

## The Project Gutenberg eBook of Latitude 19°, by Mrs. Schuyler Crowninshield

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Title: Latitude 19°

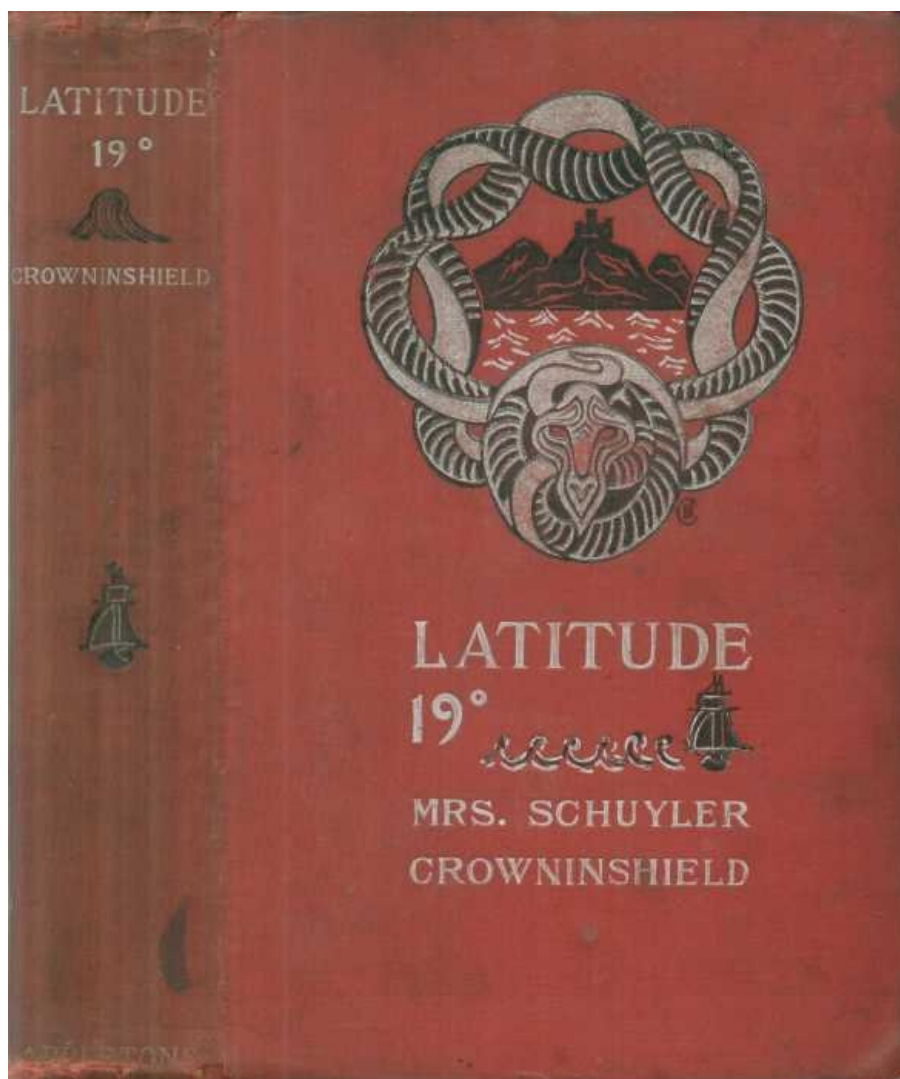
Author: Mrs. Schuyler Crowninshield  
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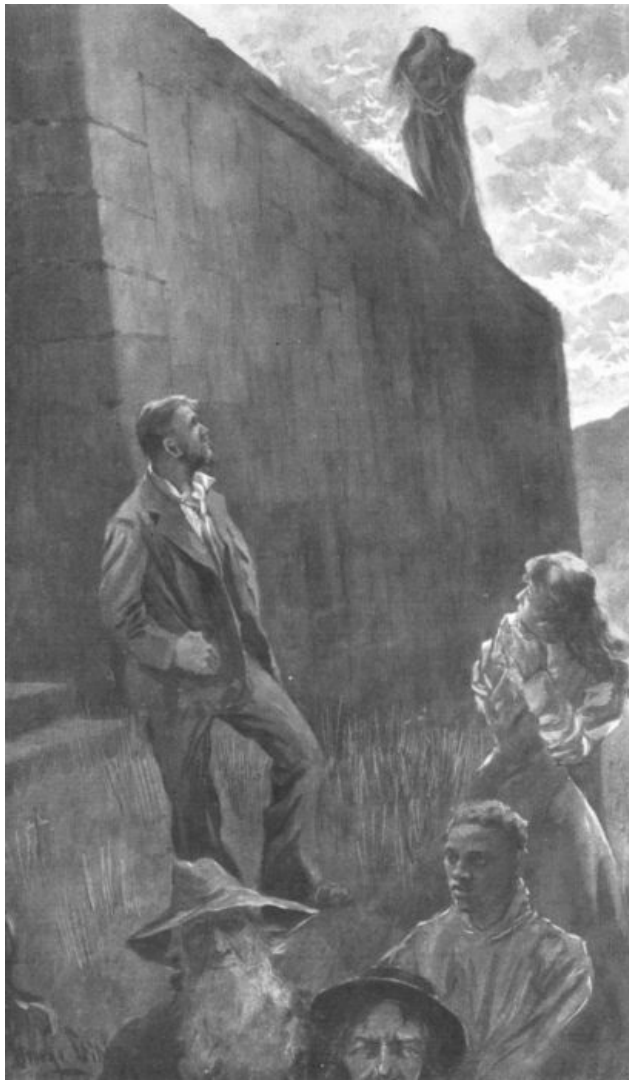
Release date: May 28, 2011 [EBook #36244]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Juliet Sutherland, Pat McCoy and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LATITUDE 19° \*\*\*





A Queen but yesterday. (See page [418](#).)

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## LATITUDE 19°

### A ROMANCE OF THE WEST INDIES IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY

*Being a faithful account and true, of the painful adventures of the  
Skipper, the Bo's'n, the Smith, the Mate, and Cynthia*

**BY MRS. SCHUYLER CROWNINSHIELD**

*Author of Where the Trade Winds Blow*

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE GIBBS



NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY  
1898

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To  
C. S. C.

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## LATITUDE 19°.

THE HOMESTEAD, BELLEVILLE, N. J.  
September 23, 1867.

*DEAR SON ADONIAH: In complying with your request that I jot down the facts with regard to my early experiences at the time when I was cast away, I have hardly known what to tell and what to leave untold. I could not relate to you the detailed occurrences of each day, though you will think that I have come quite near it, for it would have made a manuscript too large in size. I have told you much when we have been sitting by the fire on a winter evening, you with your leg on a chair, and little Adoniah hanging round you trying to persuade you to "make Grandpa stop," that you might tell him your more recent tale of interest of the battle of Gettysburg. Many a time, as we have been talking, I have seen your dear mother, always beautiful and always young—though she has been a grandmother now seven times, what with Mary's children, and Gertrude's, and yours—many a time I have seen her look at us disapprovingly, as if wondering what pleasure we can take in such gruesome tales, but I find that with most men adventure is as the breath of their nostrils, and that no matter what suffering they have undergone, they always hark back to the wild, exciting scenes of youth, forgetting the pain and dwelling only on the pleasure.*

*Miserable as I have been at times, and in some pretty tight places, too, now that we are all happily at home together, I would not exchange one of those experiences for a pot full of gold. I would not give away the remembrance of them any more than you would have blotted from your memory that fight in the Wilderness, where you led so gallantly; any more than you would be willing to discard the scar on your leg, or the strap on your shoulder, the one gained because of the other.*

*Sometimes, as I sit on the settle at the door of the farmhouse, when the sun has gone down and twilight is coming on, I dream those days all over again. I see the buccaneers in the cave. I experience again the suffocation of the cage in which they left me for dead. I see before me as plainly as if I held it in my hand, with those wondrous eyes intact, and shining like two living balls of fire, that symbol of mysticism, the serpent ring. I see again the vaudoux dance and the long, light eyes of the Pythoness, which fascinated while they struck terror to the very soul. I again take part in those sad and dreary burials at sea, in which the dear old Skipper so revelled, and once more I find myself at Christophe's Court, with all its magnificence, all its barbarity, and all its horrors, and I wonder if any other life ever crowded so much into itself in so short a space of time. My letter must not be too long or tell too much in advance. I am not an author, son Adoniah, nor do I wield the pen of a ready writer even for my children. This has been to me a laborious task, though at the same time a labour of love.*

*If you should show these recollections to some of your friends, they will probably discredit the statement that anthropophagi have lived in the recent times of which I write, and so near our own coast. What would they say, I wonder, should they meet my friend, the late United States Minister to the Island, and learn from him that the dreadful practice existed not only at the date of which I write, but that it is actually extant, though more concealed, at the present day. And we pour our gold into old Africa while New Africa, where these awful crimes are rampant, is but twelve hundred miles from Belleville!*

*Finally, son Adoniah, believe that I have set down nothing here which can not be substantiated by historians, by living witnesses, and by the published proceedings of courts of law.*

Your affectionate Father,

HIRAM JONES.

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## CHAPTER I. OUR INVOLUNTARY LANDING.

I put my head down through the hatchway and called to Cynthia to come on deck. I always called her Cynthia to myself. What I said was:

"Come up, Miss Archer; I can see Christophe's castle."

"You can't!" she said. These words were uttered, I was convinced, more in astonishment than in contradiction. They issued from the funnel of a white cotton sunbonnet. The funnel appeared above the hatchcombing, then a pair of shoulders incased in blue dungaree followed suit, and, finally, the tall figure of Miss Cynthia Archer emerged from the open hatchway and stepped lightly on to the deck.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"I will answer that question if you will answer mine," I responded.

"I was never good at guessing riddles," she said.

"It's no riddle," returned I.

"Oh, the same old question!" hazarded Cynthia. The handsome gray eyes looked out questioningly from the depths of the funnel. I nodded appealingly.

"You've got me up here under false pretences," said Cynthia. "I will go below again. I don't believe there is any castle."

"There is, indeed, Miss Archer." I held the spyglass tightly under my arm. "I will show where if you will answer me."

"The chronic question?"

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"Yes, the chronic question."

Cynthia looked out at me, a world of sincerity shooting from her eyes.

"To tell you the truth," said she, "Jones is simply impossible! I couldn't, really! Why, Mr. Jones, Jones is synonymous with anonymous. And then *Hiram Jones*!" She knew as well as I did myself what I wanted to ask her. I told her so.

Cynthia stood for a moment looking meditatively at me.

"I don't know why I shouldn't, after all," said she in a musing tone.

My heart leaped up into my throat.

"I might call you 'J,'" she said.

"And I might call you 'A,'" answered I. "'A' was an archer and shot at a beau."

"Shot with a bow, you mean," said Cynthia; "but, really, the words run, "'A' was an archer and shot at a frog."

"Thank you," said I. Of course, she knew what I had in mind. I said it every time she came on deck. I made a point of it. I thought that she might get used to it after a while.

"You haven't been up all day," said I reproachfully.

"There's no variety in your conversation, Mr. Jones," said Cynthia. "The parrot is much more interesting. But when you called down that Christophe's castle was in sight, I thought that perhaps you were in your right mind once more."

"If my present mind's wrong, I shall never be right," said I, as I hove the wheel over to larboard to keep the Yankee Blade on her course.

"Archer's so much prettier than Jones," said Cynthia in a dreamy, convincing tone. She reached out her hand and took the glass from me. Her touch was like a magnet. I couldn't have held it back to save my life. She stepped to the rail and rested the barrel of the glass upon one of the ratlines.

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"Now where's your castle?" she asked; and added, "How this ship rolls!"

"The wind is falling light," I said. "Seems to me we're farther in shore than we ought to be.—Tomkins, did you keep her exactly on the course the Captain gave you?"

"Yessir," said Tomkins, without winking.

"Now where is it?" asked Cynthia.

I called one of the men to take the wheel and went to Cynthia's side. I guided the glass very slowly to within a hair's breadth of the imposing structure, ran it hurriedly past, so that the view was all in a blur, then I searched slowly and carefully for the thing that we had passed by. Cynthia was not long deceived.

"Give me that glass, Mr. Jones," she said with dignity. "I will find the citadel if it is there."

"It is there, upon my soul!" said I. I saw that she was angry. "There! Don't you see that big pile of stone?"

"Where?"

"There! Just there!"

"Is—that—Christophe's castle? What—a—big—thing—it—is! Why—Mr.—Jones—you—never—told—me—half! How—I—should—like—to—go—there!"

"God forbid!" said I, and I shuddered.

"Hand me that glass!" said the Skipper, who had tumbled up from below. He laid a heavy hand upon the spyglass and took it without ceremony. He could. He was her Uncle. He could call her Cynthia, too. I could only think it. The Skipper wheeled about and looked out to sea.

"Here, you, Mr. Jones!" said the Skipper, his gaze fixed on the stranger, "what did you do with

that Cook?"

"The Cook?" said I inquiringly.

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The Skipper removed the glass from his eyes.

"Didn't I tell you that pudding wasn't fit to give to a dog?"

"Yes, you did, sir, but the man did his best. I thin——"

"Mr. Jones, am I Captain of this vessel, or am I not?"

An acquiescent nod from me.

"Very well, then! You go below, Mr. Jones, and you take Bill Tomkins and the Growler, and you take that pudding, and you put it in the brig, and you take that Cook and you set him alongside of it, and you lock the door, and don't you let either of 'em come out until one of 'em's inside of the other!"

"Yes, sir," said I, and I went below to carry out his orders.

I closed the door of the brig, leaving the Cook sitting in the hot little place, looking ruefully at the nauseous mess that he had tried to force on the cabin table. I suddenly remembered something that I wanted done about the men's mess gear, and returned along the companion way. It was evident that I was not expected, for I heard some words, not overcomplimentary to myself, proceeding from the Growler, who had lingered behind; and he added, calling out to the Cook:

"Never mind, doctor,<sup>[A]</sup> you will be ashore in less than an hour."

[A] A sailor's name for the Cook.

When I came on deck again the Skipper had the glass glued to his eyes.

"Did he eat it?" asked the Skipper.

"No, sir, not yet," said I. "He'd just had his dinner."

The Skipper did not seem to listen to my answer. He handed the glass to me and pointed seaward.

"Don't like the looks of that vessel out there, Jones. She's been crawling up on us for the last hour. Looks as if she was trying to head us off. About three points forward of the beam now, I should say. Isn't this vessel off her course, Jones?"

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He walked over to the binnacle, and took a look at the compass.

"No, you're right. But we certainly are farther in shore than I expected we would be. Head her up, man, head her up!"

"Tomkins had the wheel while I was below," said I. "He said he kept her just as you told him. That stranger's flying the English flag." The Skipper shook his head, looked at the Union Jack, and then over the side of the Yankee Blade.

"Didn't know there was any currents around here. Strange! Strange!"

Cynthia stood sniffing and wrinkling up her handsome nose.

"What is it smells so sweet?" she asked.

"The land," said I.

"Yes, I know, of course. But I never smelled land so sweet as this before. Now, off Martin——"

"The wind has fallen light, Captain," said I.

"How monotonous you are," said Cynthia, "not to call it——"

"Damn the wind!" said the Skipper. He wet his finger in his mouth and held it up.

"Why don't you throw the cat overboard, and shoot an albatross?" questioned Cynthia, who was versed in sea lore.

"The cat was left behind at Martinique," replied the Skipper. "I guess with some of those girls Jones was hanging round, and any fool knows that no one ever saw an albatross in these waters."

"Well, please don't damn the wind, Uncle, while I'm on board." Cynthia spoke with some asperity, and turned her back squarely on me. "You know very well you promised Aunt Mary 'Zekel——"

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"Damning the wind ain't anything; *want* a blow!" said the Skipper.

"Do we? Why?"

"That's our safety," growled he, with his eyes glued to the glass.

"Are you really afraid, Uncle Antony?"

"Well, no, not what you might call afraid. Wouldn't be very agreeable to be taken prisoner just

now. Damn if I don't believe that's a letter of marque, that fellow!"

I laughed.

"Don't be afraid, Miss Archer," I said; "there are no letters of marque nowadays."

"Oh, do let me see! I hope he is one. I never saw a letter of marque."

The Skipper growled in my ear, "Pirates are just as bad."

"Will he take my cassava bread, and capture Solomon?"

"He'll capture you and the whole bilin' if we don't get ahead a little faster. I'd like to head her up. Can't, till we pass those nubbles on the starboard bow. Jones, we may have some tough work. You go below and get a bite, while I take the deck. May have to run."

"Where to?" asked Cynthia.

"Ashore, I guess," answered the Skipper. Most girls would have fainted.

"I'd better go below and pack my bag," said Cynthia. She turned to me condescendingly. "I'll give you something, Mr. Jones, if you choose to come."

Choose to come! I would have followed her to a much warmer interior. The cabin was close and stuffy. There were some cushioned seats on either side of the table, just too far from it to allow one to eat comfortably. The most of my bread dropped, between my knees and rolled away on the deck.

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"What does he carry that ridiculous picture all around the world for?" I growled.

Cynthia turned and looked at the coloured picture of a falcon which hung in its frame at the end of the small cabin.

"Doesn't he look foolish? He's so out of drawing. He makes me seasick," said I.

"It is an excellent picture," said Cynthia.

"And a plain Yankee skipper coming to sea with a coat of arms and a motto. It's positively silly!"

"It belongs to him just as much as his name does. I can't see why he shouldn't bring it. It isn't a coat of arms, either. You can't say such things to me about the hooded hawk, Mr. Jones, though I am not a Schuyler exactly. But I have a great respect for the family."

"And a Latin text," I added.

"Don't talk with your mouth full, Mr. Jones. Even the bird will be shocked. Do you know what the motto means?"

"It's Latin," I answered. That was conclusive. At Belleville we had other things to do besides study Latin.

She turned on her transom and surveyed the coat of arms, her head on one side, her handsome eyes screwed out of all shape. They rested upon a very fat bird holding with difficulty to a wrist to which it bore no proportion. The wrist was as large as the trunk of a tree.

"Aunt Mary 'Zekel did it," said Cynthia. "Uncle says it means, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'—the motto, I mean."

"Well, so it is," I answered. "A bird in a white sunbonnet is worth——"

"William Brown is waiting at home on the dock for me," said Cynthia, as she removed the sunbonnet.

I sat silent and drained my cup.

"Have some more coffee, Mr. Jones?" She took my cup and replenished it.

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"I said that William Brown is waiting on the dock for me."

"He can't; a dock's a hole."

"Well, anyway, he's waiting." A short silence, during which she wrinkled her forehead.

"Wharf, then! William Brown's——"

"I should think Brown was synonymous with synopsis," said I absent-mindedly.

"Some people have no dictionary knowledge," sniffed Cynthia. "He is, really."

"Is what?"

"Waiting. We're going to keep house."

"On what?"

"What? On what?"

"Keep house on what?"

"Well, I'm going to begin with the parrot. That's what I got him for."

"Stew him first day. What'll you do next?"

"I decline to talk with you," said Cynthia, twisting huffily around on the old red plush cushion. "William may be very rich some day. His great aunt was a Schuyler. He has a share in the Belleville copper mines."<sup>[B]</sup>

[B] It has been rumoured lately that there is a project on foot to resume the working of these mines.—AUTHOR.

"You still have faith in them, have you? Now, Miss Archer, let me tell you——"

Plim! Splash! The water was dashed through the open stern ports.

"What was that?" said Cynthia, rising. "A whale or a hurricane?" And then, as she sat looking questioningly at me, we heard a report. The report of a gun. This was followed by the pounding of the Skipper's feet on the deck above our heads. Cynthia ran out of the cabin door and up the companion way to the poop. I heard her calling as she went: "Don't be afraid, Uncle Tony! I'm coming."

"Where's Jones?" I heard him growl, as I followed close at his heels.

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"Fainted away in the cabin."

"Damn coward!"

"What's the matter?" said I.

Bill Ware had let go the wheel, and the vessel was yawing round. We were in the trough of the sea.

The Captain seemed incapable through astonishment. I jumped to the wheel and got her on her course again.

"That damn fellow fired at me across our bows. Next he'll cut us amidships."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Cynthia, "if he takes the stern for the bow."

She stood looking calmly at the approaching vessel.

"I should think he'd fire straighter than that. Looks as if he had something in him."

