musketry came thick and fast, mingling their reports with the roar of the heavy guns from town and entrenchment.

The men of the Gwalior Contingent were literally borne back by that terrible bayonet charge, then the whole mass became mixed, the scene more resembling an Irish row than a fight among disciplined men.

Pandies and English were jumbled together, fighting for life, and for revenge more than for victory, the red glare of the guns seen through the rising mist, the shouts and cheers of the men in the race stand, maddening still further the already savage combatants below.

“Clear the way, my hearties,” shouted a hoarse voice, as with a loud cheer, the men of Peel’s Naval Brigade came laughing and shouting along, after forming behind the grand stand, dragging along a 24-pounder. “Starboard, you may. Heave ahead with the gun.”

“Who is commanding officer?” asked Captain Peel. “Here, bugler, sound the recall. Now, my lads, give them Number one broadside, ram in grape!” and as the notes of the bugle sounded in the morning air, the discipline momentarily lost, again regained its hold; and the 150th came streaming back, re-forming behind the gun, Major Hughes grasping the gallant sailor’s hand as he passed him.

Staggered by the bayonet charge, the mutineers paused. A man, evidently an officer of high standing, could be seen encouraging them, and urging them on. At length, with a savage yell, the massive column wavered to and fro, the officer, grasping a green flag, dashed forward, full twenty paces in front of his men.

“File firing from the right of companies,” shouted Hughes, as the regiment, re-formed, once again, stood in line.

“Take that, you landlubber,” shouted a sailor, hitting the mutineer officer over the head with his short cutlass, as the brave fellow dashed at the gun, and cutting it literally in two, the 24-pounder, with its terrible fire of grape, sweeping right through the advancing column.

The mutineers wavered, stopped dead, while with a cheer the gallant tars loaded the gun.

Over the din, came the well-known shout, “Men of the 150th prepare to charge.”

“Charge!”

And once more the indomitable British line hurled itself on the foe, who broke and fled just as the tramp of cavalry was heard, and three troops of the Lancers, among whom could be seen the brilliant uniforms of Brigadier Hope Grant’s staff, came sweeping over the plain.

The fight had lasted two hours, and was the only attack made on the British picket. The punishment inflicted by the Lancers was severe, and the 24-pounder took an active part in the pursuit.

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**The Kaffir Bride.**

“Officers in command of regiments are requested to meet the Commander-in-chief at ten o’clock this evening.

“*December 6*, 1867.”

Such was the order placed in Major Hughes’s hands a few days after the desperate attack on the out-picket had been so gallantly repulsed. The loss of the regiment had been severe; but the men were in high spirits, and ready for everything, being proud both of themselves and of their commanding officer, whom the old soldiers of the corps had known as a youngster, and had learned to trust and to love.

Sir Colin Campbell, as he entered the tent which was to serve as the council-room, held out his hand, advancing to meet him as he did so. “I congratulate you, sir, on the gallant behaviour of your regiment. Your name will appear in General Orders to-morrow with an appointment as lieutenant-colonel of your corps, pending her Majesty’s approbation.”

The tell-tale blood flushed his cheek as he grasped the hand held out to him, and one and another of the men who stood around him added their congratulations to those of the rough but true-hearted old soldier.

There stood Brigadier Hope Grant talking eagerly to the officer commanding Hodgson’s Horse, but who found time for a cordial shake of the hand; Captain Middleton, who, with his field battery, had ever been among the foremost; Brigadier Greathead; Captain Peel, of the gallant Naval Brigade; Captain Remington, of the Horse Artillery; the Commanding Officers of the Cavalry; of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Infantry Brigades, and of the Royal Engineers, all men trained in a school of actual warfare; and it was with difficulty Hughes could suppress his emotion, as one after another advanced and shook his right hand, congratulating him on a firmness and steadiness which had perhaps saved the little force, but, at all events, kept open the communications with Allahabad.

“Oh, that Isabel could have been here!” he thought. But Isabel was away, and far better that it was so, for stern work was yet to be done.