Her acceptance of the situation threw the Skipper into a towering rage. He stammered and stuttered. Cynthia paid no attention to his angry words.

"Shall I take the wheel, Uncle?" she asked.

This seemed to bring the Captain to his senses.

"Take the wheel, Mr. Jones." I had had it for a minute.

"On deck, everybody!" The men came tumbling up in lively fashion. They could have heard our Skipper on board the other vessel.

"Jump to the lee braces, men! Brace everything sharp up! Get a small pull of the spanker sheet! Haul all the bow lines! Let her luff! Luff, you beggar! Bring her close by the wind!"

The Captain stood, his chin raised in the air, his eyes on the yards.

"Well! The main yard!" The men ceased hauling, and belayed the braces.

"Well! The maintops'l yard. Belay the lee braces!"

"Do you think we'll get ahead of that other ship?" said Cynthia.

I looked critically to windward.

"No, I don't," said I.

"Then what will happen?"

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"Depends on the other fellow; if——"

"Think we might weather the nubbles, Mr. Jones?" And then, before I could answer, "Ready about!" he roared.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"He's bound to catch us on this tack," confided I into the funnel as I ran to my station.

The men ran willingly to obey the orders; all but Tomkins.

"Blank you, Tomkins! why don't you move? Got rheumatism, or what? Why don't those sails fill? Darn it all! We're in irons. No, there she goes! We're forging ahead. Think I'll run for that cove when we tack again. Might stand 'em off with two four-poun——"

The Skipper was interrupted. He stood with open mouth, from which no sound issued. We were



all, as we stood, swayed slowly forward, then as slowly backward, with a motion that made me sick and dizzy. There was a shaking of the hull, an ominous creaking of the masts, as the Yankee Blade careened slightly and stood still. At that moment a shot struck the foremast, cutting it in two. It fell to leeward, a mass of splintered wood and tangled rigging. The crashing of the top into the water sent the foam flying over us.

"He wants you to stop," said Cynthia.

"Well, haven't I?" said the Skipper dryly.

"Yes, you have certainly," answered Cynthia in a tone of conviction. The Skipper turned on Cynthia in a sudden rage.

"Can't you cry or do something? Why don't you act womanly. I wish to God you was home with your Aunt Mary 'Zekel!"

The Skipper seemed to have lost his nerve.

"What shall we do, Jones? Cut away the mast, I suppose."

"Better lower some boats, sir, at once," said I. "We're no match for them."

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Cynthia had the glass raised to her eyes.

"They're getting out a boat," she said.

"Let me see."

The Skipper seized the spyglass from Cynthia so roughly that he pulled her sunbonnet from her head. She stood beside him bareheaded, the gentle tropic breeze blowing her hair into a thousand little brown rings. I ran close to her as I was hurrying to get the boats lowered. Her mouth was set, as if she did not fancy her Uncle's rough treatment.

"He doesn't mean it, Miss Archer," I said in as sympathetic a tone as I could command. "He's worried and——"

"You need not apologize to me for my Uncle, Mr. Jones. We understand each other thoroughly." She went up to the old man and laid her hand upon his shoulder. He shook it off impatiently.

"Lower a boat, Mr. Jones!" he said. "Lower a boat at once!"

Cynthia put on her sunbonnet to hide, I thought, her mortification.

"I have given the order, sir," said I. "Better lower two, sir. The men don't want to be captured any more than we do."

"Couldn't wish the stranger any worse luck than to capture them all, Cook included," said the Skipper with a scowl at the men.

"I guess they did their best, Captain," said I, in a louder voice than was necessary, with an eye to a possible future.

"Don't answer me, Mr. Jones! Get a boat down!"

"Lay aft there to lower the dinghy! Stand by!"

"How can you worry Uncle so, Mr. Jones, when you know how——"

Two or three of the men lay aft with alacrity at my order. Among them was Tomkins. He worked with a will.

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"Where's Ned Chudleigh?" asked the Skipper.

"In the foc's'l, sir," said the Bo's'n.

"Send him up here. On deck, everybody!"

"Says he's sick, sir."

"Sick, is he? Guess he'll be sick before we've—Why don't you get out that boat, you rascals?"

"Shall we lower a third one, Captain?" said I. The shore looked inhospitable. We might as well be on the right side of the men.

"Bear a hand there, whatever you do! They've got their boat in the water. The men are climbing down the falls now. Put a cask of salt pork under the thwarts, Mr. Jones, and a breaker of water."

I gave the order, and added thereto a bag of hard bread, some coffee, tea, and sugar. I saw that the Bo's'n was adding the necessary utensils. Cynthia watched these preparations with disapproving mien. She came over to where I stood, her eyes flashing fire.

"Do you mean to tell me," she asked fiercely, "that you'll run from those letter-of-marque people without even a struggle? There are all my shells and that West Indian dress of mine down in my box. Do you intend to let them be taken without so much as——"

"I'm not Captain of this craft," said I, "but he's doing the only——"

"Don't hide your cowardice behind my poor old Uncle. If no one else will do anything, I'll—Get me a slow match; light it quickly, do you hear?" with a stamp of the foot at the cabin boy.

"Shall we put any blankets in the boat, Mr. Jones, sir?" asked the Bo's'n. "Something for the lady \_\_\_"

I ran down below into Cynthia's cabin. Even with all the hurry, confusion, and excitement of the moment, I did not fail to note the neatness of that white little room. I tore the blanket from the smoothly made bed and seized a pillow from its place. I stood looking around a moment to see if there was anything more that she might want. I saw on the dresser a little note-book, with a pencil slipped into the loops. This I put into my pocket with a picture done by a Belleville artist of Aunt Mary 'Zekel. Another of a very meek-looking man, with his hair brushed forward over his ears, and a collar the points of which ran up nearly to his eyes, I took it to be William Brown. This I detached from the hook on which it hung, and, going to the open port, I thrust my arm through and tossed it up in the air, hoping that Cynthia would in this way look her last on the face of my rival. Simultaneously with my toss of the picture there came a report from overhead, and I saw some fragments of shattered glass. I knew that the six-pounder on the poop had been fired.

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I hurried on deck, encumbered with the pillow and blanket. The smell of gunpowder was in the air. Cynthia was standing defiantly by the gun. She had just dropped the slow match. The Skipper was dancing in rage on the poop.

"Now you've done it! Now you've done it!" he screamed. "You've made 'em so angry there's no telling what they'll do.—Are the boats all ready, Mr. Jones?"

"If we are going to run, we may as well show them a little Yankee spirit first," said Cynthia. "I wish I could make them hear me. I would tell them that the only man on board this vessel's a girl."

I had picked up the glass and was trying to get a sight on the long boat. She was a little way from the end of the ship, and Cynthia through sheer luck had struck her amidships. I saw that there were five or six men struggling to keep afloat. A boat was being lowered to pick them up.

"Seems to me now's our time to go," said the Skipper. "Just look at the guns on board that fellow!" He turned on Cynthia, his face crimson, his eyes fierce and angry. "How dare you accuse me of being a coward?" He shook his fist in her face. "I'm thinking of you more than anybody. We haven't a ghost of a chance with those fellows if they're what I think they are. You may talk to Jones there; he's weak enough to stand it, but by—"

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"Mr. Jones has taken the precaution to have a comfortable time, at all events," said Cynthia, with a scornful glance at the blanket and pillow. "If you're really going ashore, Uncle, I'll just step below and get my bag. I'm glad I packed it now."

She disappeared down the companion way, and after a few moments, during which we were getting the Jacob's ladder slung so that she could descend into the long boat, she came on deck again. A sound of stumbling and a banging of metal preceded her.

When she appeared above the hatchcombing, I saw that she held a worked canvas bag in one hand and a large, square parrot's cage in the other. A shot from the stranger went over our heads at that moment, doing no damage beyond cutting away a few threads of rope, which fell upon the cage.

"Damn those Britishers!" said the parrot.

"They didn't do much that time—only cut off those Irish pennants. That's a very sensible bird of yours, Cynthia," said the Skipper, who remembered the late war only too well.

"I'm glad there are some brains on board," answered Cynthia, "if only a bird's."

"Get in the boat and stop sassin' me!" ordered the Skipper.

I handed the blanket and pillow to the Bo's'n, who placed them in the bow, thus making a comfortable seat.

"You'd better go up in the bows," I said to Cynthia, as I helped her down from the wobbling Jacob's ladder. She stepped exactly on the middle of the seat. I never saw another girl step anywhere but on the gun'l.

The Skipper took the steering oar.

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"I'll keep the Yankee Blade between us and them," said he.

"I haven't the slightest doubt of it," remarked Cynthia gratuitously.

I sat forward of the men, next to Cynthia.

"Where's William Brown?" I asked. We were about three boats' lengths from the ship. Cynthia arose in her seat.

"O Uncle! wait!" she called; "I must go back a moment. I have forgotten something."

The Skipper paid no more attention than if she had not spoken.

"Not too short a stroke, Bill," he said, "but strong, strong. Am I keeping the Yankee Blade between us?"

"You be, sir," answered the stroke.

Cynthia sat down, impelled to do so partly by the jerk of the oars and partly by the silence of her Uncle.

"I thought you never forgot him for a moment."

"I never do. That was the only time all this voyage. If it hadn't been for you, Mr. Jones——"

This sentence was subject to two constructions. I tried to look upon it as an admission.

A shot fell over the Yankee Blade and pierced the water just behind us.

"Damn those Britishers!" said the parrot.

"I'll give you fifty dollars for that bird when you get him home, Cynthy," said the Skipper. "Did you teach him that?"

"I!" There was a world of wrath in Cynthia's tones. "He was probably taught by the Minion when he took the cage out to clean it."

Cynthia jumped excitedly to her feet.

"Oh! See there, Mr. Jones, they are firing on the flag! There goes a shot through it! I don't suppose they know we have left yet. The Yankee careened so."

It was true. Our emblem, which we had left floating at the masthead, had been shot directly through the field, and some of the stars were carried away with the ball. Cynthia wrung her hands. [Pg 20]

"Uncle Antony," she screamed, if that sweet voice could ever have been said to do anything so vulgar, "let us go back! Don't you see? They have fired on the flag."

"Don't get flustered," said the Skipper to the stroke. "Steady and strong wins to-day. My niece's a little excitable."

Cynthia heard the words. She turned on me, her lips white with suppressed passion.

"You know what the trouble with the English is, don't you, Mr. Jones?"

"Yes, I know of several failings they have; first, they——"

She took the words out of my mouth.

"They haven't a cowardly hair in their heads," she said. "I am ashamed to-day, for the first time in my life, of being an American."

Of course, she did not see that it would have been worse than foolhardy to remain, and I did not try to convince her.

"I see a man on the foc's'l," said Cynthia.

"Nonsense!" roared the Skipper from the stern. "We ain't goin' back for anybody. They had their chance.—Is there any one on board, Bill?"

"There is, sir."

"What's his name when he's sober?" asked the Skipper viciously.

"Ned Chudleigh, sir."

"Didn't you call him?"

"I did, sir," puffed Bill.

"Why didn't he come, then?"

"Said he was *English*, sir; 'd *like*, to go back. Waited a *purpose* for them Britishers. *Wanted* 'em to capture him." [Pg 21]

"I am afraid he has mistaken their nationality," said I.

"Damn the Britishers!" remarked the parrot.

"We have no quarrel with the British at present," I remarked. "What's your antediluvian bird talking about, Miss Archer?"

"I should think that with two six-pounders in the waist, and a gun that none of you had the pluck to fire on the poop, you might have——"

"Too much noise in the bows!" growled the Skipper.

I was sitting in the bows, facing Cynthia, as we left the Yankee Blade. I had watched the citadel on its far distant height grow lower and lower to the eye, and finally sink behind its seaward hills

and masses of foliage. I noticed, however, that our course was laid in an almost direct line for it; a little to the left, but still so that the position of the castle was impressed upon my mind. As we neared the shore, white rocks began to show, and the water, from having been blue, of a dark and beautiful shade, began to fade into tints no less lovely. There were streaks of pale green upon darker green, streaks of yellow upon blue. This was caused by the depth or shallowness of the water which flowed between us and the white rocks. Coconut tufts fringed the shore, and behind them were the various species of trees that thrive in the tropics. The gri-gri, the mahogany, reared their tall heads and vari-coloured leaves. Masses of green of all shades clothed the hills, which sloped upward a short distance from the level of the beach.

"O Uncle! See those lovely pieces of coral! Stop a moment, do, and let me get a piece to take home to Aunt Mary 'Zekel."

The stroke trailed his oar.

"What are you about, Bill Tomkins, stopping for coral! I never saw a mite round here. You stop when I give the order.—Don't be too much of a fool, Cynthia! Do you know we're running for our lives? Look back at that Yankee of ours, and see if there are any other——"

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"I see only one lonely man. He looks repentant, as well as I can make out. Let's go back and—Why, yes! There are some other people, too. They seem to——"

"Go slow there, ahead!" called out the Skipper, standing up as he spoke.

He held the steering oar firmly and looked for a landing place, trying vainly to see over the heads of those in the boat.

"Tom, jump up there in the bows, and see if you see any——"

"There goes another piece of the flag! O Uncle Tony! they've almost shot our flag away."

The spyglass dropped with a bump into the bottom of the boat, and Cynthia put her hands inside the funnel and over her eyes, and burst into floods of tears. She did not cry like a young lady. She cried like a young cyclone.

"Damn those Britishers!" shrieked the parrot.

"Yes, damn them, Solomon dear! Damn them again, since there's no one here to even——"

Her words ended in a rain of sobs. They issued from the sunbonnet wringing wet and soaked through. They might have come out of the washtub. She stood up the better to see the extent of her misery.

"Down in the bows! You will be overboard."

"There comes the Union Jack! I see it over the Yankee. That letter of marque's getting closer. Shame on us all! Oh, shame!"

The grounding of the boat seated Cynthia rather suddenly again in a manner which would have been undignified in any girl in the world but Cynthia.

The bow of our boat had not reached the shore. Some of the men dropped overboard and tried to get her clear. She had grounded amidships. As they pushed, she swung round as if on a pivot. I joined the men.

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"We'll have to lighten the load," said I, and without more words I took Cynthia in my arms and waded with her ashore. I set her high and dry on the beach. She surveyed me with anger and scorn glowering from her eyes.

"Your Uncle was steering," I explained humbly, "and the men——"

She cast a comprehensive glance at Bill and Tanby.

"Yes, I suppose you are better than——"

"William Brown will have to possess his soul in patience," said I. "Do you think he'll wait?"

"Yes, he will, but he *will*——"

"What! On that dock?"

"Yes, and I'll wait here."

"I wouldn't; at least, not too long," hazarded I.

"Where's that kag of salt pork and that bag of hard bread?" roared the Skipper. "Is the breaker ashore?"

"Looks hospitable, don't it?" said I.

She raised her eyes to the wooded heights above us, and then looked up along the coast.

"I see the other boat has landed."

I looked along the beach, and saw that the men were leaving the dinghy and were carrying some heavy weights high up on the beach. Cynthia seated herself upon a rock. She deposited the cage

on one side and the worked bag on the other.

"Jones," said the Skipper, "I wish you'd keep the glass on those people out there while the men get the provisions up."

I took the glass willingly and seated myself by Cynthia. Before I put my eyes to the glass, they rested upon the bag which reposed at Cynthia's side.

"I'm so glad I brought it," said she. "Aunt Mary 'Zekel worked it for me."

"It's a curious-looking bag," ventured I. "What are those funny-looking white things on the side, made of glass beads?"

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"There's nothing funny at all about that bag, Mr. Jones. That's our family plot."

"Your what?"

"Plot—our family plot. Aunt Mary 'Zekel worked it for me. She said she thought it would be a pleasant reminder of home. That's her tomb in the middle. Don't you see her initials: 'M. S. A.'—Mary Schuyler Archer?"

"Is she inside of it?"

"Who? Aunt Mary 'Zekel? Mercy, no! She's just as much alive as you are. At least, she was when I left home. There's her tomb in the middle. Uncle 'Zekel's buried inside of it."

I withdrew my eyes from the Yankee Blade.

"Isn't he rather heavy to carry round?"

"Don't be silly, Mr. Jones. His name's on the other side. It doesn't show on the bag. On the right you see Antony's shaft, and then little Peter's—there was always a Peter in the family—and on the left comes Gertrude, and then Mary—Aunt Mary 'Zekel's little girl. The beginning of that next one is for Adoniah. She didn't have time to work that in."

"Oh, I see! She chose the time to depict the plot when a burial was in progress. There are the horses' tails."

"How can you joke on such a solemn subject, Mr. Jones?" I dropped the glass at her evident displeasure, and it rolled down the slight declivity. "Those are not horse tails, as you know very well. Besides, they are green. Any one can see that they are weeping willows. She didn't have time to work the trunks. She's going to do that when I come back. Please do not add stupidity to your other failings, Mr. Jones."

She moved the bag to a safe distance from me with a reverential and disappointed air.

"Where is that glass?" she said.

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Every man on the beach ran for the spyglass. The Cook got it first.

"Thank you, Cook," she said, with a radiant smile.

"You never looked at me as you did at that Cook just now," I whispered under my breath.

"The Cook never presumes," she answered in a low tone. "Lend me your shoulder, Cook."

The Cook knelt on the beach with Spartan firmness. I did not envy him his cushion of sharp and jagged rocks. I gloated with joy over the wince into which his features were twisted. The Skipper turned and waved his arm at me.

"Come here, Jones! One would think you were at a picnic, the whole of you."

I walked over to where the Skipper stood, fanning himself violently with his panama.

"You told me to keep my eye on them, sir," said I. "Hadn't that Cook better build a fire?"

"What! Think he's hungry so soon?" with a grim smile. "We must husband our resources, Mr. Jones."

"Sounds just like a shipwreck," called Cynthia, who had caught the Skipper's words. "'Husband our resources!' Isn't that delightful!"

"We've got no place to sleep to-night, sir," said I, pursuing my theme. "There are all sorts of crawlers in the bushes yonder. A fire will clear up the place, and will cool off before night."

"You've got more sense than I credited you with," said the Skipper. "Cook, build a fire up there under those trees." The Cook arose, joy and regret intermingled in his looks.

"Thank you, Cook. I never rested the glass on so steady a shoulder."

She had rested it on mine a hundred times.

Thus we each took our turn at the glass, and each told each other what we saw.

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"If they're looking for money, they'll be almighty disappointed," said the Skipper in a low tone to his niece and myself. "I took all there was."

Then in an undertone, and with that rashness of statement that sometimes we live to regret, "I wish I could strike a flint in that magazine. What was that, Mr. Jones?"

We saw a puff of smoke out at sea, and some moments later a report.

"Why should the British attack us, Uncle?" asked Cynthia. "I thought we were at peace now."

I shook my head at the Skipper.

"Don't know as they have," answered the old man for want of a better explanation.

Cynthia jumped from her seat and ran back to a slight ascent which rose above the beach. To the top of this she climbed, and, shadowing those wondrous eyes with her hand, gazed out to sea.

"It's another vessel! An American, I am sure! Yes, I can see the flag; probably a man-of-war. Regular officers, of course. They won't know how to spell R-U-N—Run!"

"Did you hear me tell you to stop sassin' me a while back? 'Twas the best we could do. Some one got us off our course on purpose. They tell me some one's got a Haitien wife down here."

At these words Cynthia, who at this time seemed to live to make me miserable, surveyed me with unconcealed scorn.

"You had the wheel while Uncle was taking his nap," said she.

"I turned it over to Tomkins a half hour before I called you, Miss Archer. I have never been here before, give you my word," said I.

"I think they're leaving the Yankee now," said the Skipper. "When they take what they want and clear out, we can right her and get her on her course, and I'll take care how I get in these waters again."

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Cynthia took the glass from her Uncle without permission.

"Yes, they are," said she. "Don't you see those black figures climbing over the bulwarks? There, to the right of the mainmast."

"Guess I must be looking through the other end," said the Skipper.

Cynthia restored the magnifying medium with some reluctance.

"My eyes are so much better than yours, Uncle Tony," she urged.

"Use 'em, then!" said the Skipper shortly, as he screwed the glass to a focus. "Yes, they certainly have gone. Yes, by cracky! there goes another shot from the American." He ran a little higher up the hill to a better vantage point. We followed. "I can see 'em now over the bulwarks of the old Yankee. They're pulling like Satan for the Britisher. Hope the Americans 'll knock Ned Chudleigh's head off!"