“Be seated, gentlemen,” said Sir Colin, motioning with his hand. A momentary bustle ensued and then a dead silence, broken only by the boom of an occasional gun from the town.

“I dare say you have wondered not a little,” said the fine old soldier, “why I have remained so long inactive. My object has been to disembarrass my force from the incubus of non-combatants. The want of foresight of the enemy in leaving us the bridge of boats permitted the attempt to be made. The true British pluck and gallantry of the 150th Regiment has enabled me to carry it out completely.”

All eyes turned towards Hughes, who again blushed with pleasure.

“I intend, gentlemen, to strike our tents at sunrise to-morrow, and attack the enemy.”

Sir Colin paused, and a general murmur of pleasure and gratification ran round the table, as he continued, with a smile on his war-worn countenance,—

“Ay, ay; you have all been grumbling at me in your hearts, but we’ll make up for lost time. My attack will be on the enemy’s right, and if we can drive that from its position, the day will be ours.

“Here are the instructions for the Cavalry and Horse Artillery, who will act together. Brigadier Greathead, here are yours. You will call in the out-pickets of the 150th, and direct that regiment to join your brigade, holding the centre of our line. You hear me, Colonel Hughes,” said the veteran, as he turned to the officers he addressed, those named rising and each receiving his written instructions.

“Officers commanding Infantry Brigades, you will parade your regiments in contiguous columns in rear, and under cover of the cavalry barracks half an hour before sunrise, according to seniority. And now, gentlemen, good night, for I have much to do,” continued Sir Colin. “The enemy muster twenty-five thousand men, with all the guns of the Gwalior Contingent. We can count only about four thousand and thirty-two guns.”

“And quite enough, too,” exclaimed the gallant Peel, replying to his chief, utterly against all military etiquette. “We’ll have more before we pipe to supper to-morrow night. I say, Hughes, you can answer for how my fellows do their work? Eh!”

There was a general laugh, a few hearty shakes of the hand, as the officers of the force crowded round their beloved leader, and the council of war broke up.

“Let General Wyndham have this order, Ogilvie,” were the last words Hughes heard, as he took his way into the night. “It will tell him to open the heaviest fire he can from his entrenched camp before sunrise.”

Some one touched him on the shoulder. It was General Greathead.

“Are you well enough to take command of your regiment?” asked the General, pointing to the left arm, which was in a sling.

“I would not relinquish the honour for any reward the world could give me,” was the reply.

“Very well, Colonel Hughes, then good night. We shall meet at sunrise, and a memorable day it will be. Good night!” and shaking hands heartily, as men do under such circumstances, the two separated, taking their way to their respective commands, challenged at every few paces by the watchful sentries, the boom of an occasional gun from the town breaking the stillness of the night.

Morning dawned bright and beautiful, with that freshness in the air so well known to all who have inhabited hot countries. The guns in the town and entrenchments were for once silent, as the domes and minarets of Cawnpore flashed back the first rays of the rising sun. The river rolled its sacred waters lazily along, and the trees in the compounds, and on its banks, hardly moved in the breeze. The Ganges canal alone separated the out-pickets of the two forces, the ring of an occasional shot breaking the calm stillness of the morning.

Behind the Cavalry Barracks, and close to the Allahabad road, corps after corps formed up. There were Hope’s and Inglis’s brigades. Shoulder to shoulder stood the men of those two splendid regiments, the 42nd and 93rd Highlanders, and there, too, laughing, joking, and putting all notions of discipline at utter defiance, were the gallant tars of the Naval Brigade.

Sir Colin Campbell seemed in high spirits, as regiment after regiment marched past, and took up the position assigned it, the whole movement being concealed from the enemy by the large buildings called the Dragoon Barracks.

“How well the 2nd and 3rd battalions of the Rifles look, Biddulph,” he said to the quartermaster-general, who stood by his side. “Captain Wheatcroft, let Wyndham know that his guns should open.”

Saluting with his sword, the dragoon officer dashed away, and in a few minutes the calm silence of the morning was broken by the loud boom of a single gun, quickly replied to from the town, and followed by one after another, until the whole of Wyndham’s artillery was hotly engaged, and the firing on both sides the heaviest during the siege. Seated on his horse, watch in hand, Sir Colin calmly listened to the deafening uproar.