He changed his focus, and fixed his gaze on the newcomer.

"That last fellow's an American, sure! The other has turned his attention to him."

As the Skipper looked through the glass and reported what he saw, there were several shots interchanged between the two vessels.

"Hope they'll knock seven bells out of 'em!"

"Cook, send up a smoke. They will see us, perhaps, and take us off. Are those our colours, Mr. Jones? Perhaps you can make——"

I almost snatched the glass from his hand. I raised it hurriedly to my eyes.

"It's—yes—no—yes—it is—the——"

"What a lucid description!" remarked Cynthia.

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"Don't devil the man, girl! Can't you speak, Jones? It's the——"

"Stars and Stripes," said I.

The Skipper at this juncture snatched the glass from me. He fixed it upon a nearer point.

"My God!" he ejaculated.

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## CHAPTER II.

### OUR FIRST VIEW OF THE NATIVES.

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The Skipper's tone was reverent, but full of horror. We all, even to the Cook, ran up to a higher spot to see what had so disturbed the old man.

"You'll see it just as well from the beach," said the Skipper. "They've set the old Yankee afire!"

It was true. We could not see very clearly for the smoke which the firing had made, but as we gazed anxiously, knowing what the entire loss of the ship would mean for us, we saw that smoke had begun to pour from the ports and hatches. First appeared the misty stream which the Skipper had discovered, then it grew thicker.

As we gazed, fascinated with the horrible spectacle, the flames began to shoot upward. They curled round the lower mast, they ran up the rigging, they licked their way up the shrouds. They ran aloft, and swallowed the crosstrees, first having eaten into the very tops. The smoke was thicker than ever, and made a dark background for the points and jets of flame, which leaped through its walls. And now, as we watched breathless, each one glued to his post, no word spoken between us, a long, low, ominous rumble came to our ears. There were two or three sharp cracks, the flames leaped to the sky, there was a final thunderous crash, and the air was a mass of flying timbers. I turned to look at the Skipper. The glass had fallen unheeded from his fingers, the tears were dropping off the end of his nose. He winked hard, and took out a bandana and wiped his forehead to hide his emotion.

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"I suppose you think I'm an old fool to stand here and cry like a baby. Perhaps you don't think I should feel anything to see my handsome ship go up in smoke." The old man's lips quivered. "She's been home and wife and children to me for a good many years, the old Yankee Blade has—yes, and a livin'. I ought to have stayed at home. I never should have tried it again. I was foolish; I deserted her; I never should have done it but for that damn' girl, who don't appreciate it any more—"

Cynthia's arms were round the old man's neck.

"Dear Uncle Tony! I do appreciate it. I do! I do! I didn't know you were doing it for me. I thought \_\_\_"

"And I thought they would leave, and we could perhaps get her afloat again. Is there anything left of her, Jones? I suspect we've seen the last of the old Yankee Blade." He turned and walked down the hill. I stooped and picked up the glass and handed it to Cynthia.

She turned it on the spot where the Yankee had gone on the rocks. A dull, thick smoke overhung the place. On the hither side we could see a mass of wreckage. Some large splinters of wood were floating in the water. We heard repeated shots, but the other vessels were obscured from view by the smoke which they themselves had made, as well as that which enveloped the wreck of the Yankee.

"I think there's a little of her left, Uncle Tony," said Cynthia. "She seems to stand up on the rock, part of her. Oh, if they could only see us! We haven't anything to signal with, not even an apron."

She seized the sunbonnet from her head and waved it wildly in the air. "They must see us!" she said. "They must!" But her action was of no avail. Our sight could not penetrate the smoke, and the vessels, even if their crews could have seen us, were too busy to notice us. Cynthia waved until her arm dropped tired at her side.

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"We'll have to give it up, I suppose," she said. "Good-bye, old Yankee Blade, good-bye!" And together we descended the hill. Captain Schuyler had turned his back on the ocean and was talking with the Cook.

"No use crying over spilt milk," I heard him say. The Cook regarded him as surlily as he dared. The pudding lay heavy in his interior, mental and physical.

"We'd better get some food ready and then put out the fire. No knowing who's lurking round."

"Why, Uncle Tony, isn't Haïti a friendly country?"

"Friendly enough, girl, but we don't know what's happened since we were here before. Might have had forty revolutions. These fellows are always revolutin'.—Now, my men, stir round and beat out that fire! Reckon the crawlers are all killed or scattered. Come, men, stir your stumps! Do you hear me?"

The Skipper looked round at the men.

They were standing apart, conversing in low tones. They did not move at once.

"Isn't it exciting?" whispered Cynthia, her eyes shooting out light from the funnel. "Do you believe it's a mutiny? I hope it is. I never saw a mutiny. I believe they usually say: 'Now look a-here, Cap'n, we ain't a-goin' to stand this sort of thing! It's a-goin' to be share and share alike. There ain't no officers and there ain't no men. We're all equal on this here island.'"

I laughed.

"You must have read some very instructive books in your time, Miss Archer," I said.

"Yes, I have. I seem to know exactly what they are saying. Don't you think I understand pretty well how they conduct a mutiny?"

"Yes—in books," I said. I laughed, more to disabuse her mind than anything else. I remembered a very pretty mutiny a few years back. For weeks I never slept without seeing those men strung up to the yard-arm with not a moment in which to say a prayer. I thought this a good time to advance myself a little in her favour, and at the same time make her forget the loneliness of her

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situation. I saw that the Skipper seemed to be arguing with the sailors, and that he seemed to want no help from me.

"I wish that I could express to you, Miss Archer, how really beautiful I think you. The English language is feeble to convey all that——"

"When we get home, Mr. Jones," Cynthia broke in, "I will lend you a book which contains all the adjectives you could possibly need——"

I looked at her to see if she was in earnest.

"It is called 'The Complete Idiot.' Now do stop your nonsense and look at those sailors. What do you suppose they are saying to Uncle?"

I withdrew my gaze from her face and regarded the men as they stood in a group near the Skipper. Their attitude did savour somewhat of insubordination. We could not hear their words or the Skipper's as he answered them.

When they had finished, they proceeded to the glade where the fire had been kindled, and began to beat the bushes with a will. Then, with brooms improvised of thickly leaved branches, they swept the place clean.

"Will that do, Cap'n?" asked Bill Tomkins.

"Yes, I call that a pretty handsome clean up," answered the Skipper. "Now you men go and sit down upon the beach and I'll send you some food."

They withdrew in a cluster, and sat down on the beach as directed. The Cook, who had been broiling some pork, handed us our shares first, each slice on a piece of hard bread. Then he served the men.

Cynthia took her ration and ate as heartily as the rest of us.

"Is it mutiny, Uncle? I was never in a mutiny."

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"Wasn't you, really? Well, it is mutiny, if you like to call it so, Cynthy.—Give me some tobacco, Cook; and you, Minion, just run up the hill and see if those ships are in sight."

The Cook handed the Skipper the tobacco with a look that expressed the wish that it had been gunpowder instead, and the thin young lad, who was at everybody's beck and call, ran as fast as his legs could carry him up to the little knoll. The Skipper seated himself in the shade and puffed away. Cynthia hung anxiously on every puff, every breath.

"Uncle, will you never speak? If you knew how interested I am——"

Captain Schuyler sat, his pipe in his mouth, and talked one-sidedly between the puffs.

"The idiots want to walk to Cap Haïtien," said the Skipper. "I tell 'em it's worse than foolish, but they seem pretty determined. They say they can do it in two days' time. Must be twenty miles or more, following the shore. They say they can bring back horses for the rest of us."

"That's an excellent idea!" said Cynthia. "I don't believe I shall get tired of pork in two days' time. I don't know about the third. Have we enough food for two days, Uncle?"

"Lord, yes! We'll get along a week easy.—What do you think, Jones?"

"I'd let 'em try it," said I. "Of course, they'll never come back. I've seen 'em start off before this to bring aid and succour. They never returned, except in story-books."

"If I was sure of that, I'd let 'em go mighty quick," said the Skipper. "We're better off without 'em."

He turned to the group. "How many of you want to go?" He raised his voice, so that it would carry to where they sat.

Tomkins stood up and answered respectfully:

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"All but the Bo's'n and the Minion, sir."

There was a certain decision in Tomkins' tone, which revealed the fact to me that they intended going, permission or not.

"The Cook, too?" asked Cynthia.

The Cook looked down and shuffled his feet.

"I can cook, Cap'n, miss, sir, beggin' your pardon, ma'm, Mr. Jones," volunteered the Bo's'n.

"Good enough!" said the Skipper. "Let Cook fit you out with vittles, men. What have you got for water?"

Bill Ware spoke up eagerly:

"Tomkins says as there's two or three springs on the way, sir——"

"How does he know?" asked the astonished Skipper.



"Been here before, sir, so he was a-tellin' us last night. Says it's a puffec pair-o-dice."

"Oh, he does, does he?—So you've been here before, have you, Tomkins?"

Tomkins looked daggers at Bill Ware.

"Yessir, I was here some years back."

"Know the coast pretty well?"

"Yessir, pretty well."

"Thought so," muttered the Skipper in a low tone. "Knew it better than I did." Then aloud: "Very well, my man. Now do you think you can get horses from whoever's governor down there, and be back in a week?"

"Sartin sure, sir," answered Tomkins unblushingly.

While Tomkins was speaking, the Skipper was muttering under his breath, "Better get rid of the rascals, anyway."

"You don't think——" said I.

"I do think——" said he.

"What! Wrecked the vessel?" asked Cynthia breathlessly.

"Yes; drove her ashore."

"Why?"

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"Hush!" said the Skipper.

"Tomkins!" called Cynthia.

"For God's sake, Cynthia, don't——"

"Miss Archer, I'm usually called, sir! I believe in always going to the root of every matter."

Cynthia arose from her sitting posture. She stood tall and stately. Her dignified air recalled to my mind a young woman by the name of Portia, of whom I had once read somewhere.

"Be quiet!" said the Skipper, pulling her skirt with a rough jerk. "Sit down!"

Cynthia gently disengaged her skirt from the Skipper's hand. She removed her sunbonnet, and with her pure face turned toward the sheepish Tomkins, she looked like a very young Daniel come to judgment.

It was a strange scene, one which I shall never forget. The tropic shore, the shipwrecked crew, the young girl standing forth as the exponent of right—foolhardy, if you like, but fearless in her righteous indignation.

She raised her hand, commanding the attention of the men.

"Tomkins," she said, "as you shall answer at the day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, did you wreck the Yankee Blade?"

The man shifted from one foot to the other, his head hanging down. He looked up with ferret eyes from under his sparse eyebrows.

"Fore God——" began Tomkins.

"You are before God!" said Cynthia sternly.

He ground his feet restlessly, making little pools in the gravel of the shore.

"O Lord!" groaned the Skipper helplessly.

"Well, then, miss, 'fore God, I didn't!"

"Remember you're on oath, Tomkins. Well, then, who did?"

"Beg his pardon, ma'm, it was Mr. Jones!"

"I!"

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Cynthia turned upon me a glance of most withering scorn and horror.

"You hear what this honest sailor says, Mr. Jones?"

"Tell you how it was, ma'm," said Tomkins. "I come on deck this mornin', long 'bout 'leven o'clock, and I see we was goin' straight for the land. Skipper was below, you was below. Mr. Jones, he had the wheel. I says, 'Fer Gord's sake, Mr. Jones,' I says, 'what are you a-doin', sir?' He says, says he, 'You, Tomkins, mind your da—, mind your busi——'"

"Shut up, Tomkins!" said the Skipper. "If you're goin', you'd better get ready."

Cynthia turned on me.

"What could possess you to do such a thing?"

"I was so anxious to get home to see William Brown," said I. "Haven't we had enough of this farce, Miss Archer?"

The Skipper laughed aloud, and I saw the backs of some of the men shaking.

"Don't be any more kinds of a fool than you can help, Cynthy. Sit down and keep cool until we can get rid of those rascals. Thank God they've elected to go! The sooner they take up their march the better for all hands."

"Do you mean to tell me, Uncle Tony, that you don't believe Tomkins on his oath?"

"What!" The Skipper's voice had the rising inflection. The word was uttered in a tone between a roar and an incredulous scream. "Believe a sailor?" roared the Skipper. "What are you talking about, Cynthy? Believe a sailor? O Lord!"

The men saw the Skipper's amusement, and doubtless judged of the cause.

"No use in threatening Tomkins," he said in my ear. "Better treat it as a joke, and let them go."

"As you say, Captain Schuyler; but when Mr. Tomkins and I meet again, there will be a reckoning that he won't forget, I'll warrant." [Pg 37]

"Perhaps he really thought so," said Cynthia. "Hadn't they better wait until morning? It's getting so late now. They might be lonely without us."

"Now, Cynthy, don't you go and suggest any such a thing. We shan't be lonely without *them*. We shall be well rid of 'em, the Lord knows.—Here, you, Cook, fry some pork for those lunatics! Give 'em two days' rations, and let each man carry his own."

While the Cook was frying the pork, I noticed that the men were busy behind some guava trees at a little distance from the place where we were sitting. I had placed the pillow and blanket at the root of an enormous tree, and had made as comfortable a seat for Cynthia and the Skipper as my limited means would allow. The Skipper had his coat off, and was fanning himself with his great panama hat. The sun was broiling down upon us, but Cynthia looked as cool as a piece of ice from the Passaic River. I never saw such a provoking girl. While every one else was sweltering, she appeared perfectly comfortable. I was trying to balance myself upon a rather sharp piece of rock and to keep the men in my eye at the same time. We could not see much of them. They were stooping down, with their backs toward us.

The Skipper turned lazily round. Suddenly he straightened himself and glared at the group in the bushes.

"What have you got there, Bill Ware?" shouted he.

The Skipper's tone of authority startled the men.

They arose to a standing posture. Bill Ware turned his face toward us.

"We've—we've found some guavas, sir, that's all. I'll bring you over some."

"No, no, I'll come over. I don't know as I remember ever having seen guavas growing on——" [Pg 38]

But Bill Ware had started toward us with great alacrity.

"Don't come here, sir, for the Lord's sake! The place is alive with scorpions."

The Skipper thought better of it, and waited until Bill Ware's arrival. The man walked across, holding something in his hand. When he came near, we discovered two very small and very unripe guavas.

He came close to Cynthia and handed the fruits to her. His face was very red. His breath was almost upon her cheek. She started back.

"Are those guavas? What a curious odour guavas have, Uncle!"

"I never noticed it," said he.

"How queerly Bill Ware walks!" said Cynthia, as she watched his return to his mates. "I never noticed it on board ship. I suppose he hasn't got his land legs on yet."

The Skipper raised himself and looked critically at the man.

"Those are the legs he always has on when he goes ashore," said he.

I had my suspicions, and I saw that the Skipper had his, but I did not want to frighten the girl and anger the men. Besides, she might not be frightened. She seemed to think that she had been sent into this world to set things right, and no one knew what tack she might take next.

The Skipper took out his silver watch. "Come, men, you'd better start! It's gettin' late. You'll want to pick out a good place for the night. It comes down in a minute in the tropics, you know.—Cook, are you ready?"

The men arose, turned one after the other, and came lingeringly out of the bushes.

"Are there any more of those guavas?"

"It's a little early, sir," said Tomkins. "They don't ripen well until the last of May."

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Bill Tomkins's tongue seemed thick and his speech halting.

"Well, it's time to start. Cook'll give you your rations. Come, now! Good-bye, my men. Don't forget to bring those horses. We shall expect you by daybreak on Saturday." (We had gone ashore on a Monday.)

"Yessir, you expect us, sir," answered Tomkins.

The men took their rations from the Cook, then they one and all paid a last visit to the bushes to seek for a few more guavas before they left us, and then, with a hang-dog nod and touch of their caps, they took up their straggling march. We sat watching them as they moved westward in a wavering line.

"It must be very hard work walking up that beach," said Cynthia. "Did you remark what a difficult time Bill Ware had to get pointed straight, Uncle Tony?"

The Skipper and I sat and watched them. There was no need to answer Cynthia. The men made a line as straight as the fences which we were beginning to use about Belleville. The idea came from Virginia. We called them Virginia rail fences. As the last man of them staggered round the point and was lost behind the trunks of the cocoanut grove, the Skipper arose and approached the thicket where the mango tree stood. I followed a close second, and Cynthia came behind.

"I thought as much!" exclaimed the Skipper. He had parted the bushes and stood looking downward. I gazed over his shoulder, and Cynthia condescended to stand on tiptoe and cast her eyes over mine.

"What is it, Uncle Tony?" asked she.

"Those blanked rascals! In the confusion, Jones, do you see? Broke into my store-room, of course. I wanted to bring some myself, but it's never safe with such a crew. Got that at Santo Domingo for medicinal purposes. Wish to Heaven it would physic them all! Darned if I don't! Wish now I'd put arsenic in it." And then followed some language which I will not weary you by repeating. The Skipper was not the most profane man that I ever sailed with, but in those days of which I write—days long past, ah me!—that is saying a great deal more than any one to-day would imagine. Men, and particularly men who followed the sea, did not regard profanity as we do nowadays. Cynthia was used to the Skipper's ordinary looseness of speech, and, having heard it all her life, was astonished at very little that he said. I have learned to look upon such language with disgust, and I thank the refining influences of the day in which we live for making me see how much worse than silly it was, and, though I shall try to make the Skipper's speech sound more like the Skipper of modern times, still to make him seem at all the man that his friends knew him, I must occasionally point his marks as he himself pointed them.

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Cynthia stood looking steadily at her Uncle as his adjectived indignation poured forth. When his vocabulary was exhausted, he sat down on the ground, weak from his exertion. Cynthia stood looking fixedly at him. Then, as the enormity of his offence overcame him, he drew out his bandana and mopped his face.

"Beg pardon, Cynthy, but you shouldn't have been here."

Cynthia fixed him with her glances as long as she could hold her tongue between her teeth, then turned and walked away with dignity.

"Now that girl's mad! And she'll go and tell Mary 'Zekel, and I promised Mary 'Zekel—Where'd we better put that damn thing, anyway?"

I aided the old man as he rolled the cask nearer our camping place, if the spot where we had deposited our few belongings could be called such. We had placed our cooking utensils—or the Bo's'n had for us—the parrot's cage, and the mortuary bag in a secluded spot among the trees. There happened to be a depression in the earth near where we sat, up beyond the line of the beach in the soft earth. We tumbled the cask in and covered it well with leaves and branches. Cynthia, whose curiosity would not allow her to remain longer away, had returned, and was watching our efforts.

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"If they come back, they will demand it," remarked Cynthia.

"What! Those honest sailors?" inquired I.

I was still sore from her ill treatment of me. Cynthia's face, as much as I could see of it, was a brilliant crimson.

"Have they any weapons, Uncle Tony?" she asked, ignoring me entirely.

"Got pistols, I'll be bound, every man Jack of 'em!—By the way, Jones, what have we got in the way of firearms?"

I threw back my thin coat and displayed a pistol stuck in my belt in either side.

"Oh!" exclaimed Cynthia. "If I had known that you carried those murderous weapons, I should have refused to come ashore with you."

"From the ship, or the boat?" I asked.

She blushed again, and drooped her head so that I could see nothing but the white top of the funnel.

"I've got a fine knife," said the Skipper, "and so has the Bo's'n. He has brought some ammunition ashore, and I've got my old musket, of course."

"Do you really suppose that we shall need all those dreadful things?" asked Cynthia, her lips white and quivering.

"And you're the girl who fired on the letter of marque?" said I, for want of a more non-committal name. "What sort of a girl are you, anyway?"

Here was an anomaly, indeed! A girl who had had the courage not only to defy her Uncle and the whole ship's company, but to fire a gun which made a pretty good deal of noise when close to one's ear, afraid to listen to a simple discussion of weapons of defence! The Skipper at this moment hitched himself up a little higher, and threw his whole weight against the trunk on which he was leaning. I heard a softy, mushy crumble, and his head and shoulders disappeared from view.

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I arose and ran to his aid, and at once clasped his outstretched hands and pulled with all my might. He finally, with my help, succeeded in regaining his position. He spluttered and coughed, his eyes and mouth full of the dust of decay. He rose to his feet and kicked viciously at the crumbling bark. A large piece fell inward, making an opening, into which a man could have squeezed himself. At that very moment, so mysterious are the ways of Providence, there was a short, sharp whiz and ping, and a bullet struck the tree just above my head. I lost no time in looking for the cause of this assault, but only the thick green of the near wood rewarded my searching glance. I seized Cynthia by the wrist and bent her almost to her knees. I forced her to push her way into the opening.

"It may be an attack," I said, hurriedly, to the Skipper. "Go in quickly! I will follow."

No one who has not seen the great trees of Santo Domingo and Haïti can believe to what a grand extent they grow. I have heard of the so-called "big trees" of California. The only one which I have seen is one placed in the grounds of the Smithsonian Institution at Washington. I made that trip with my wife lately. We were both of us a trifle infirm for so long a jaunt, but she agreed with me, and she has also been among the great trees of Haïti, that nothing that she had ever seen, with the exception of this one curiosity, exceeded the size of those trees in the island.

As yet we had not caught a glimpse of our secret foe. Whether he had caught sight of us or not I did not know, but, as a second bullet whizzed past my head, I hastily secreted myself also within the hollow trunk. I whispered to Cynthia to push over more to the side, and give room to her Uncle and myself. I could hear the beating of her heart, I stood so near her. Several bullets struck the tree, and one entered and dropped upon my foot. And now I heard some cries of anger. My curiosity became too much for me. I stood as near the opening as I could and placed my eye just over the edge of it. The voices grew louder, the bullets flew faster, and then from the bushes emerged a retreating party. Their backs were toward us. They were firing as they retreated. They were dark men, but not of pure African type.

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They were unclothed, except for some trousers of white linen and a thin sort of shirt. They wore belts and carried the national weapon, the machete, stuck through the leather bands.

"Are you afraid of fainting?" I asked Cynthia. "Here, take a whiff of this." I had a little kit in my pocket which I had seized upon as I left the ship. I felt for the vial of sal-volatile, telling what it was by the smell of the cork, and pressing it into her hand.

"Faint!" she replied with scorn. "If I could only see something, I should enjoy it hugely."

"It would not be safe," I whispered. "Stand farther back. They may discover us, in any case."

"Stand farther in, Cynthy," whispered the Skipper. "I'd like nothing better than to join one side or the other, but I can't risk it with you here."

I pushed my knife through the soft, spongy wood where the bullet had entered, and made the hole larger. Here I could see, myself unseen.

"Do let me look, Mr. Jones," said Cynthia.

As any bullet which struck the tree might enter it, and she was in equal danger anywhere inside the tree, I saw no reason why she should not look if she felt so inclined. I gave up my place to her, and had to content myself with peeping through the large hole through which we had entered.

The line of retreat was now changed, for I saw the Haïtiens veer to the right, toward the beach, still firing as they retreated. There were yells and wild noises. The attacking party seemed close to us, and these sounds did not seem unfamiliar. As we gazed at this unexpected sight, we perceived that the retreating party had with, them a young girl. She was tied by the wrists to the belt of one of the men, who fired as he backed toward us. The girl did not struggle to free herself, but ran backward as the men ran. She seemed a not unwilling captive. The tall, thin mulatto would fire a shot, turn and pull his captive after him, then load and fire again. There was blood

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upon the girl's clothing and upon the clothes of her captors.

"Oh, that poor child!" whispered Cynthia. "I must go out and take her away from that brute!" I barred the way.

"It would be death for us all, perhaps," said I. "Wait! The attacking party may be her friends. Whatever we do, I beg of you keep concealed. That is your only safety."

"Don't be a fool, Cynthia!" whispered the Skipper hoarsely. "No one knows what's going to happen." And so prophetic were his words that, as we listened, we heard a thoroughly American whoop, participated in by several voices, and who should burst from the undergrowth, shouting as they came, but Bill Tomkins, followed by McCorkle, Bill Ware, the Growler, Hummocks, Tanby, and all the rest of them.

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### CHAPTER III.

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#### WE CHANGE OUR CAMP, AND CYNTHIA DISCOVERS A DISTURBING ELEMENT.

The attacking party seemed to remember the little camp where they had remained for so short a time. As they advanced upon the Haïtiens, they gazed around, as if the place were familiar to them, but at the same time they continued to come forward, and to fire as fast as they could load their pistols. They outnumbered the Haïtiens, as they were thirteen and the Haïtiens only four. As the Haïtiens backed toward the shore and to the eastward of our shelter, we lost sight of them entirely. I took the Skipper by the shoulders and drew him away from his position. I opened my knife and tried to pierce a hole through the tree on the side toward the water, so that I could follow the men with my eyes, but the wood was more firm than at the place where we had entered the cavity, and I could not manage it. We heard the sound of bullets rattling among the leaves, and fierce cries and oaths, mingled with long sobbing wails from the young captive, but we could now see nothing of the battle.

It was exasperating to be obliged to remain in seclusion. We might have joined the attacking party, but, though no one enjoyed a scrimmage more than I, I reflected that if the Captain or I should be killed the chances were that Cynthia would be left at the mercy of the sailors or the Haïtiens, and I could not decide in my own mind which would be the worst. The sailors were all very well so long as they had the eye and nerve of two men to oppose them, but if either one of us should be killed, the girl would be left with only one protector, and should anything befall her she might better be dead than to fall into the hands of the Haïtiens or of that drunken crew of sailors.

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Thinking of the Haïtiens brought to my mind the keg of rum. I turned to the Skipper—rather, to the place where I knew him to be—and said:

"Captain, we do not know what may happen. These brutes may return and find the cask, and we ought to have a little of that liquor."

"No danger of their finding it," whispered the Skipper.

"Well, perhaps not," said I. "But I think I had better steal out, now that they have passed by, and get what I can. Where did the Bo's'n put the cup?"

"No need to look for that, Jones; here's my flat bottle. I didn't fill it last time I used it. Knew I had plenty on board. Take this."

I groped in the dark and my hand met the Skipper's. I took the bottle from him and went to the opening in the tree. I put my head out cautiously and listened. Shots were still being exchanged, though they sounded much farther away. I withdrew inside the tree again.

"I think," said I, speaking aloud, "that if you and Miss Archer will lie close I can manage it."

"I don't want any rum, of course," said Cynthia, "but I am dying of thirst. Do you think that you could manage to get to the breaker, Mr. Jones, and bring me a little water?"

"Where did they put the breaker?" I asked.

"Just up along the bed of that little dry creek. Not more than a hundred feet away. Directly back from the shore."

"If it is a possibility, you shall have it," I answered.

I advanced with caution from my hiding place. The trees were so thick to the eastward that I was now completely concealed from the two parties. I wanted much to follow them and discover, if possible, how the battle had waged, but Cynthia wanted the water. That was enough for me. They might take it into their heads to return, and then we should again be imprisoned. Without more ado I hastened back through the glade, and found the water breaker just where Cynthia had told me it was. I found and filled one of our two cups and returned, carrying the water carefully, so that it would not spill. When I reached the place where the rum keg lay, I uncovered it. To my

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surprise, I found that the bung had fallen out. In the haste with which we had moved it we had not noticed this. I saw that much of the precious liquid had been lost. There was, however, enough and to spare. I placed my bottle upon the ground, raised the cask, and tipped it so that the bottle would fill. The position of the keg was awkward, and I lost much of the liquor. Some large bees flew near and settled on the stones wet with the rum. The air was filled with the odour which they had noticed almost as soon as I had. I laid the keg down, bringing the bung right side up, and, having no stopper, I proceeded to fill the opening with leaves. These I gathered in handfuls, and stuffed them into the orifice. The mass that I squeezed together in my hand was not large enough to fill the hole, and the leaves fell inside the keg. This happened twice or more, but finally I seized a double handful and forced them into the bunghole, and pressed them compactly down. This time I was successful; then I took up the cup of water, and proceeded upon my way back to our refuge.

I still heard distant shouts, and the sound of an occasional shot from a gun. There were voices from the water, as well as from the land. I wondered what new danger threatened us. When I got opposite the tree where Cynthia and her Uncle were concealed, I set the cup and the bottle upon the ground, and, crouching down, I stole toward the line of the beach. I passed from tree to tree with great care. Finally I reached a vantage point where I could survey all the actors in the drama.

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The first thing I discovered was that our two boats were a hundred yards or so out on the waters of the bay, and that the foremost one only was occupied. The dinghy was being towed behind the long boat. There were two persons in the boat, and, as I shaded my eyes from the rays of the setting sun, which struck obliquely down the long beach, I managed to make out the Bo's'n and the Minion. The Bo's'n was paddling slowly along with an easy motion, which did not seem to argue at all that he had any intention of leaving the island, and the Minion was standing up in the stern sheets and executing what we should call nowadays a double shuffle or a breakdown. He made derisive motions toward those on shore, whistled and laughed unrestrainedly, patted his legs as we would if calling a dog, and, in fact, was so outrageous in his insults that he had worked the men into a perfect frenzy. I truly think that his life would not have been worth a moment's purchase had the sailors on shore been able to lay hands on him. The Haïtiens were nowhere to be seen, and of the sailors there remained but nine. Whether some of the men had pursued the Haïtiens or whether they had been killed, I could not determine. I saw that Bill Tomkins, the acknowledged leader of the men, had the young girl in his possession. The cords were still around her wrists; the other ends he had twisted round his hand, as one holds the reins in driving a frisky horse. The girl had her hands over her eyes, and was weaving back and forth, as if in great agony of mind. If we had had the Bo's'n and Minion on our side, we might have attacked the sailors and rescued the girl. But the men were just enough inflamed with liquor to care nothing for the authority of either Captain Schuyler or myself, and I thought it more prudent to wait a little and see what resulted. For, terrible as it was to see that young girl in the clutches of those rough men, it would be death to us three to have them obtain possession of Cynthia.

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I now saw that the men, with fists shaking in air, and uttering bitter and profane imprecations at the Bo's'n and the Minion, had turned their heads our way again. I retreated hastily, and picked up my bottle and the cup of water. I had hardly reached the hollow tree when I heard the sound of running footsteps, and just as I got safely inside they rushed past us, Bill Tomkins pulling the young captive after him. The poor child was forced to run with him, or to be dragged along the beach.

The sailors ran straight for the mango tree, whooping and hallooing as they came. Tomkins tied the cords which he held in his hand to a stout limb, thus fettering his captive, and then, with his comrades, proceeded to search the thicket. I knew at once for what they were searching.

I heard some reference to "the old man," which I understood, of course. When they spoke of "the popinjay," I was at a loss to comprehend to whom they referred. Bill Tomkins seemed to take charge and give orders. He remained close to the tree and near his captive. There was blood upon his hands and clothes, and upon the young girl's skirt. The girl leaned against the tree in the most abject state of misery and fear. Each time that Tomkins moved she raised her large eyes to his in a frightened, imploring manner, as if begging for mercy.

"I *must* go and rescue that child!" whispered Cynthia to me in fierce tones. I seized her wrists and held her in a viselike grasp.

"You will do nothing of the kind," I whispered back. "We should be at the mercy of those ruffians. Wait until the case gets desperate. They may mean to liberate her themselves."

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The men had always been fairly good sailors on board ship, and had been respectful to the officers during the voyage, but the enemy that a man takes into his mouth to steal away his brains had made them fiends. They ran about in a sort of frenzy, looking for the keg, uttering wild oaths and imprecations against the Skipper and that "blanked popinjay," whom I was finally forced to mentally acknowledge was myself. I could see no way out of the difficulty. I hoped that they would resume their march along the coast, and yet I did not purpose that they should take the young girl with them. I thought that should they discover the keg, no bounds would be placed upon the excesses which they might commit.

We watched them with anxiety through our vantage holes, and at last, just when we hoped that they had missed the keg, some one stumbled exactly upon it. My heart fell with a thump like lead as I heard Hummocks's foot strike against the hoop. A shout of joy went up from the men which

made me heartsick. Even Tomkins left his captive and joined the others. They threw themselves upon the ground one and all, and struggled like wild men for the first draught of the madly desired liquor. Blows began to rain down, and pistols and machetes were drawn. I began to hope that they would kill, or at least maim each other sufficiently to allow of our capturing them with the aid of the Bo's'n and the Minion. But Tomkins, seeing how things were going, interposed. He called a halt in an authoritative tone of voice.

"Belay there, boys!" he cried; "let's be fair. What do you say to drawing lots?" He stooped and picked some blades of grass, and broke them in different lengths.

"Somebody's got to drink first. You can't all drink to onct." As he spoke he arranged the blades between his fingers so that they appeared the same length. The men stopped quarrelling and faced Tomkins.

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"Shortest drinks first," said he. "Step up, Growls, and take a chance."

Growls drew a short blade, Hummocks a shorter, Bill Ware a very short one, and, at last, the longest of all was left in Tomkins's hand. The men crowded close together with an eagerness which should have been inspired by a more worthy motive.

"It's Bill Ware," said Tomkins; and, without wasting time unnecessarily, Bill Ware plumped himself upon the ground, his mouth to the bunghole. Tomkins held a battered old watch in his hand, and kept his eyes fixed upon the second hand.

"Ten seconds apiece," said Tomkins. "Time!" he cried suddenly. Bill Ware had almost to be dragged from the keg by sheer force.

"You, Hummocks!" said Tomkins and the scene was repeated. The thirsty crew had even a harder tussle to pull Hummocks from the keg than they had with Bill Ware, Ware himself tugging at Hummocks's legs, while the rest endeavoured to unclasp his arms from the keg.

"My turn," muttered Growls, in that tone which had procured him his name. "Time me, boys, but time me fair."

"That cask's gettin' light," remarked Tomkins in an anxious tone of voice.

"It's just like a play," whispered Cynthia. "I never saw a play but once. Aunt Mary 'Zekel thinks it's wicked. It was a more refined play than this, but I consider this all very interesting."

"What about the girl?" asked I.

"I have not forgotten her," said Cynthia. "I am hoping that those brutes will fall asleep; then I can go out and rescue her."

"What, from those honest sailors?" I asked. I could not resist it.

For some time I had been conscious of a distinct burning sensation in the palms of my hands. I could not account for it except that I had had my hands in salt water a great deal during the day, and, as we had been unprotected from the sun much of the time, I thought that the combination had affected them unpleasantly. However, no one had complained, and Cynthia's skin was certainly much more tender than mine. My palms itched incessantly, and when I rubbed them to quiet this unpleasant sensation, the skin suddenly puffed up and my wrists pained me intensely. My fingers swelled, and the pains shot up to my shoulders. I bore it without a word, hoping that it would soon abate. I would not have had Cynthia hear me complain for the entire world. I had been obliged to play the part of coward in her estimation too often during the last few hours to wish her to see another exhibition of that attribute from me. So when she whispered to me to pick up the blanket which had been trodden under foot, I seized the rough thing and handed it to her, though its contact seemed to scorch my flesh like living coals.

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I had fancied that the men might drink themselves into a state of insensibility, but I did not dream that this condition would overcome them so speedily. In a very few moments after they had taken each one his allotted amount of the rum, each man had rolled over on the grass and laid there like a log—all but Tomkins, who was the last, according to lot, to be served. When he found that there was very little of the liquor remaining for him, he swore frightful oaths, and used such language as would have precipitated a general quarrel had not the rum taken an almost immediate effect upon those who had drank of it. His vile epithets fell upon unheeding ears so far as his mates were concerned, and, in fact, in a very few moments he, too, was breathing heavily.

"I never did a kind action in my whole blamed life," snarled Tomkins, "but what I got my come-uppance," and I must say that, painful as is the reflection, I have noticed much the same circumstance in my dealings with my fellow-men.

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Before Tomkins had ended his grumblings his utterance became thick, and he followed his comrades to the borderland of death.

"Do you think they're asleep?" whispered Cynthia softly in my ear. Eleven distinct and stertorous snores answered her more plainly than any assurances of mine could have done, and a twelfth, from the interior of our tree, chorussed them and made the round dozen.

"Poor dear Uncle Tony! I had forgotten all about him. I remember now that he has not spoken for some time," said Cynthia in her gentlest voice.

She felt for her pillow and then for the old man's head. "Strike a light, Mr. Jones," she added, more kindly than she had spoken hitherto. I did as she requested, repeatedly striking my fire until she had made the unconscious Skipper comfortable. When this was accomplished we stepped outside. Although the sun was getting low, I found it difficult to face the glare and the heat after the darkness and cool seclusion of our hiding place.

The young captive was still endeavouring to pull her hands loose from the cords. They were black and swollen. I say black, for, though the girl was a Haitien, she evidently had a mixture of French blood in her veins, being much lighter coloured than the men in whose custody we first discovered her. I thought that should she smile and her face recover from the storm of grief which had swept across it for the last half hour, she would be very pretty. She had soft, large eyes like a deer's, but they were swollen with crying, and her face was drawn with pain.

Cynthia emerged from the tree just after me. The girl, hearing the roll of a stone upon which I stepped, turned in a terrified way and confronted us. It was not to be wondered at that she should be horrified at seeing two persons whom she had not seen before, appear upon the now quiet scene. She raised her manacled arms to heaven and shrieked as if for aid, then threw herself upon the beach, and screamed and beat her head against the ground.

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The education of this child had taught her to fear the mysterious, and when the beautiful white girl emerged like a hamadryad from a tree in the depths of the forest, the child imagined her an avenging angel. What vengeance she intended to take upon a young girl of such tender years the girl herself had not knowledge enough to imagine. Later developments taught us what she had feared.

The poor child continued to wail and beat her head against the ground. I glanced at Cynthia. Her lovely eyes were dimmed with tears. At once she became all gentleness, all tenderness. She approached the girl slowly, as she would a frightened bird, holding out her hand and making soft, cooing noises. As she drew near, the girl shrank behind the tree, peering out with terrified eyes at this strange apparition. Cynthia continued to advance, still making those sweet sounds. The prisoner trembled in every limb, and drew away as far as the cords would allow. She looked wildly over her shoulder, as if longing to escape. Cynthia came nearer, and put out her hand. She laid it gently on the girl's shoulder, when the young savage twisted her head suddenly and with a snap like that of a wild beast buried her teeth in the tender flesh. A blow from my hand laid her sprawling. Cynthia turned angrily on me, forgetful of her own pain.

"Don't you dare to interfere with me!" she said angrily. "I shall never get her confidence now."

The Haïtienne lay where I had thrown her, and watched our movements with glittering eyes. Cynthia took me by the shoulder and marched me off to the hollow trunk, where the Skipper lay snoring his antiphonal response to the louder snores of the sailors. Then Cynthia returned to the attack of kindness and humanity.

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The prisoner, seeing that I was quite gone, and that it was Cynthia's wish that I should be gone, lay looking at her as she again approached her. This time Cynthia knelt upon the ground, and, seemingly without fear, she stretched out her hand and gently stroked the captive's head. The girl did not renew her attack upon Cynthia, but suffered her to stroke her head and coo and murmur over her.

"Bring me some water, Mr. Jones!" Cynthia ordered.

I stretched my hand inside the tree and felt for the cup; then I ran to the place where we had left the breaker of water. I drew some and carried it to Cynthia. She took it from me, saying at the same time:

"What is the matter with your hand?"

"Don't mind me!" I said shortly. By this time my fingers were puffed out of all semblance to their original shape, and when I endeavoured to move them the pain was intense.

Cynthia put the cup to the girl's lips. She shook her head and closed her lips tightly together. Then Cynthia drank a little of the water, and again held it toward the girl. This time she drained the water eagerly and to the last drop.

"Some more!" demanded Cynthia, holding out the cup to me. When I had replenished it, Cynthia took her handkerchief from her pocket, dipped it in the water, and bathed the girl's face and hands, whereupon the prisoner drew a long sigh of satisfaction.

"Bring me your knife, Mr. Jones," ordered Cynthia.

"If you free her, she will run away," protested I.

"Bring it at once!" responded Cynthia.

It was with difficulty that I opened the blade with my swollen fingers, but, after slipping the lanyard over my head, I managed to do so. Then I walked with the open knife toward the pair. When the captive saw me coming she began to cry and scream and roll on the ground in an agony of terror.

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Bill Tomkins heard the cry, and turned over in his sleep, opened his eyes a crack or so, asked how the weather was, and went off again into a profound slumber. I argued that if he who had drunk



so little of the rum was thus stupefied, the others would not awake for many hours.

"Lay your knife within reach and go away again, Mr. Jones," said Cynthia.

I obeyed, as I was willing to obey her every word and gesture.

As Cynthia took the knife up from the stone where I had laid it, the girl sobbed and wailed and clutched at the grass.

"Go away," said Cynthia; "quite away."