“Captain Remington,” said he, at last, beckoning to his side an officer commanding a troop of horse artillery, “take the cavalry and with your guns cross the canal higher up, threatening the enemy’s rear. I think, Biddulph, the fire from the entrenchments slackens, let the infantry deploy into line.”

All was now bustle and excitement as the orders to deploy were given, and the various brigades were put into motion, the bugles of the Sikh Infantry sounding merrily on the breeze, as the gallant fellows spread over the plain in skirmishing order.

“The 53rd Regiment to support skirmishers,” shouted Captain Dalzell of the 93rd, and the regiment indicated moved off at the double.

To the light lay Brigadier Greathead’s brigade, consisting of the 8th and the 150th Regiments, and the 2nd Punjaub Infantry.

The whole line was now in motion, the enemy having been completely deceived, the heavy firing from the entrenchments causing them to expect an attack on their centre, which lay fully prepared right in front of Greathead’s regiments. So silently and so skilfully had the movement been conducted, under shelter of the great buildings of the Dragoon Barracks, that the whole force was hurled on their right flank, before they knew anything about it.

“There go Walpole’s and Smith’s guns,” said the chief, as a heavy firing was heard among the brick-fields and kilns under the city walls; “let the whole line advance, I long to hear the scream of my brave Highlanders.”

Over the canal bridge poured regiment after regiment. Brigade after brigade appearing in great confusion for a moment, and the next re-forming their ranks, as regularly as though on parade. The long line of the enemy's force lay before them, as pouring in volley upon volley, the skirmishers being driven in, the British line struggled forward.

Colonel Biddulph was shot down. The gallant Dalzell, of the 93rd Highlanders, was lying on the ground dead; he fell as he was leading his regiment to the charge. Captain Wheatcroft, of the 6th Dragoons, Hardy of the Royal Artillery, were moistening the plain with their hearts' blood. Sir Colin Campbell himself was wounded, and eight of the staff around him were more or less hurt. The Naval Brigade working their twenty-four pounder, as though it were a plaything, had been dreadfully cut up, but still above the roar of the guns, and the pattering of the musketry, came the shout, "Forward!" not a man thought of retreat.

"Brigadier Greathead is hard pressed, Sir Colin," said a mounted officer, dashing up.

"I can't spare a man, Major Robertson," replied the chief. "Tell him to look to himself."

"Captain Heale, this for Sir Hope Grant; tell General Mansfield I want him."

While the battle was thus hotly contested on the left, Brigadier Greathead's little force found itself opposed to the enemy's centre. Walpole's guns, it is true, were steadily clearing the brick-fields, driving the enemy before them, but the Punjaub Infantry had already lost ninety-five men, and the 150th were severely cut up.

"Within five minutes of receiving this you will charge the enemy's centre, such are the chief's orders," exclaimed a staff officer, galloping up, and handing over a small pencilled note.

The thing seemed impossible, and the Brigadier, amid the roar of the battle, for a moment doubted his ears. The next, the word of command was given, and pouring a shattering volley into the enemy's line, the little brigade dashed on with the bayonet.

Precisely at the same moment, on the left, Sir Colin heard the scream of his Highlanders, the whole British force dashing forward at the charge. It was a splendid sight, as emerging from the heavy smoke cloud, the long line of bayonets glittering in the sun, with one mighty shout for vengeance, the English force buried itself in the heavy opposing masses of the murderers of Cawnpore.

"Forward—remember Cawnpore," shouted Hughes, as at the head of his men he dashed on, leaving a long line of dead and dying in his rear.

Utterly astonished at the attack, the mutineers of the Gwalior Contingent gave way, then came the ringing cheer of the 8th Regiment, as the men dashed onward with the bayonet, and the enemy fairly doubled up, turned and fled.

At this moment, and just when the first runaways carried dismay into the ranks of the still resolute right wing, the Highland scream was heard as the little army moved forward, and emerging from the smoke, hurled itself in one glittering line on the mutineers, who broke at once.