I did as I was bid, and sat again at the foot of our sheltering tree. Then Cynthia, with motions and signs that she did not intend to injure her, drew near the captive, and, taking her unawares and with dexterous movement, inserted the point of the knife under first one and then the other of the cords, and the captive was free. The girl looked up in a dazed sort of surprise. Cynthia smiled down on her as only the angels in heaven smile. Then she again dipped the handkerchief in water and again cared for the swollen hands. The girl ceased her crying, knelt down and laid a caressing cheek on Cynthia's feet, then sprang up and ran into the forest.

"You have seen the last of her," said I.

Perhaps I was a little jealous of this new favourite.

"If I have, you are to blame," said Cynthia, "and I shall never forgive you."

But I had prophesied falsely, for the child came back to us in a moment with her hands full of leaves. She gave them to Cynthia, and by signs persuaded her to bind them on her own hands and wrists.

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The girl then stood up and beckoned to Cynthia to follow her into the wood. They walked together a few steps. Then she stopped and pointed to a strange arrow-shaped leaf. She shook her head and held up her hands as if in horror, and displayed various signs of fear. I noticed from where I stood the leaves to which she pointed. They were the same kind with which I stopped the bunghole in the keg.

"The Skipper did not need the arsenic," I muttered to myself as I surveyed the sleeping men.

I went inside the tree and awoke the Skipper. He turned over drowsily at first, and asked how we were heading, and if she was off her course. I shook him pretty roughly then, and he asked me how many bells.

I answered, and truly, that it was four bells, and the dog watch. Dog's watch, I might have said; I had certainly had one. I then hurriedly explained the situation to the Skipper.

"Captain Schuyler," I said, "I think we had better get away from here before these wretches wake up. There is no knowing what they may do. They may wake up sober and they may wake up drunk. They may possibly awake in a pleasant and friendly state of mind, but it's my opinion that they will be pretty vicious when they find the rum all gone and also that I have liberated that young girl."

"What young girl?" asked the Skipper.

"The young girl they rescued from the Haïtiens."

"What Haïtiens?" asked the Skipper.

I saw that it was no use to consult the Skipper; he was hardly awake, and could not yet comprehend what had happened during the last hour. I left him with Cynthia, to do what he could toward gathering up the articles hidden in the bushes, and ran down to the beach. I saw that the two boats were farther out than they had been, and, when I put my hands to my mouth and shouted my loudest to the Bo's'n, I could but just make him hear. He and the boy laid to their oars with a will, but I soon perceived that they were making little progress. I saw the Bo's'n drop his oars, stand up in the boat and gaze around him, and, as there was no one but the Minion to help him row, it was plain that he could not overcome the current, which I now saw was taking the boats out to sea. I saw the Bo's'n take a sight on shore and watch it for a moment, like a true sailor; then he shook his head, stepped to the stern, and, drawing the boats close together, he cut the painter short off at the bows and set the dinghy adrift. I was sorry to see this, but I knew that unless it was done we should lose both boats, and the Bo's'n and boy as well. Then the Bo's'n sat down and began to pull with vigorous strokes, and soon the boat was quite near the shore.

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"Beg your pardon, sir, Mr. Jones, but where's them crew?"

I pointed over my shoulder, and made him understand that they were incapable of injuring us. He did not ask how this had come about, but pulled up to the beach. I saw that the boy was rowing with one hand; the other was bound up with a piece of cloth, and was bleeding a little, the result, probably, of the defiance which I had witnessed. The Bo's'n had torn away a part of his shirt sleeve to bind up the boy's hand. This, I thought, argued well for us. I had fancied that I could trust the other men, and how mistaken I had been! This kind trait, however, in a man on whom we must depend more or less, gave me courage.

"Where are those Haïtiens?" I asked.

"Dead, sir, as far's I know."

"Where is Wilson?"

"Saw him fall—and Tanby, too. Guess they're all down the beach there together."

I did not investigate. We had no time. It was growing late, and I wished to get away before the men should awaken. I hurried my little party together. They ran into the bushes, one and all, picking up and carrying what they could. Captain Schuyler and the Bo's'n rolled the keg of pork and the breaker down to the water's edge; the boy held the boat while we deposited our few belongings therein.

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"If you'll take the bag, I'll carry the parrot," said Cynthia.

I lifted the mortuary receptacle from its hiding place among the leaves.

"Why, just look at that crab!" said Cynthia. "That's a very good discovery. If we can find crabs, we'll——"

I seized her by the arm, with horror, no doubt, in my look. I pushed her roughly toward the beach.

"Run," I said, "for God's sake!"

"How rough you are!" said Cynthia; but she ran a little way, as I impelled and commanded. I hastily set the parrot's cage on the ground and drew my pistol, and, difficult as it was, I pulled the trigger. I aimed straight at the black, hairy thing; but my bullet missed, and I seized up the cage, preparing for flight, when I saw the animal turn to crawl sluggishly away. I looked with astonishment at this movement of the tarantula, for it was that dread scourge of the tropic forest that Cynthia had taken for a crab. I saw that it was moving from the spot where the rum had been spilled, and found in its low and halting pace additional reason to believe that the liquor which I had sought to protect with the leaves from evaporation I had unconsciously drugged, perhaps poisoned. There was nothing to do. I had no remedies, and such men, I argued, are better off, or rather we are better off with them dead than alive. I took a second shot at the tarantula, and this time I was successful. I had shot it through the body. The body was as large as an egg, the legs long and hairy, and the proboscis curved, pointed, and vicious-looking. Cynthia's hurried departure had left me to carry the bag and the parrot. My hands were extremely sore, and, somehow or other, as I lifted the cage I swung it against a rock. The catch was loosened, the bottom fell out. In my nervousness I dropped the cage, and before I knew it I heard a voice over my head, saying, "There's no fool like an old fool!"

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Here was a nice mess! Cynthia's parrot gone! The pride of her heart sitting over my head in a tropic wood, where he could fly away, if he wanted to, hundreds of miles, and always find a resting place.

"Why don't you come, Mr. Jones?" It was Cynthia's voice.

I hastily picked up the cloth which always went with the cage, and which had covered the bird on its voyage ashore, threw it over the wire top, and covered the cage. I refastened the catch, and came stumbling down to the beach with my two burdens.

"Miss Archer, you had better sit in the stern," said I, as I proceeded to place the cage in the bow.

"I prefer the bow, thank you," said Cynthia.

I waded out in the water and set the cage in the stern sheets. At this Cynthia began to climb over the seats. She reached the stern just as I removed the cage and waded with it back to the bow. At this Cynthia stood up, preparing to move again.

"Sit down, Cynthia; you can't crawl over me."

"But, Uncle Tony, I want to hold Solomon," said Cynthia. "He gets so frightened without me."

"He won't this time," I said. "Besides, the yellow girl will have to come in here." We had left the stranger on the beach purposely until the last. She watched our preparations with interest, crouching on the beach, staring at every movement of Cynthia's, and occasionally turning a look of horror in the direction of the men. When she was sure that Cynthia was seated in the boat, and that she had no intention of returning, the girl stretched out her arms and said something which we could not understand. Without more ado I took her up from the beach and placed her beside Cynthia. A flock of parrots had settled in the mango tree, and Cynthia looked at them with interest. I pushed the boat from shore and jumped in. As I did so I heard from the tree the words, "Damn those Britishers!"

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"How far off that sounds, Mr. Jones! Was that Solomon?"

"I think it was, undoubtedly," said I.

"It sounded up in that tree. Do you think that perhaps while we were in hiding some wild parrots have come around and learned to speak as he does?"

"It is barely possible," said I. "Now, Bo's'n, look out there; what are you doing? We don't want to run ashore too soon."

"Are we putting out to sea in an open boat, Uncle?"

"Ask Jones," growled the Skipper. "He seems to be the captain of this expedition."

I saw that the old man's feelings were hurt because I had not consulted him, but there had not been time. I felt that the party must obey my orders first and protest afterward.

"I only want to run back along the beach a mile or so," I said, "to get away from the crew. The chances are that they'll think that we have tried to get to Cap Haïtien and follow along the coast; but from what I heard at Santo Domingo of Christophe's latest didos, I don't believe we want to go to Cap Haïtien just now."

"Why, Mr. Jones! And you let the men go! They might all have been killed!"

"Just what I was hoping for," said I. "A little more lively with those oars, Bo's'n; it's growing dark."

"How quiet Solomon is!" said Cynthia. Just then there came the distant words, "No fool like an old fool."

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"It certainly is among those parrots there," said the Skipper.

"Yes, I think it is," said I.

"I never heard of wild birds learning to talk so soon," said Cynthia. "I don't believe you will get any one to believe it at home."

"Neither do I," said I.

The night had come down upon us suddenly, but there was a fine line of light in the east, which betokened an early moonrise. As we looked out to sea, we could still perceive a faint glow round the wreck through the haze which overspread the water in that direction, but of other ships we saw none. We had forgotten about the fight between the pirate and the American while watching the fight on shore, and whatever had happened there was no one to tell us. I had hoped that the American would have sunk the pirate, and then we could have pushed out to him in our boats and gone home in one of our own bottoms, but the two vessels had vanished as completely as if they had never existed. It has seemed to me since that the privateer, as we called him, had tried to run away, and the American in chasing him had been led either very far out to sea or else round some point which hid them both from view. And now the moon, which had arisen many hours earlier, flooded the world. Its light came across the water a beam of silver. Our boat seemed always in its rays. This worried me somewhat, as I felt that we must be silhouetted against the eastern glow, and that any one on shore with hostile intent could follow us to our hiding place by simply walking along the beach. We kept rather close in shore on this account. When we had rowed about a mile and a half, we came to a little indentation, which I thought betokened the presence of a stream or rivulet from the hills.

"What do you think of this place for a landing, Captain?" asked I.

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"This isn't my expedition," said the Skipper surlily. I wasted no words in explanation. I ordered the Bo's'n to pull for the beach, and we were soon ashore.

It was a pretty place, this, at which we had landed; an ideal one, I have thought since, for a modern picnic, but God forbid that any of the young women of the present day should have to go through what we had suffered, and what was to come, for the sake of finding so pleasant a picnic ground. We rowed the boat directly into the small inlet, and the Bo's'n, the Skipper, and I hauled her up a little way on the shelving beach. It was hard to know just what was best to do—whether to prepare for a land flight or for a sea flight. We took the stores out of the boat, but laid them near it, so that we could replace them at a moment's notice. We dared not build a fire, as the strange vessel might return, so eating some hard bread and drinking some water had to content us. We laid the blanket upon the ground and the pillow at its head. I motioned to Cynthia to take her position there. She beckoned to the girl, who laid down by her. The Skipper stretched himself at Cynthia's feet, and the Bo's'n, the Minion, and I removed ourselves to a spot at a little distance.

I laid awake the early part of the night, partly because I was anxious and worried, and partly because I was suffering a good deal from what I now felt sure was poison. If my simply touching those leaves had had that effect, I wondered what would be the result to the men of the Yankee's crew. I laid on my back, looking up into the sky. The moon had set, the heavens were deep and dark, but studded with stars. The Southern Cross stood out beautiful and brilliant. I had seen it so many times when cruising in these waters, and here it was again to welcome me as an old friend. Strange how one feels a personal right to, almost ownership of, these splendid works of God when again one meets them after a long or short separation. A swelling comes up in the heart and a pride in seeing again the thing which one has known for years, but which, so sad and persistent is fate, ignores us in return, unknown atoms that we are!

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It must have been much after midnight. I had dropped off into an uneasy slumber, when suddenly I was awakened by the sound of a stealthy footstep. A pebble rattled against another pebble; I raised myself upon my elbow. The stars were obscured by heavy black clouds, which had arisen after we had settled ourselves for the night. I saw nothing unusual among us. I could dimly distinguish some recumbent forms, and could trace the spot where Cynthia and the stranger had laid themselves down. The Skipper, if one could judge from the sounds, was enjoying his first sleep hugely. I have never seen a being with such a capacity for sleep. I did not disturb the old

man, but turned quietly and raised myself to my feet. I looked in all directions, but there was nothing to be seen. I walked on tiptoe to where the Skipper snored and dreamed probably of his lost Yankee Blade. I could dimly see one sleeping form, and from the position in which it lay I felt sure that it was Cynthia. The rescued girl was nowhere to be seen. I returned to my sleeping place and laid myself down again and watched, lifting my head occasionally and scanning the edge of the wood and the near hill. Finally my search was rewarded by seeing two forms come out from behind a clump of trees and stand a moment in earnest conversation. Then one of the figures vanished from sight, and the other came without noise toward the camp. As it passed me by, I recognised the form and height of the young Haitien girl. She stepped lightly and quickly, making no noise as she went, and laid down again by Cynthia without disturbing her.

We were all awake early. When I opened my eyes I found that both Cynthia and the girl were absent. In a few moments, however, they came toward us, Cynthia fresh and smiling from her bath in the stream. One could follow this stream a hundred yards up toward the hills, and the bushes drooped, so that they made for the bather a perfect screen. The Haitien girl followed in Cynthia's footsteps, like a devoted and faithful animal. The rest which she had obtained made her look almost handsome, and she had evidently imitated Cynthia in bathing and in arranging her hair.

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Cynthia had in her hand a large bunch of stems and flowers, behind which her head was nearly hidden.

"Do I look like Birnam Wood?" she called as she came toward us.

"Throw those down, I beg of you, Miss Archer," I shouted, "if you don't want your hands to look as mine do. It is most dangerous to pick flowers in any woods, and here——"

Cynthia continued arranging her flowers.

"You should let Lacelle show you where to get that remedy which she gathered for herself yesterday," said she.

Lacelle seemed to understand, for the moment that Cynthia called her attention to my swollen hands she ran hastily toward the bank. Again I urged, "Do throw away those flowers." Cynthia at my request flung them on the beach. As they fell, a strange metallic sound struck upon our ears.

"I have thrown something away with them," said Cynthia. "What can it be? I have no rings or jewellery. Can it be my scissors or my thimble?" But a search of the interior of the little bag depending from her belt disclosed the fact that she was still in possession of those useful articles. I stooped over the weeds and, as well as I could, pulled the bunch apart. I searched among its leaves. Upon the very central branch—a branch of thin wood with heavy green stems jutting out from either side—I discovered the cause of the strange sound. I found a large twisted circle of some dark metal, dull in some places, in others so bright that it hurt my eyes. The circle was made by the curving of the tail of a serpent, whose body formed the ring. Where the seal is usually placed there was the head of an animal. It looked like the head of a sheep or a lamb. There were no horns, but ears were there, and laid back viciously close to the head. The eyes were formed of strange red gems, which glittered wonderfully in the morning sun. They seemed to shoot forth rays of light, and as I looked into them I fancied that they gave back an answering gleam of intelligence. There was a barbaric splendour about the trinket which attracted while it repelled. I wonder how Cynthia could have broken the stem and not have seen the ring; but she said she was trying to keep her eye on the harbour, as she was convinced that shortly some ship would heave in sight, and she wished to be the first to see it. The strange trinket had evidently been dropped by its owner, and it had fallen circling just over the tender shoot of green. This sprout had grown into a stem, and the stem into a strong plant, and in growing had carried the bauble with it into the air.

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Cynthia put it jokingly over her thumb.

"You could almost get it over your hand," said the Skipper. "It would make a splendid bracelet."

"What a curious find!" I exclaimed.

"How long do you suppose it has been there?" asked Cynthia.

"I can't say; since this stem began to sprout, anyway. This is May. Say since March, or even earlier; you see that the stem is very well grown."

"Then the person who dropped it was here, on this very spot, in March," said Cynthia.

"Oh, that does not follow at all," said the Skipper, who had drawn near, much interested. "The ring might have laid there a long time before the stem decided to grow through it."

"No," said I, "I don't agree with you. I think the ring was dropped by its owner exactly over the young and tender shoot, and it has had the strength——"

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"Of mind——" interpolated Cynthia.

"Or of purpose——" chimed in the Skipper.

A shriek interrupted our nonsensical parleying. The Haitienne had come shyly up to us, wondering doubtless what we had found to so interest us all. She had thrust her head forward into the circle close to Cynthia's arm. The shriek that she gave utterance to was blood-curdling. It

was between a howl and a wail. It chilled me through and through. The girl put her hand quickly to her heart, looked at each of us as if in great terror, and, turning, fled to the near woods. The Bo's'n joined the group, and stood respectfully on the edge, waiting to ask if he should build a fire and prepare breakfast. He craned his long neck forward and looked over my shoulder at the curious bauble. When his eye lighted upon its barbaric strangeness, he drew a short, sharp breath and turned away, running in a different direction from that which the girl had taken; but before he started I heard his horrified voice mutter in distinct tones:

""THE GOAT WITHOUT HORNS!"

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SKIPPER MAKES A PRAYER.

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The girl's strange behaviour did not surprise me. In the short time that she had been among us I had become quite used to her vagaries. I have spoken of her as a savage, but only as one would call any human being a savage, either black or white, who had attacked another as viciously as this girl had attacked Cynthia. The girl was not a savage in the common acceptation of the term. She was of mixed blood, a French octoroon, probably from the country districts; at least so the simple chemisette and short skirt which comprised her costume would imply. Her hair was black and wavy, her lips red, her teeth white and small. She was plump and prettily formed, and looked in reality like a girl of eighteen, though we afterward learned that she was just then in her fourteenth year.

A large tree, which had fallen across the stream up near the cliff, formed a bridge over the deep little river. To this the Haïtienne flew, and, springing upon its trunk, she crossed to the other side as if she had been a rope-walker. I watched her as she fled down the beach. I did not care when she returned to us, or, indeed, whether she came back at all, but the pangs of hunger were beginning to tell upon me, and the Bo's'n was the only one who could assuage them. So I turned from contemplating the flying figure of the girl and gazed in the opposite direction. The Bo's'n, too, was still running, as if pursued by some horrid nightmare. I watched until I saw that he had abandoned his pace, then ran slowly, then settled down into a walk, looking furtively over his shoulder the while, and finally stopped. I beckoned to him, but he shook his head. I started up the beach to meet him, but he began to run to the westward again. I returned to Cynthia.

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"Give that fellow up as a bad job," said I. "Did you ever cook anything, Miss Archer?"

"I can make calves'-foot jelly," said Cynthia, "and oley-koeks. I always made those for Christmas dinner at home."

I looked around the shore scrutinizingly.

"I don't see any little calf sticking up his feet to be chopped off—except the Minion," I added, after a moment's survey of the sloping sand, where the cabin boy was disporting himself upon his back with his feet in the air. "I suppose oily what-you-call-'ems need butter and eggs——"

"As I haven't the necessary materials, suppose I cook some pork," said Cynthia. "I suppose"—looking quietly at me—"it isn't so very difficult. You will have to build a fire, you know, and wash the frying-pan and cut the pork."

"And lay it in the spider and let it cook itself," said I. "I am sorry to put you to so much trouble."

"Don't mention it," said Cynthia good-naturedly. "Now, you know, by rights a piece of the old Yankee should come floating ashore with a dozen fowls, a pail of milk, and a keg of butter planted safely on the upper side and——"

"A barrel of flour," added I. "Well, stranger things have happened——"

"Not much," said Cynthia.

This silly badinage served to while away the time while I cut the pork, made the fire, and started the breakfast on its way. I brought the water and hard bread, and then told Cynthia that if she would watch the breakfast I would go and take a bath. I had something on my mind which depressed me greatly. When I took the parrot's cage ashore on the previous evening, I had hung it on the limb of a ceiba too high for Cynthia to reach. That was very well for the night, but this was the next morning, and, like many another next morning, its light ushered in a day of reckoning. I had told Cynthia, I am ashamed to say, that I would give Solomon his food and water, and I am also humiliated to confess that I did actually fill the bird's cup and take it with a bit of hard bread to the secluded place which I had chosen for the scene of my base deception. Let me state here, with the entire reliability of all explorers, that it was not entirely the fear of what Cynthia would think of me for the part which I had played in what was to me a comedy, and which might prove to her a tragedy, but that I really could not bear the thought of seeing her sorrow when she first heard the dreadful news that Solomon had escaped. I had often longed to wring the neck of the feathered brute, for he had repaid me, as many kindnesses are repaid in this world, by biting my finger to the bone when I had tried to tempt him with some dainty. However, Cynthia loved him, and, notwithstanding his viciousness, I had tried to make friends

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with him for her sake. Kick a man's dog, and he is done with you. Ill treat a woman's parrot, and if that woman is the woman you adore, you had better be dead. I had left the cover drawn tightly over the cage, telling Cynthia that it would protect the bird from the night dews, *Facilis descensus Averno*. Little Adoniah says that means tell one lie and you will have to tell a hundred. I had stuck to the letter of the truth, but I really cared very little whether the dews of evening or the deluges of the tropics descended in floods upon that wretched bird. When I left Cynthia I walked directly up the bank of the stream, and was soon lost to sight behind the low foliage which fringed its western slope. So soon as Cynthia could no longer see me, I struck to the right, and, circling round, I was again in the vicinity of the camp. I could see that her back was turned toward me as she stooped over the frying-pan, scorching her hands and face doubtless in doing this menial work. I went to the tree where the cage hung, reached up and pulled down the limb, seized upon the cage, loosened the catches, and quietly released the floor. This I laid upon the ground half upon edge, as if it had fallen so. I then returned to the stream and took my bath, which much refreshed me, and appeared in camp with my guilty heart thumping and my pulses ringing in my ears. The Skipper was narrating a wonderful tale to Cynthia, to which she was listening, as if she wished some confirmatory evidence before quite believing him.