"General Mansfield," shouted Sir Colin, as he rode on through the enemy's camp, among whose white tents the Highlanders and the men of the 32nd Regiment were bayoneting right and left.

"General Mansfield, take Greathead's brigade, and storm the enemy's left at Subadar's Camp."

"Colonel Hughes, let your bugles sound the recall, and fall into line at once," cried General Mansfield, as he rode up in obedience to the order.

The men of different regiments were now fairly mixed, and a motley corps was hastily got together. There were the uniforms of the 23rd, 64th, the 90th Regiments, with the 150th, and some dismounted troopers of the 9th Lancers.

"You will take the command, Colonel Hughes," said General Mansfield, as they moved hastily forward against the enemy's left, "one volley only, and then the bayonet. Steady men, you will have enough to do soon." The enemy's fire now reached them, and man after man dropped as the line moved forward. A withering volley was poured in, and then came the irresistible charge of the British soldier, and the next moment the 150th were among the tents, and the whole Gwalior Contingent in full flight.

Gun after gun was spiked; the English Artillery playing upon the masses of retreating and disorganised mutineers. Grape and canister being poured into their broken masses at two hundred paces distant, while the Lancers and Dragoons rode them down, sabring right and left.

Sir Colin himself led the pursuit, and for fourteen miles along the banks of the river the carnage continued, until tired out and unable to do more, the bugles and trumpets sounded a halt, and men and horses bivouacked on the ground, not an enemy in sight.

The whole of the rebel stores, ammunition, and a great part of the guns were taken, but the loss on the side of the English was heavy.

The 150th counted over one hundred men in killed and wounded, and the 93rd Highlanders alone had ninety-three killed and one hundred and eight wounded.

"It was a splendid sight, Curtis," said Hughes, as he sat on a spiked gun, while a hospital dresser who had happened to be passing was looking to a bullet wound in his right leg. "It was indeed a splendid sight when the cavalry debouched from yonder grove, and with Sir Colin at their head, dashed into the retreating pandies. I shall never forget the day."

"Where's Harris? I have not seen him for the last two hours."

"Poor fellow, he is lying among the tents at Subadar's Tank, shot through the heart. He fell close to me at our first charge."

The two were silent, for the mad excitement of the fray was passing away, and the cost had now to be counted. They were seated at the junction of the Calpee and Cawnpore roads, masses of men of different regiments, and peletons of cavalry and artillery were moving across the plain in every direction, the animals fagged and weary, the men exultant, and bandying rough jokes.

Their horses covered with sweat and dust, their arms and accoutrements jingling as they rode, a group of officers came along. It was Sir Colin, General Mansfield, and Brigadier Greathead, with their staffs.

Reining in his horse, Sir Colin spoke.

“Colonel Hughes, you will parade the 150th to-morrow afternoon. I have a word to say to them.”

Steadying himself, with his right hand leaning on the gun-carriage, his left being useless, his leg half swathed up in its bloody bandages, and the hospital dresser kneeling at his feet, his forage-cap lost, and the heavy masses of black hair hanging over a forehead smeared with blood, Colonel Hughes saluted, and the General and his staff rode on.

“I wonder what he wants with us,” said Curtis. “We shan’t be able to turn out very well.”

Events in India had justified fully the confidence reposed in her sons by England. The retreating rebels were pursued the following day, and the column, under Sir Hope Grant, came up with and at once attacked them at a place called Serai Ghat, took fifteen guns, and a vast quantity of ammunition, then pushing on to Bithoor, carried Nana Sahib’s palace, and captured all his treasure. It was one of the closing scenes of the Indian mutiny.

“Steady, men, steady,” said Colonel Hughes, as leaning heavily on his sword, he stood in the centre of his regiment formed up in square, just where the Calpee and Cawnpore roads join.

“There comes the General and his staff—150th, attention!”

The rattle of the muskets as the men came to attention was heard. “Fix bayonets—shoulder arms,” were the words of command which followed as a mounted aide, at the gallop, left the group who were advancing across the plain, their plumes dancing in the breeze, and the sun glinting from their accoutrements.