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"Oysters growing on trees!" Cynthia exclaimed as I joined them. "Uncle Tony, you should not try to practice upon my credulity in that way, and you a member of the church in good and regular standing! But then you don't carry the deacons to sea with you, or——"

The Skipper asserted his discovery in loud and positive tones, which drowned Cynthia's softer ones.

"Don't be a fool, girl! Shows you never travelled. Here's one now! See it? Shell and all! Here's where I broke it off the branch!"

"Well! It beats Robinson Crusoe," said Cynthia. She turned to me. "Do you believe it, Mr. Jones?"

"It is nothing new," said I. "I will take a pail, if you like, and get some for breakfast."

"I will go with you," said Cynthia. "I know there's some catch about it. I never saw oysters growing on trees."

"That's strange!" said the Skipper with ill-concealed scorn; "since you have seen everything else in the whole blessed world——"

"Where are they, Captain?" I inquired, interrupting the controversy.

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"Along there, where that girl's standing. You go and get 'em, and I'll fry some more pork."

I took the pail which the Bo's'n had left near the fire and we started across the tree and along the beach in the direction which the Haitien girl had taken. When she saw Cynthia approaching, she began to run with the fleetness of a deer.

"I guess she's gone for good," I said.

Long before we reached the low mangrove growth we heard a curious snapping, like quick, sharp taps with a hammer. "Click!" "click!" "click!" it sounded, until, as we drew close, the noise was confusing, and we had to raise our voices somewhat in speaking. We came to a little inlet, a sort of marshy place, where thousands of the low mangrove trees grew and pushed their roots and hooplike ends into the salt water.

"Now where are your trees?" asked Cynthia.

"Why, there they are, those mangrove trees."

"Oh, you call those trees, do you? Explosion of story number one."

"Story?"

"I didn't like to call it by its real name," said Cynthia, "as Uncle Tony told it. Don't you think, Mr. Jones, that going to sea is very bad for the mor——"

The conversation was taking too personal a turn. I pushed in among the hooplike roots.

"See here!" I said, "and here! and here!" as I pulled the oysters from their holding places and threw them into the pail. All about us the shells were opening and shutting, as if they longed for the return of the tide, which was about two feet below them.

"Now that's exactly like so many of the stories one hears. I expected to stand under a very high tree and see you climb it as you would a hickory at home. I meant to stand under the branches and hold my dress and catch—Oh, pshaw! Why do I talk to you?"

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"You have too much imagination," said I. "Just taste one before you begin to abuse us all so."

"I am not abusing any one, Mr. Jones; I only said——"

"Halloo! Halloo!"

It was the Skipper's voice. Fearing that something of an unpleasant nature had occurred, we started quickly back again.

"Breakfast's ready," said the Skipper, with his mouth full of pork.

As I approached the camp I saw a signal in the distance. I discovered after a moment's scrutiny that it was a signal from the Bo's'n. I beckoned him to come to me, but he only shook his head, and waved more wildly than before, pointing with sharp, quick jerks of his thumb over his shoulder to the westward.

"Are you going to see what that fool wants?" asked the Skipper.

"No," returned I. "I am tired of playing tag with the Bo's'n and the Haïtien girl. Besides, I am famished."

We sat down on the rocks and ate our salt pork from a plate made of hard bread. We washed it down with water from the spring at the base of the rocks, and I heard no remarks upon the coarse fare.

Cynthia said only that she had never known how good salt pork and ship's biscuits were, and that she should get Aunt Mary 'Zekel to have them three times a week when she got home.

"Where's that Minion?" asked the Skipper, with his mouth full.

As nothing was to be seen of the boy, we left his breakfast with the Bo's'n's share and that reserved for the Haïtien girl, and I started to go to the rescue of the Bo's'n, who was still waving violently. I had taken but a few steps when I heard a call from Cynthia.

"Mr. Jones," she called, "bring me a biscuit before you go." My heart sank down like lead. In the pleasure of gathering the oysters and the walk which I had had with her alone I had forgotten that the day of reckoning was near at hand. I took a piece of bread from the cask and ran to meet her.

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"Hungry again?" I asked, outwardly smiling. There was a singing in my ears. I could hardly see.

"Oh, no," said she in answer; "but 'a merciful man,' you know, and my poor beast must be starving."

"Yes, I think he is," said I. I forgot the Bo's'n's signal; I forgot everything.

I seated myself miserably on a stone and waited for the deluge. It came. I heard:

"Oh! Oh! Uncle! Mr. Jones, do come here; Solomon's gone!"

"We ought to sing the doxology," said the Skipper to me in an undertone. He called to her in a well-simulated tone of regret:

"Oh, no, Cynthy, it can't be possible!"

So there were two cowards of us.

"How can she tell? She can't reach the cage," said I.

"How can you tell he's gone?" called the Skipper, in tones whose joy was but poorly concealed. "You can't reach the cage."

"I'm standing right under the cage, Uncle; I can see right into it. O Solomon, Solomon! my dear, darling, beautiful bird!"

"Never knew she could look through a piece of tin. Guess I'll go and see."

I put my fingers in my ears and ran toward the Bo's'n, who was still waving. The Minion trotted along by my side. The strange thing about the Minion was that, unlike most boys, he seldom spoke; I should have thought that he was dumb had it not been that occasionally, when hard pressed, he did open his childish lips and pour forth words of wisdom. There is an old saying that actions speak louder than words. The Minion seemed to prefer to communicate his thoughts in this way. He pointed to the beach, where I still saw the Bo's'n making his gestures. I turned and looked back to the camp. I put my hands to my mouth and hallooed to the Skipper, who had emerged from the shadow of the trees.

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"It's a flag of truce, I think," said I.

I saw the Skipper shake his head and look despondently on the ground. What he said was: "O Lord! those wretched sailors again."

I wondered if he was correct in his surmise as I ran along toward where the Bo's'n stood. When he saw that I was really coming, he dropped the flag of truce and put it on, for it was his shirt which he had fastened to a branch to use for this purpose.

"How silly you are, Bo's'n!" I said. "I can't be following you all over the island. You had better come back to the camp and behave like a Christian."

A look of horror overspread his face as I spoke of his return to the camp, but he shook his head and said:

"I should not have called you, sir, Mr. Jones, sir, but I have discovered something. I thought you would like to know it." He turned and walked briskly away.

"Hold on!" I said. "I am tired of this tomfoolery. Do you know what a hot morning it is?"

"Yessir, I know, sir," said the Bo's'n. "Come here, sir."

The Bo's'n's air of mystery overcame my desire to sit down in the shade. I followed where he led.

"It's the result of the battle, sir," he explained.

"What battle?" I asked, as I walked beside him.

"The fight between the sailors and the Haïtiens, sir."

"You don't mean," I said, "that the sailors have come down here to——"

"No, only those are here who were left here." He parted the shoreward bushes and revealed to me three men lying there. Two of them were white men. They were our sailors Wilson and Tanby. The other was a Haïtien. He was lying by a partly dug grave. Indeed, so nearly ready was the grave that I had some thought of confiscating it for the body of one of our sailors. There were two other graves; at least, so I took them to be. They were finished, and their occupants were at rest under that wonderful leafy bower which only the tropics can afford. I thought that I heard a rustling in the bushes, and told the Bo's'n my suspicions. The Minion pointed to the thicket, and with a wild yell disappeared. One never knew what the Minion would do. One always knew what he would say, and that was nothing. There seemed to be an air of mystery about this secluded spot. I watched the bushes, expecting the Minion's return, and, as I watched, I felt that a pair of eyes was fixed on me. I pierced the undergrowth right and left with my gaze, but only the mompoja leaves moved languidly in the baby breeze which was now stirring, the precursor of a later wind. I followed the Minion into the thicket, but saw no one. Even the Minion had vanished. It was a great relief to me to be able to act like a man with courage once more, instead of guarding my words for fear that they would agitate the being the dearest in the world to me.

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"Did you see any one as you came along the beach, Bo's'n?" said I.

"No, sir, Mr. Jones, sir; I was not looking or thinking of any one when I stumbled right on them bodies. I was running to get away, sir."

Again the look of horror overspread his features, and he glanced backward over his shoulders toward the camp.

I believe in always going to the root of a matter with the ignorant and superstitious.

"Now, Bo's'n," I said, with an air of logical argument, "what should you see in that simple, plain, iron trinket—" But he stopped me with a gesture which was strangely authoritative from an inferior to a superior, and in hushed, scared tones he said:

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"Don't speak of it, Mr. Jones. Don't mention it, sir. Don't think of it. Make the young lady throw it away."

"*Make!*"

"Yessir, Mr. Jones, make her throw it away, sir."

I laughed to reassure him, though I must acknowledge that I was impressed by his manner. My laughter had the effect of reassuring myself somewhat also.

"Shall I take the boat and row out and sink this dangerous bauble with its snake's body"—a tremor seemed to seize my listener, and he shook as if with a chill—"and its sheep's head?"

"Do not make fun of it, sir. You will be sor——"

"We will go and get it, Bo's'n, and you shall row me out while I——"

"Do not ask me to touch it, sir. There is doom in that sign." I noticed that he did not call it a ring, as I had done; and then he came close to me and looked into my eyes with impressive and beseeching earnestness, and said in a whisper:

"You may take it out to sea, far, far out to sea, and drop it beneath the waves, but the storms will come, the waves will roll, and the breakers will dash it again on the shore. You may bury it in a pit so deep that you can hardly get yourself out again from its grave, but an earthquake will rumble beneath it and with its cracks will upheave it, and it will be here again. You may take it to the top of yonder mountain and lay it on the topmost peak, but the tempests will come and the hurricane will blow and will toss it again at your feet. She has found it, and it will follow her to the end—to the end."

The mysterious tone of the man, the ghostlike voice in which he spoke, made me feel unpleasantly, although it was broad day and the sun was shining brightly. He seemed to be lifted out of himself, and to speak in a voice and tone not his own. I tried to laugh. I reasoned with myself thus. How utterly absurd that a man of little education, of the most ordinary ability, and, withal, a man holding that absurd position Bo's'n of a merchant craft, should have an insight into mystical and occult things which none of the rest of us possess! But as he still stood staring at me, and directly into my eyes, as if he would read into the very depths of my mind, I began to have what is commonly called a creepy sensation. Little shivers ran up my backbone, and I longed for other companionship. I cast a glance at the dead men, and felt that if I were to retain the strength to go for aid to bury them, the sooner I went the better for me. With difficulty I withdrew my gaze from the man's eyes.

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"Come, come, Bo's'n!" I said, forcing a laugh, "you are overwrought and nervous. Come back with me, and I will give you my word that you shall not see the ring again while you remain with us."

He stood gazing irresolutely out to sea.

"It is no ring!" he muttered. "A circle, a sign, an emblem of horror—of dread—of vengeance!"

"I am hungry, Bo's'n," I said, dropping from the height to which he had raised me and endeavouring to drag him down with me. "You left your post, and Miss Archer is doing your work. I shall return for my breakfast, and then get the Captain to come back here with me and bury our men. That will be only decent."

These matter-of-fact statements brought the Bo's'n down to earth again.

"I see crumbs on your shirt front," said he. He spoke now in his natural voice. His eyes had lost their far-seeing look. I left him and ran back to the camp, calling him to follow. I told the Skipper what he had found, also his strange and unreasonable terror of the ring. Cynthia looked sad and downcast, but entered into this new subject with interest.

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"If he's afraid of the ring, I can conceal it," said she, "but don't ask me to throw it away. I wouldn't give it up now for the world."

"For some reason," said I, "the man is half dead with fright. Just hide it, Miss Archer, and I will tell the Bo's'n that you have thrown it away."

*Another!*

People will tell you that it is only wicked women who lead men astray. Here was the best and sweetest woman that I had ever known, and I had told three absolute falsehoods in less than an hour's time, and was ready to tell another—many others, in fact—should circumstances demand it.

"I think it very wrong to tell a falsehood," said Cynthia. "I never tell one"—a short pause—"unless it is absolutely necessary."

Meanwhile she was feeling under her collar. When her fingers came to view again, they held a little gold chain and locket. I looked at the locket curiously.

"My lover's portrait," said Cynthia, looking up at me with a saucy smile. She calmly and with patience prepared to pull apart the two pieces of the slide or clasp that held the delicate chain together.

"This was my baby chain; I have worn it ever since I was a little thing.—How old, Uncle Tony?"

The Skipper blew his nose.

"I remember my sister putting that chain on you before you could walk, Cynthy," he said. "I remember she said it was big enough to grow in."

"I have never taken it off but twice," said Cynthia; "once to slip the locket on empty, and once to slip it on after I put the picture in it."

"Let us have a look at William," said I, chagrined that I had not destroyed the only likeness extant of that hated individual.

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"You shall see it some time," returned Cynthia. "There!" She took the ring from her pocket, slipped the chain through the circle made by the serpent's body, and clasped it around her neck.

"Don't do it!" I remonstrated. "There may be something in the Bo's'n's fears, after all."

"Nonsense!" laughed Cynthia, as she tucked the ring down below her collar and rearranged her tie. Her dress was still neat and fresh, but as I looked at her I wondered how long it would be before she would appear like other shipwrecked women.

And now I beckoned to the Bo's'n. He started and came haltingly up the beach. I cast my eyes on the loose pebbles at my feet for a moment and discovered what I wanted. As children we had often played with what we called lucky stones. A lucky stone was a little stone washed by the motion of the water into an open circle. The lucky stone that I picked up was a glittering piece of rock, and shone in the sun.

"We can not spare the Bo's'n's services," I said, "and he won't come back to camp until the ring is thrown away, so here goes."

The Bo's'n was nearing us slowly on the left, and the Haïtien girl as reluctantly upon the right. When the Bo's'n was perhaps a hundred feet away, I threw back my arm and hurled the pebble as far away as I could. It glittered as it flew through the air, and entered the water with a splash at about three hundred feet from the shore. I was considered a good thrower in my time.

The Bo's'n advanced now with more confidence, though he looked continually out into the bay at the concentric rings in the water, which were approaching the beach where we stood.

"Expect that fool is looking to see it bob up and swim ashore," laughed the Skipper. The Haïtien girl now returned also. She drew close to Cynthia, and laid her cheek down on her skirt in a respectful way.

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"*Li negue a peu*," she whispered. She looked at the place where the stone had gone down and shuddered. She shook her head several times. "*Ça, retou! Ça retou!*" she said.

"I understand her talk a little, sir," volunteered the Bo's'n. "I lived with a Dominican, Mr. Jones, sir, for a year. I was with Toussaint's army when he marched to Haïti." That seemed ancient history to me, and I gazed on the Bo's'n with respect. "It was then I learned about——" He broke off suddenly.

"What did Lacelle say, Bo's'n?" asked Miss Archer.

"She says the negro is afraid, miss. That's what she meant to say, miss. The Haïtiens don't speak what they call the fine French, miss. It's half African and half French, miss."

"Captain," I said, "we are wasting a good deal of time over nothing, seems to me. There is something that we should do as soon as possible." I drew him aside and told him about the dead sailors.

"Come on," said the Skipper readily. "Bo's'n, you stay and watch the camp, and if any danger threatens, signal us."

"What with, Cap'n, sir?"

"Why, as you did before."

The Bo's'n became very red, looked at Miss Archer sheepishly, and said, "Yessir." The Minion had now appeared mysteriously from somewhere, and, after ordering him to stay with the party and help the Bo's'n "clean up," we started. We pushed the boat into the water. The Skipper took the steering oar and I took the sculls, and we pulled westward. When we arrived at our destination, I beached the boat and walked with the Captain up the slope to where the dead sailors were lying.

"Dear! dear!" said the Captain. "Wilson and Tanby! How natural they look! Poor fellows! You'll never tumble up again to the sound of the Bo's'n's whistle, my lads."

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"And he'll never pipe any more to your crew," said I, as I thought of the sleeping forms we had left behind us the night before. I stood looking about me. "Captain, there's something queer about this place. It's uncanny, it seems to me. When I left the men here, a half hour ago, there were three—our two men and the Haïtien, and two graves. Now there is no Haïtien, and three graves instead of two."

"Lord! you don't say so! Well, I have seen queer things in my time, a sight of queer things. Nothing ever surprises me. Let's give the poor fellows a decent burial and get back to camp. I don't quite like leaving Cynthy with that crazy Bo's'n——"

"We have no spades, Captain," said I.

He saw what I meant, for he turned and looked at the graves.

"How's that?" he asked, jerking his head over his shoulder toward the water.

"The only way now," I answered.

We lifted the poor fellows and laid them gently in the bows side by side, and then pulled for the open water.

The dinghy's painter was lying in the bottom of the boat, and as I rowed the Skipper untwisted and split the rope. Of course, I had known quite well why he lifted two heavy rocks from the beach and laid them under the thwarts. When I had rowed for about ten minutes, the Skipper said, "Way enough!" I trailed my oars, and together we prepared the men for the last sad rites. With one end of a rope around the body of each, and the other fastened securely around one of the rocks, we lowered them one after another into that deep over which for so many years they had sailed happy-go-lucky fellows. As they sank below the surface, the Skipper shifted his squatting position into a kneeling one, raised his eyes to the blue above him, clasped his weather-beaten hands, and said:

"Oh, Thou who holdest the oceans of the earth in the hollow of Thy hands, hold these poor sailors, we pray Thee, within Thy tender keeping, and when the sea gives up its dead, good Lord, and they are called aft to Thy mast, where they must answer up, no shirking, remember the many trials and temptations of poor Jack, dear Father, and judge them *as* sailors, and *not as human beings!*"

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"Amen!" said I.

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## CHAPTER V. A MYSTERIOUS FLIGHT.

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I could not restrain a smile, even at this most solemn moment, as I heard the Skipper's ending. I sat looking at the water for a little—at the resting place of the men, which was marked for a short time by the bubbles which came to the surface; and then a light wind ruffled the water, and I

closed my eyes, breathing a few words for the living as well as for the dead. When I opened them again, I had lost trace of those nameless graves for all time.

As I rowed the boat swiftly toward shore, away from that scene of sadness, I pondered upon the situation. It seemed to me that the others had not considered seriously enough our strangely exceptional fate. In most accounts of shipwreck and adventure the castaways are left upon a desolate island with savages more or less gentle, who help and care for them; or else the natives are bloodthirsty wretches, who, if they come in contact with the shipwrecked people, are outnumbered and overcome. Then a vessel heaves in sight at the right moment, and takes the unfortunates to home and happiness. There was the alternative of being shipwrecked upon an utterly desolate land, where provisions were few and enemies none. Our case was not any one of these three. We had not been obliged to seek refuge upon a desert island, far from home and friends. On the contrary, we were but twelve hundred miles at the most from Belleville, which was the centre of our world. The anxiety which filled my thoughts was caused by recent facts in our history, which followed each other rapidly through my mind, and which gave me reason to fear that if we could not quickly get safe passage away from the island something of a dangerous nature might befall us. That black monarch, "King Henry of the North," as he chose to style himself, was at this time reigning over the island of Haïti with resolute and powerful sway. No absolute monarch ever ruled a people with as decided and unbrooked a will as Henri Christophe. The French occupation, which had lasted about one hundred years, had been finally ended with the revolution of 1793. Toussaint l'Ouverture had instigated and led the most bloody rebellion of modern times. The slave of the Breda plantation, through insurrection, wars, and bloodshed, had become a great general, and so the dictator of the entire island known as Santo Domingo. It is an almost incredible fact that Toussaint was a gentle and humane man, even though he rose against and massacred the whites that his people with him might throw off the yoke of slavery. Had Toussaint been alive at this day, I knew that we should have had nothing to fear, but his mantle had fallen upon other shoulders, and those who had succeeded him had lost sight of the primary cause of the uprising. Like some other reformers, his path ran with blood, but it was either that or continued slavery for himself and his people. Toussaint was the grand figure of the Haïtien revolution. The Marquis d'Hermonas said of him, "God in this terrestrial globe could not commune with a purer spirit." It was well known that Toussaint's enemies were treated with a gentleness and consideration which was abnormal in those days of bloodthirsty cruelty and excess. But at the time of which I write Toussaint had died in the Alps. The French, short-sighted as to a policy which should have urged upon them the recognition of Toussaint as the best governor which the island could procure, instead of treating with him, and forming an honourable peace, decoyed him on board one of their ships. He was sent to France, where he died in the Château de Joux. His death was caused by Alpine rigour, and it is hinted that it was aided by unnatural means. Toussaint was a courageous general, a keen legislator, an astute philosopher, a good citizen, a generous enemy, and a faithful friend. Had we but had such a man to turn to, I should have felt no fear, but there had been wars and bloodshed since Toussaint's time. His generals, Dessalines, Christophe, and Pétion, had continued the war with the greatest bitterness. They had driven out the French, who, however, had left their various mixed progeny behind them. That progeny, the product of two races, who despised their black mothers and hated their white fathers, were always at war with the blacks and whites alike. Then Dessalines, following the example of Bonaparte, in 1804, crowned himself emperor, saying, "I am the only noble in Haïti." This would be laughable if the results had not been so disastrous and far reaching. Then came the downfall of Dessalines. Then Pétion was elected president. There were more conspirings, more treachery, and more bloodshed, and finally Christophe crowned himself king. This was in 1811, about ten years before the last cruise of the Yankee Blade.

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Back from the coast, about eight to ten miles as the crow flies, upon a mountain height which overlooks the sea and land as far as the eye can reach, Christophe had built his wonderful citadel, the tragic erection of which cost a life for each stone laid.

This black prince lived in the greatest luxury and, as far as his light shone, in unbounded magnificence. No refusal was ever brooked by him. If a workman was ordered to accomplish the impossible, and the article desired was not forthcoming at the time set by the despot, the unfortunate being was dragged from his hiding place and hurled off the precipice of the citadel. I had heard that thirty thousand men had perished in this way. I remember now the words of a historian whose book I have lately read:

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"As long as a stone of this wall shall stand, so long will there remain a monument to one of the greatest savages and murderers who has ever disgraced God's earth."

Christophe's palace at "Sans Souci" was one of the wonders of the world. It would have graced any country; have reflected glory upon any people. The earthquake of '42 damaged its fair beauty, but its remains stand to-day a proof of the power, the determination, and the inventive genius of that terrible black king. Seated under a camaito tree, which spread its green shade over the marble terrace, this absolute monarch held court. No one dared to look upon his face. Officers, soldiers, and prisoners alike trembled and hid their eyes as they knelt before him. If any one displeased or unconsciously thwarted the king, he was haled away to a dungeon, which generally meant death.

Is it wonderful, then, that I regarded our going to the interior of the island as little less than suicidal? We were in danger of lawless bands from the West and from the East, for there was discontent with the black king Henri, and irresponsible parties of griffes and mulattoes, not to speak of outlawed whites who had no standing at home, were in hiding among the rocks and

caves of that extraordinary formation known as the island of Santo Domingo. I had wondered how Captain Schuyler had dared to bring his niece with him on this cruise of the Yankee Blade, for the buccaneers were still pursuing helpless craft upon the high seas. They usually feared a close proximity to civilized lands, but carried on their nefarious business upon the open ocean, making sudden and unexpected dashes from the Isle of Pines, which was their stronghold.

I think that I have written enough without going further into detail to show why, though we had been ashore barely twenty-four hours, I was anxious to escape from this place of horrors. These reflections ran through my brain in the space of a very few seconds, as thoughts will, and I trailed my oars and spoke.

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"Captain Schuyler," I said, "why did you run the risk of bringing your niece on such a dangerous voyage?"

The Skipper looked up at me for a moment, as if not comprehending my question.

"God bless your soul! Dangerous? Dangerous? What do you mean, Mr. Jones?"

"I consider it a very foolish thing, Captain, to——"

"What! Mr. Jones, do you know who you are speaking to, sir? This is mutiny, Mr. Jones, rank mutiny! Rank——"

"No, Captain," I answered calmly and slowly, "it is no mutiny. I must speak my mind. I can not understand your action, with pirates still roaming the high seas——"

"Yes, yes, high seas," broke in the Skipper; "but who ever dreamed of their coming so close to shore? Why, I've been sailing these waters now for seven years, since I gave up the Calcutta trade, and I never so much as saw a pirate craft. I've hugged the shore pretty close, it's true, and —— Pshaw, Mr. Jones, you're nervous! I recognise the signs. A man's always nervous when he's in love. I used to be; I——"

"I am not unnecessarily nervous," said I. "Your niece is a very beautiful young girl——"

"Do you think so?" said the Skipper in a surprised tone. "Why, do you know, Jones, I never thought her even good-looking. You should have seen her Aunt Mary 'Zekel at her age!"

"I regret my loss," I said. "But that's neither here nor there——"

"You are foolish, Jones! You imagine things."

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"I suppose the loss of the Yankee and the balls of those pirates are all in my fancy."

"Good God! No! I wish they were. I can't say that," answered the Skipper, "but——"

"Hardly, I fancy," said I impatiently, "with the old Yankee sunk and our party ashore, half of them dead, some of them buried, the others——"

"Don't go on so, Jones. Those men may not have been pirates. Sometimes people pretend they are pi——"

"Don't split hairs, Captain. I think if a Britisher or an American should capture them, and knew what they done, they would give them a short shrift. I can't see how you can be so unimpressed with our dreadful situation."

I looked up at the Skipper and saw the tears welling over from his eyes.

"Don't scold me, Jones," he said in a broken voice. "God knows I can't see my way clear to anything! Tell me what you think best, and I'll do it."

I saw that the old man's nerve was gone, and I suspected that with it had departed some of the good judgment for which he had been noted, I had heard, in years gone by. Had I started from Coenties Slip with the ship, I should have remonstrated with him, if possible, for taking a young girl on so hazardous a voyage; but I had joined the ship at Martinique, my own vessel having been lost off that island in a hurricane, of which more another time. The Captain had quarreled with his Mate, he had deserted, and I had taken the job, and glad to get it, too. My surprise was great when I found Miss Archer on board. I had always been pessimistic about her presence there, and now something like what I had anticipated had happened, and here was I left to care for a Captain who was broken and old, and a young girl of my own nation, for whose welfare I found that I cared more than was good for my peace of mind, and a boy who was of no use except to give us an occasional laugh, and a Bo's'n who went off into strange, mysterious attacks, and talked at such times miles over my head, as well as his own—a sublimated Bo's'n, who, though entirely illiterate in his normal moments, in attacks such as I have described spoke like a professor; who one moment was soaring in the skies, and raving of things spiritual and supernatural, and the next moment was talking like the veriest old Jacky that ever came out of a forecandle. I, too, was feeling upset with all that we had gone through, but I must keep my courage up if we were to escape from that accursed island.

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"Jones, what do you say to rowing back up along the beach and seeing if those fellows are alive? We ought to bury them decently if they have died since yesterday." The Skipper seemed suddenly to have developed a fancy for the rôle of Chaplain. Having tasted the pleasure of being in close communication with Heaven, on a confidential footing, so to speak, with Providence, the

apologist and recommender of the dead of his crew, he hated to give up the job. I have noticed the same sort of frenzy in my wife at times. She (to speak mildly) used to dissipate, at certain seasons, in church meetings, going to Wednesday evening and Friday evening meetings, to noon prayer meetings, and three times to church.

On Sundays many's the time I've walked the floor with little Adoniah Schuyler second, while she was listening to Reverend Vandenwater thunder hell and damnation at the unrepentant. She has come in with an uplifted look on her face and an air of holy calm, which assured me that the next world held no place for such degenerates as myself. The Reverend Vandenwater demanded all her time and attention for the "Refuge for the Progeny of the Bondsman." But the Reverend Vandenwater disappeared with the funds of the Refuge, and she has not dissipated so extensively since. I used to tell her when she talked about the love of the Lord that it was spelled with a "V," which at times created a coolness in the family. But I have digressed.

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I told the Skipper that I thought we had been enjoying ourselves long enough away from the camp, and that we should now return as soon as possible. As I spoke, I rested for a moment on my oars and turned my head in the direction of the camp.

"Strange!" said I; "there's no one on the beach." The Skipper stood up in the boat.

"No," he said, "there isn't. Perhaps they have gone a little farther into the shade." There were no figures moving about, no Cynthia, no Bo's'n, no Minion. One never knew what Lacelle would be up to, so I did not worry myself at not seeing her. I turned again to face the Skipper, and all at once I perceived a strange vessel coming rapidly toward the coast, and as I looked, the French flag which she bore was supplemented by another. I could not believe my eyes. I did really rub them and look again. Yes, it was true. The Jolly Roger fluttered for a moment at the masthead, and as suddenly was lowered to the rail. It confirmed my suspicions as to the pass to which the island had come, that a pirate craft could sail openly along the coast in broad daylight, displaying her signal of murder and death! That it was a signal to some one in waiting on the shore, I could not hesitate to believe. Then, in what terrible danger were we and our party from an assault both on the land and on the water. We were, indeed, between the devil and the deep sea.

"Captain," said I, scrambling hastily over the middle seat, "take the other pair, for God's sake!"

"What's the matter with the man?" exclaimed the Captain, as I tumbled hastily into the bows and picked up the extra pair of oars. "Just when one begins to feel peaceful and calm, communing with his Maker, as it were, you——"

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"You'll commune with your Maker sooner than you care to, Captain," said I, "if you don't pick up those oars. That pirate's come back, or else it's another one. I saw the Roger——"

The Skipper had by this time turned about, deliberately removed his coat, and taken up the oars.

"What! that vessel? She's no more a pirate than you are."

"I tell you I saw the crossbones as plain as I see your back. Pull, Captain, for the love of God!"

The Skipper did bend to his oars, but his mutterings were proof that he had little confidence in my judgment or eyesight.

"Just thinking peacefully of my latter end——"

"You'll have your latter end closer in view, Captain," said I, "if you don't pull like hell."

My violent word brought him down from his heavenly flight, and pull he did, but we had quite a distance yet to go.

"She's a beauty," said the Skipper. "She's so long and low and rakish, but so was the Yankee Blade. Not quite so much free board as the Yankee, has she, now?"

"Captain, excuse me, but if you would pull more and talk less——"

"Well, I'll pull, Mr. Jones, I'll pull, but I'll remember your language, Mr. Jones, and when I get ——"

I looked over my shoulder as I rowed.

"Our people are nowhere to be seen, Captain. Do you think they could have noticed that signal?"

"You are crazy, man, utterly and entirely out of your head. I told you that men in love were insane. They would never show that flag if they had it."

"They know what they are about, sir," said I. "They wouldn't do it for fun. Let us beach the boat and run for it."

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The Skipper suddenly seemed to catch my fear. We beached the boat some hundred yards from the camp.

"Which way, Jones?"

"For the camp, Cap'n, the camp! If you ever ran in your life, run now."

I sped along the beach, taking it just where the retreating water had left the sand hard and firm, the Skipper pounding along after me on his fat, short legs. I did not think of the danger of being

seen by those on board the vessel, and, had I done so, I should have been sure that they were busy with their signals and their rounding to. As I ran, I turned my head now and then to watch the approach of the craft. She was a beautiful sight, the long, low schooner, all sails set, pointing directly for the shore. She ran so far in, that one would think that they meant to run directly up on the beach, but I argued that their confidence bespoke their knowledge of these waters. The wind had risen, and the trades were blowing freshly along, parallel with the shore line. We had reached the camp now. No one was to be seen. I turned for one more glimpse of the dreadful vessel, and as I looked she began to haul down her jibs. She rounded to, shot up head to wind, and lowered her foresail and dropped anchor pretty nearly together.

"You see, she knows her ground," said I.

The Skipper looked blankly about him. There was no sign of any of our party. There was no trace of any of the provisions or of our occupation of the place except a broken leaf or two and the remains of the fire, and that was heaped with wet sand, which was fast drying between the embers and the sun. I called "Cynthia! Cynthia!" frantically, regardless of the proprieties or of what the Skipper would think, or of her resentment if she heard me. There was no response. I ran here and there. I hallooed, I shouted, with no thought of whom else might hear. The four living, breathing human beings whom we had left at our camp had vanished out of life as if they had never existed! I ran anxiously through the undergrowth, and as I ran I stumbled over the one thing which the party in their flight or imprisonment, I knew not which, had forgotten.

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It was the spyglass, lying closely hidden under some large leaves that grew upon the bank of the stream. I took it up and pointed it at the strange vessel. Her decks seemed alive with men. I saw that they were lowering some boats. They were coming ashore, then! We took turns in watching the movements of the crew, and discovered that they had got down two boats, and were preparing to lower a third. The first two were pulling directly for the cove or mouth of the stream.

"Comin' ashore for water, probably," said the Skipper. "Bo's'n has seen 'em probably, and has come down from his high horse long enough to hide the party. We're all right, Jones. Don't be so dreadful scared. They won't stay above half an hour."

I devoutly hoped not.

We now ran up the bank of the stream toward the face of rock which rose precipitately from the grass-grown valley. As I looked toward it, I could not fail to admire the beauty of its vine-covered precipice. On either side the hills sloped backward, but the cliff stood bold and vertical, like a verdure-covered fortress. Behind those leafy hiding places the guns of an enemy might lie secure until the day of need.

"Cynthia! Cynthia!" I shouted again. I never thought of calling any other name. "Cynthia" was all that I wanted to find. As we neared the face of the rock we perceived that the stream ran exactly out from its centre, through which it had made in the ages past an archway for itself. We stooped and drank of it. It was cold, as if it had emerged from a glacier. I bathed my head and my hands. The Skipper did the same. And then I took up my cry of "Cynthia! Cynthia!" I had begun to call now as a matter of habit, not at all as if I expected to obtain a response, and was looking around for a place where the Skipper and I could secrete ourselves until the pirates had procured their water, when I heard a whistle or sort of chirrup from somewhere above. I raised my eyes toward the sheer straight wall of rock, and saw a human face looking down. It was forty feet over my head, but I knew it better than I knew any face in the world. It was the face of Cynthia, smiling down on me as if we had never had any tiffs, as if no danger threatened, as if it were the most natural place for her to be, and, above all, as if she were glad to welcome me.

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I could see nothing of Cynthia's body. Her head only protruded from a mass of vines which covered the face of the rock, from vines rooted in a spot a hundred feet above her head, and falling to the ground where I stood. The Skipper looked upward at the signal from Cynthia.

"Always knew you was a tomboy, Cynthy. But for the Lord's sake, how did you climb up there?"

"Better hurry, Uncle," answered Cynthia; "they're getting near land."

"But how?" asked the puzzled Skipper. "How? I don't see any vine that'll hold my weight. Besides, they'd see me climbin' up the face."

"Round to the right, your right, and up the hill!" It was Cynthia's voice again, and we eagerly obeyed. We skirted the base of the ragged cliff. The last words that we heard from Cynthia were, "the ceiba tree," and we took them as our guide. We pushed through the low underbrush and climbed the broken shale, sending down shovel loads of small stones at every step. It was hot work. I panted and dripped, and the poor Skipper's face was the colour of fire. I was glad for both our sakes when we reached the ceiba tree and stood leaning against it, fanning ourselves with our hats. Here we were concealed from the men in the boats by the trees that fringed the shore, and felt in no hurry to start on again. We were at a loss as to how to proceed farther when, as I looked about for a continuing path, a hand protruded from the bushes which grew against the cliff, and I saw some beckoning fingers. I pushed the Skipper forward. He grasped the hand in his and disappeared. I heard what sounded like "Atton." This might mean anything. I took it to be an order from Lacelle, and that the word was spoken in her Haïtien French, and was intended for "*attendez*." I was not and never have been a scholar of the French language, but one who follows the sea for a livelihood picks up more or less of the words of various nations, and I thought that I

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must be right in my surmise. So I waited. I did not think that they would leave me alone, and, if they did, I had no fear of the strangers coming up the hill in that blazing sun when they had landed merely for the purpose of securing water. As I leaned against the rock waiting for developments—for that developments of some kind must come I was certain—the hand was put forth again, and I was drawn within the recess. The bushes grew so close to the face of the cliff that I had left them behind me and had entered an archway of rock before I realized the change. The darkness and the cold of this strange interior were the more obvious because of our exertion under a fierce tropical sun, and they told me that I was treading a passage well surrounded by rock masses within the deep interior of the great cliff. I could see absolutely nothing, and I groped stumblingly along. As I walked I dragged the fingers of my left hand against the wall upon that side of me. The other was clasped in the hand of my leader. We proceeded some distance in this way upon a level, and then began to descend a sharp declivity. Here my feet would have gone too fast for safety had not my guide restrained me with a grasp of iron. At the foot of this incline we found a level, along which we proceeded for some distance, and then we began to ascend again. Our footsteps resounded hollowly as we felt along the mysterious way.

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Among the strange feelings that surged like a flood through my being, the one which impressed me the most was the fact that one of my hands was held in a cold, moist grasp. It was held firmly and steadily. I withdrew my other hand from the wall and endeavoured to lay it suddenly upon the wrist of the leader. But it was as if my guide could penetrate the gloom, for as I attempted this my fingers were at once released, and I was left to grope alone. I struggled miserably for a moment, fearing to stand still, fearing to move, not knowing into what black abyss I might plunge at any moment; and then I shouted, "Come back! Come back!" Terrible echoes answered me; but the hand, the horrible moist hand, was again laid upon mine, and I was being led *somewhere*, as before.

My wish was to slide my fingers up along the arm of my guide and discover, if possible, what manner of being this was who led me. My manoeuvre had been foiled, however, and after two of these attempts I heard the words whispered softly in my ear, in tone of warning it seemed to me, "Pe'nez gar'." Then I resigned myself to being led blindly onward, feeling that I must trust to my leader or be lost.

I wondered if I were to meet Cynthia, or if this were some ghostly trap into which I had fallen. The air was full of mystery. I had heard weird tales of the old caves of Santo Domingo, of which Haïti was a part, and of strange disappearances—of men with a spirit for adventure groping their way in those caverns and appearing never more to human eye. Strange odours arose. The air seemed heavy and weighed down upon my head. I seemed to breathe the atmosphere of a charnel house. The blackness of darkness was upon me, but I resigned myself hopelessly to the leadership of that ghostly hand. I shudder now when I recall that mysterious contact. The very memory of it strikes a chill to my heart. My head whirls when I remember my stumbling and halting movement through that passage of dread, shivering with fear that the next step might dash me into an unfathomable pit. Perhaps the Skipper had already met his fate! Cynthia was safe; at least, we had heard her voice. But was she not perhaps reserved for some terrible future, when we, her protectors, should be gone? With these agonizing thoughts in my mind, I groped and stumbled on.

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The ghostly presence was as elusive as the soap in the bath tub. When I endeavoured to clasp the hand with both of mine, and thought that I had my fingers on something tangible, they closed together upon themselves. I felt a pressure against my side, my back. My hand touched a cold form that it gave me a chill to feel, and I tried to prove to myself that it was no delusion; but even as I groped in the darkness the form eluded me, and I was alone.

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## CHAPTER VI. THE PIRATES RETURN.

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Suddenly my guide had released my hand, and I was left to myself. I saw a faint glimmer of light ahead. And now I was conscious that there was no one in front of me. I faced quickly about. The blackness of darkness met my gaze.

I hoped to discover what manner of guide mine had been, but I looked into the depths of an inky funnel, whose grim background outlined no mysterious or other form against its dreadful perspective. I turned in the direction of the ray again, and walked a few steps. As I proceeded, the light grew stronger. I heard voices and laughter, intermingled with the ripple of one gentle voice that I knew, and I walked ahead now with confidence, and emerged at last into a large open room. I perceived at once that all our party were assembled here. I thought that Cynthia greeted me with some degree of pleasure. She held out her hand to me and asked me if my walk through the passage had not been intensely interesting.