“Order arms, and keep the men at attention only,” were the directions given and obeyed. “Have you the muster roll of your losses?” asked the aide.

“A heavy casualty list, Colonel Hughes,” said Sir Colin, as, with the paper in his hand, he rode into the centre of the square. “Three officers, and one hundred and four rank and file. 150th Regiment, I am proud of you!” said the stern old soldier, raising his plumed hat as he spoke. “Twice have you done good service to the whole force under my command. At the race stand, your determined gallantry saved our communications being cut off; to your splendid charge, we owe our first success yesterday. Men of the 150th, I repeat I am proud to have had you under my command. This I give as a token of the admiration of the whole force under my orders, and you it is who have won it for your commanding officer. As he spoke, the old soldier stooped, and himself attached the Victoria Cross, the first ever won in India, to Colonel Hughes’s breast. For you, my men, the glorious word ‘Cawnpore’ shall in future be borne on your regimental colours.”

“Colonel Hughes, dismiss your regiment.”

Three hearty cheers for Sir Colin were given, as the regiment broke its ranks, and the general and his staff rode away, winding in and out, among the fatigue parties, busy burying the dead.

The Gwalior Contingent melted away. British supremacy again reigned in India, and regiment after regiment was poured into the country, now rapidly being pacified.

Three months had hardly elapsed, when the 150th Regiment was marching for Calcutta, under orders for embarkation for England.

The sun was shining brightly on the ocean, and the houses of Cape Town. Isabel sat at her window looking across the sea, watching the white sails of a large ship, which with a pyramid of canvas, rising over a dark hull, was standing right for the anchorage. It was her favourite spot, and much of her time had been spent at that window, looking over the sea. Many a vessel had she watched, driving through the waves, while she speculated on the hopes and fears which attached themselves to those whose home lay within the dark hulls. Some had been coming from Europe, bound for far-away lands; others returning, but all bearing, doubtless, their living cargoes, and their freights of happiness and of misery.

The successes of the British army had been known, but no news had arrived in the colony for some time, and so Isabel looked musingly over the sea, and the stately ship came on letting fly her royals, and next the topgallant sails were handed, her topsails settled down on the caps, her lower sails hung in the brails, and soon a heavy splash was heard, as the anchor dropped into the water, and a crowd of shore boats surrounded the ship.

There was nothing in the scene that she had not watched daily, and now she remained at her window, sunk in reverie. A gentle breeze was blowing, the sun was shining brightly, and her book had dropped from her hand. Suddenly her ear caught a quick step on the stairs, which sent the red blood mantling under the clear olive skin, the fluttering heart beat wildly, and the net-work of blue veins seemed filled to bursting. Isabel rose, her hands clasped together, her eyes fixed on the door. It opened, and, with a cry of happiness, the next moment she found herself clasped in her husband’s arms.

Sobbing with delight, Isabel raised her head, and her eye caught the glitter of that cross, the noblest decoration the world can give.

“Where, oh, where did you win that, Enrico mio?” she asked, pushing the clustering hair from her eyes, and resting her two hands on her husband’s shoulder.

“On the battle-field of Cawnpore,” replied the soldier, “from the hand of the bravest of the brave.”

Isabel’s head sunk on the speaker’s breast, resting on the cross given only for deeds of high daring and devoted

courage, and she sobbed heavily, not from sorrow but joy.

A knock came to the door. Encircling Isabel's waist with his arm, Hughes bid the new comer enter, and Major Curtis stepped into the room.

"Captain Edmonds wants to know—" he said hastily, and then stopped abruptly.

"Allow me to present you, Curtis, to my Kaffir bride," said Colonel Hughes, laughing.

That night Isabel was on board the "Larkins" hired transport, surrounded by her husband's men, and his comrades, tried and proved trusty on many an occasion, and when the morning sun tipped the ocean waves with its rising beams, the gallant ship, with every sail set, and a leading wind, could just be made out from land, as she steered her course straight for the white chalk cliffs of England.

The End.

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