*Interesting!*

I found that my entrance had interrupted Cynthia's explanation to the Skipper, which she now resumed.

"We had nowhere to leave a message," said Cynthia. "You know, Uncle, that I should never have

run away from any ordinary boat. I knew that you thought that we ought to hide if strangers came, and I was willing to go, of course, only I did hope that we might stay our week out, or at least while the pork lasted. When I saw the Stars and Stripes I called to the others and waved to you. You paid no sort of attention to me. You had your back to me, and were leaning over the boat so far that I thought you would go over into the water. I told the Minion that you were looking, I thought, to see if there were any clams in these waters. And then the Bo's'n came running and begged me not to wave to you, or to make any sign until we found out what sort of craft that was."

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"Beg the lady's pardon," said the Bo's'n, "but I have cruised in these waters before, and we didn't have no ladies, either."

"Well, well, Cynthia, go on! go on! How did you find this place?"

"Well, then, I took up the glass. The Bo's'n was flying round hiding our things. He rolled the casks some distance back among the underbrush. Meanwhile I was looking through the glass, and when I saw the Stars and Stripes I must confess that I was a little disappointed, because I knew, Uncle Tony, you would want to leave at once. But, Uncle, while I was looking, right across my field of vision there floated that horrible skull and crossbones. It was only for a second, but that was long enough for me. When I told the Bo's'n what I had seen he could hardly believe me. He told Lacelle that we must hide ourselves until we saw what the people in the boat intended to do. She took my hand and said, 'Li negue pas peu', and drew me into a running step along the bank of the stream."

"Yes, yes, Cynthia; but how did you find this hiding place? It seems just hollowed by nature a purpose."

"That I can't tell you, Uncle. We ran up the bank of the stream, and when we reached the straight face of the cliff Lacelle turned to the right. She hurried along the base of the rock and skirted it. Round the corner we went, and up that hill we flew. Lacelle got over the ground like a young fawn, but it was rough climbing for me. Then I asked the Bo's'n to take my hand, and the Minion took the other, and they pulled me up to the level under the ceiba tree."

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"And how did you find——"

"Wait, Uncle, I can't tell all at once. She parted the bushes and pushed me some distance into the darkness, and then some one took my hand and led me along. I don't know who that was. I was so confused.—Was it you, Bo's'n?—And then——"

"Begging your pardon, miss," said the Bo's'n, "I followed *you*."

"We walked along the passage, Uncle——"

"So did we," said the Skipper. "It's all very curious. Did that girl—. By the way, why don't you ask the girl how you——"

"How can I ask her anything, Uncle?"

"Then how did you know her name?"

"Oh, I wish there was no more difficulty in learning her language than in learning her name. She just pointed to herself and said 'Lacelle,' 'Lacelle,' over and over. Then she ran away. I called 'Lacelle!' and she came running back, smiling. I'm sure that's very easy."

"Yes," said I. "I wish that we had no more difficult problem to solve."

"Well, it's a pretty nice kind of a hole," said the Skipper, beaming upon us all contentedly.

One who has not explored the island of Santo Domingo, with its western division of Haïti, can form no idea of its wonderful formation. Its gigantic cliffs rise in perpendicular grandeur from grassy or thickly wooded plains, in whose caves and recesses bandits have made their homes. There even the redoubtable Captain Kidd is said to have found a refuge!

The place in which I found my friends was a grand chamber of about sixty feet in depth, measuring back from the face of the rock, and about forty feet in width. There was an opening across the front of perhaps twenty feet in width and nine or ten feet in height, but no one looking at it from the shore would perceive that the vines which trailed their masses of leaves across the opening concealed anything but the simple face of the rock. We had not dreamed that there was any opening in the cliff until we heard Cynthia's whistle. The vines seemed to start from the top of the rock, fifty feet overhead, perhaps, from where we were concealed, and grow directly downward. When they reached the ground they fastened themselves in the rich earth with long-reaching fingers; then having made their holding good, began to climb upon themselves again to the very top of this lofty natural fort. There they had started fresh roots, and again the vine began to descend, making a new pilgrimage to earth. So back and forth it ran, its green vines hardening to woody stems, and then to the thickness of branches, curling and twisting upon one another, until the leaf screen had become hardly penetrable. I suppose that it would have been quite safe to have leaned one's entire weight against this natural lattice work, but prudence, the Skipper, and I forbade.

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I looked around the interior of the chamber, and saw that it was formed like most caverns which I had seen in my time. There were projections of rock upon the sides and around the base of the



walls, which might have been the work of Nature or of man. Perhaps Nature, somewhat aided by man. As I stood facing the opening and the small hole which Cynthia had made in the screen, I turned to scrutinize the wall upon my right, opposite where we had entered the cavern. It was about twenty feet in height. Along the very top there were some small openings, or natural embrasures, and through these a faint light percolated. I should much have liked to climb to the top and see what was on the other side of our party wall, but I was helpless. There was no possible way of getting up there, and I withdrew my eyes disappointedly. At the back of the chamber in which we had taken refuge there were some large natural pillars of stone, grand, ragged, and uneven. As I glanced at these I saw that Lacelle leaned thoughtfully against one of them, her gaze fixed upon Cynthia with a tender and earnest expression, as if she wondered what could be done to save this beautiful and beloved creature. As I looked, I thought that I saw the skirt of the girl's dress twitched gently, as if some power other than I knew was urging her backward into the gloom; and as I gazed, the girl, obedient to the mysterious summons, melted from my sight.

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"The boats are getting nearer," called Cynthia. "Look, Uncle, they are probably coming for water from our bathing place."

The Skipper took the glass from Cynthia and rested it on one of the strong vines which twisted across the window of the cave.

"Two boats are pushing into the stream," the Skipper informed us. "Did you ever see such a fiendish looking lot of ruffians?"

"Do let me see, Uncle. This is the most delightful thing that I ever experienced."

"God grant that we can keep her in that frame of mind!" I whispered to the Skipper.

He gave me a look full of anxiety as he handed to Cynthia the eagerly desired glass.

"They are pulling up against the current. Now they'll come to our bathing place for water," said Cynthia. "Oh, how I wish I had some!"

"If they find our provisions we're done for," whispered the Skipper in my ear. But, as Providence willed, the men did not disembark upon our side of the stream, or rather the side where we had made our camp, but upon the other, or right bank, if the right bank of a stream is the same as that of a river, the one on your right when you are looking toward its mouth. They hauled their boats up on the shelving beach, and then the man in the stern stood up and gave orders. We could hear him now. He spoke in a singularly musical voice, in a sort of broken English. The others called him Mauresco, as near as we could understand.

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It seems incredible that but a few years before the time when I was cast away the United States Government, and the other reputable nations of the earth as well, were paying yearly tribute to the Dey of Algiers. And although peace had been declared in the year 1805, it was a hollow one so far as the roaming bands of pirates were concerned. Many of them made their refuge on the Isle of Pines, and were so strongly intrenched there that it seemed that no one had ever thought of trying to dislodge them. Vessels started from American ports hoping to arrive at their destinations in spite of these maurauders, and that Captain Schuyler had not been annoyed by them in his southern voyages argues in favour of his luck, and not of his prudence.

The Skipper looked again.

"Those ain't empty casks," he said. He talked slowly, moving the glass about as he followed the movements of the landing party. "See how that one thumped down on the beach. I believe I heard it. Bet a red herring to a sperm whale there's something in those casks!"

"Good Santo Domingo or Jamaica rum, probably," said I.

"Maybe, in some of 'em."

I wish that I could describe the strange appearance of those lawless men as they surrounded the casks and rolled them up on the beach. I thought it strange that blue, yellow, green, and purple predominated. There was also the shade which my wife calls pink, but of a rich or darker colour, red or crimson, there was none to be seen. I discovered the reason of this, however, when the third boat put her nose against the beach.

"Those fellows mean to make a night of it," said the Skipper. "Call me a soldier if they don't."

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"Oh, I am so thirsty!" said Cynthia again. She stood leaning against the wall of the cavern close to the opening, peering down, more, I thought, upon the water glancing below than at the strangers. I have been reading of late a very pretty tale written by a gentleman of the name of Irving, and as I read of that wonderful palace of the Moors called the Alhambra, and of the lattice work across the windows from which the court beauties gazed forth, themselves unseen, my mind ran back over fifty years, and I saw Cynthia again, as I saw her that morning, a fairer, sweeter beauty, looking down from her latticed window, than any houri who ever graced the court of Boabdil of Grenada.

"Don't worry about water, Cynthy, child," said the Skipper. "Sorry you're thirsty, but they'll go away presently, and then you can have all you want. If they would only go off a little way, we could make a dash for the boats and row to Floridy."

"Begging your pardon, sir, you forget the schooner, sir," said the Bo's'n.

"Seem to have a good many men for the size of the schooner." The Skipper remarked this as the boats were pushing into the stream. "I don't believe they are all crew." And one could see that they were not. The crew were well-fed-looking ruffians, dressed in picturesque fashion after the manner somewhat of their masters, but there were six or eight of the men in the boats who had little clothing, and that of the simplest sort. They looked sad and downcast, and one could see that they must be prisoners, even without discovering the ropes or heavy cords which tied their wrists to the rowlocks where they were seated. They gazed anxiously at the shore, as if they would be glad to rest for a while upon the sweet green grass.

"How can they live so far off!" said Cynthia, gazing down at the piratical crew in wonder.

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"Far off from where?" I asked.

"Why, from Belleville, of course."

For the moment I had forgotten that Belleville was the axis of the earth.

"I wish to God they were nearer Belleville and farther from us at this moment!" said I fiercely.

"I wish that fool girl had never come away from Belleville at all," whispered the Skipper to me. He shook his head anxiously as he stood gazing at Cynthia with a puzzled expression, as if to say, "What will become of her?"

I could not withdraw my eyes from those strange men. From the moment my eye fell upon the one they called Mauresco I hated him with a deadly hatred, and yet I think I never looked upon so comely a man. Tall, well formed, with shoulders like an athlete, you did not take him for a large man, and yet after looking at others and turning again to him he seemed like a giant. After letting your gaze rest on him for a time, and then turning to the others again, they looked like pigmies, their heads contracted, their colour faded, their eyes small and dull. What there was in this man to so fascinate every one with whom he came in contact I do not know. I never got very near to him but on one occasion, and then but for the space of a few tragic moments, but I found that he left behind him wherever he passed a memory that would not die. Mauresco was the finest of his boat's crew, as far as we could see. His coat, of some greenish colour, was thrown aside, and his fine white shirt was apparently his only covering above the waist. He wore trunk hose and half boots. Upon his head was the broad straw hat of the tropics, and around his waist was a wide green sash, in which were stuck two or three knives. Some pistols lay on the seats in the bows. I suppose that the men had disburdened themselves of these because of the heat of the day. In each boat there seemed to be a leader, or captain, who was dressed much as was Mauresco. The costumes of the sailor men were a modification of his.

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"He's very handsome," said Cynthia, her eyes glued to the glass.

"For God's sake, don't speak so loud!" said I.

"He looks like that picture of the Moor we have at home, Uncle. His voice is very sweet. I don't believe he would do us any harm. Now suppose we throw ourselves upon his mercy, and——"

"Fool!" ejaculated the Skipper, and, snatching the glass, he turned his back upon her. "If you speak a loud word," he whispered fiercely, "I'll throw you off the cliff."

"I don't see how that would save my life," whispered Cynthia to me; but her Uncle's rough words and tones had the desired effect, and we spoke no more aloud.

From the second boat there stepped a young boy of perhaps fourteen years. He had, I thought, a dazed, cowed look. The leader in the second boat was a bluff, red-faced Englishman. He limped and was awkward in his movements, and I saw that he had a wooden leg. He got over the ground, however, as fast as most of the men, and his strength and power even with this drawback made him seem uncanny. He whistled and sang by snatches in a fine barytone voice, which would not have disgraced a concert stage. When this man was not whistling and singing, he was laughing and swearing, which proved a diversion, if not an agreeable one.

As soon as the young man stood up in the boat, he looked anxiously at the burly man.

"After you, my lord," said the burly man, bowing low. "I am nothing but plain Jonas—Captain Jonas, at your service. It's so long since we had a real lord among us that we don't quite know how to treat him.—Mauresco, rise up and greet my lord."

The man we now knew as Mauresco half arose and said in his musical voice, as he smiled and showed his handsome teeth:

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"I salute you, Lord George."

The boy had a rope round his wrist, which trailed after him as he walked.

"Let me remove that darby, my lord," said Mauresco.

He drew a crooked cimetar from his belt and rose into a sitting posture. The boy looked shrinkingly at the knife and advanced, trembling and pale.

"Oh, come, come! Have courage, my lad!" said Mauresco. He cut the rope and the boy was free.

"Am I to be left upon this island?" asked the boy, looking at Mauresco anxiously.

"And why should we leave Lord George Trevelyan upon this island? To wander to the interior, and tell King Christophe that this is one of our stopping places?"

"How am I to be killed, then? Am I to be made to walk out upon that dreadful plank?" The boy shuddered, as if he had lately witnessed that dread execution. "Tell me my fate, Captain. I can bear it, only tell me."

"No, no! We have another plan for you, Lord George. We will take you back to the coast of England. We will stand in near the estate of your mother, the countess, some late evening. Then you shall write her a letter asking the ransom that I shall dictate, unless, indeed, the Admiral of the Red demands more."

"You mistake my position," said the boy. "My mother is not a rich woman, even though she has a title. She is not a countess, she——"

"But your brother is a lord."

"Yes, but I am not. I have no money in my own right, and never shall have. If I had, I would promise it all to you if you would take me home or to any civilized land."

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"Lady Trevelyan could raise the money, and then——"

"She could raise next to nothing, Captain. The estates have been encumbered for years. She is trying to pay off the indebtedness before my brother comes of age; she——"

"What would she say to sixty thousand pounds?"

The boy's face blanched.

"I may as well be frank with you, Captain; she could not procure anything like that sum."

"Well, well, say forty thousand; we won't be particular about a little less. Suppose, now, I should leave you here, Lord George, with provisions for a certain length of time, in a safe place which I know of in this neighbourhood, and you give me a letter to your mother the countess, saying——"

"It is useless," said the boy, hanging his head. "She could not give it to you."

"I'm afraid, then, we'll have to do with you as we have with many a fellow twice your size. It would never do to let you go home and set the English law working against Captain Jonas, plain Captain Jonas."

Jonas laughed his burly, fat laugh.

"Not to speak of Mauresco," he said, "handsome Mauresco!"

"But if I promise never to say a word to a soul of where I have been, whom I saw, what was said, when we——"

"We've heard those promises afore," said Captain Jonas. "Remember, Mauresco? When we caught that damned Spanish don, and all the promises he made, and then that infernal chase! No, no, boy—Lord George, I should have said. We know too much about the faith of a prisoner of war."

"My family have always been noted for their honour and faith!" The boy drew himself up with pride as he said these words. "I would die before I would tell if I promised not——"

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"That will be the case anyway," said Mauresco with a careless laugh.

"Will you shoot me? Will you make me walk that horr——"

The boy shuddered and turned paler than he had been.

"No, no, boy, on the word of the buccaneer, we have no such intention. We shall neither shoot you, hang you, nor make you walk the plank. Don't be so anxious. You have got some fine stories into your head about us, but really at bottom we are the most humane of men.—Aren't we, Jonas? I beg pardon, Captain Jonas."

"So they tell me," said Jonas pleasantly.

The third boat had now come into the cove, and had landed near the first two. The Captain of the third boat was a squat, little red-faced man, with a hump on his back to make him seem smaller—in fact, he was a dwarf. His legs were bowed, his arms long. He had small ferret eyes and an ugly grin.

"Your fate will be decided by the Admiral of the Red," said Mauresco, with a wave of the hand toward the newcomer.

As the third boat grounded, in answer to the punting oars, the men on the bank, Mauresco and Captain Jonas among them, arose from, their sitting postures and stood with an air almost of respect. The little man scrambled over the seats and tumbled himself down on the beach.

"Some of you fellows come and carry me," he said. "It's too damnably hot to walk."

At a glance from Mauresco three or four of the strongest of the men ran to the help of the

Admiral of the Red and lifted him upon their shoulders. Some one else ran to the boat and seized a boat cloak which lay in the stern sheets and placed it in the shade under a mahogany tree. The Admiral of the Red, or the Red Admiral, as he might better be called, gave each of the bearers a vicious kick as they deposited their share of him upon the ground; at which they laughed as if it were a delightful joke, and ran down to the boat to help land the Admiral's belongings.

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"Broach a keg!" squeaked the Admiral.

"We have just broached one," answered Captain Jonas.

"It was rum," whispered the Skipper to me. "I told you so. I'll take that sperm whale, if you please."

I was glad that the Skipper could joke under such horrible circumstances; it seemed to make our situation less hopeless.

The Admiral now squeaked for his horse pistol, and, while some one was concocting a drink for him out of various fiery compounds, he laid under the tree and amused himself in taking aim at the prisoners in the different boats. The men turned pale and shook as each shot flew over their heads or about their ears, and watched the Admiral with apprehensive eye, and dodged as they saw him pull the trigger. They kept their hopeless gaze fixed upon him, not knowing at which boat or which man he intended to aim.

"Why don't they push the boats off and row for it?" whispered I indignantly.

"Can't, sir," answered the Bo's'n. "Even if they could jump out of the boats and push them off they must punt to the mouth of the stream, and they would be riddled with bullets before they got that far, sir. Besides, you don't suppose, sir, those hellions would leave an oar where they could get it?"

I looked where he pointed, and saw that the oars had all been taken from the boats and were piled together some distance from the little beach.

We stood and watched those dreadful men for an hour or more. They were repulsive, but they fascinated those who had never been near persons of such notorious fame. I left Cynthia to watch the pirates and joined the Skipper.

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"Captain," said I, when I could speak to him alone, "who brought you into this cavern?"

"Didn't notice exactly; that girl, I suppose. Lacelle, they call her."

"Well, she didn't bring me in. She was here when I came. She was the first person I saw. They were all here. She and the Bo's'n, Cynthia, your niece, and the Minion."

"You've got fanciful, Jones; who else could it be? Answer me that."

I did not answer him, but asked him another question.

"Did you notice, Captain, when we went along the beach this morning, when we went to bury those men, I mean——" I stopped suddenly. "It doesn't seem only a day, does it—in fact, only a few hours—since that happened?"

"Hardly twenty-four hours since we came ashore," added the Skipper.

"Well, you remember when we went along the shore, don't you?" The Skipper nodded. "When we got to the place where the sailors were lying, there were three graves on the beach."

"Yes, what of that?"

"I want you to corroborate my statement, that is all. When I left the spot with the Bo's'n, you remember, when he was so afraid of the ring that your niece found——" The Skipper nodded again.

"Well, when I left that place with the Bo's'n there were two graves, another partly dug, and a dead Haitien lying on the edge of it. When I went back there with you there were three graves, as I have said, and no Haitien. How do you account for that?"

"Don't account for it at all," said the Captain.

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"That's the way I account for it. The idee of your askin' me to account for anything in this devil's hole. If it was a little later in the day, and we were on board the old Yankee, I should say you had been looking at the sun through the bottom of a glass. About those graves now," continued the Skipper ruminatingly, "you remember what I said about a man in love, don't you?"

The old man looked at me with his eyes half closed and a peculiar expression of countenance.

"Leaving the strangeness of the completed burial aside," said I, "can you explain why there were only three graves when there were four men concerned in carrying off Lacelle?"

"I'm not good at guessing riddles," answered the old man. "Why should you care, anyway?"

"Well, Captain," said I, "there's an air of mystery about things down here that I don't like. Some strange compelling power seems to have taken forcible possession of all of us. Whose hand was it that pushed out from between the leaves and beckoned to you? And when you had entered the

darkness of the archway, so that you could not recognise its owner, who took your hand and led you into the cave?"

"That girl, I told you," said the Skipper. "That girl Lacelle."

"It wasn't the girl who guided me," said I. "Her hand is small and plump, probably warm to the touch. The hand that held mine was long and thin, and very clammy and cold."

"The devil!" ejaculated the old man.

"No, I don't think it was the devil himself," said I. "It may have been one of his chief mates."

I looked at the Skipper, and saw that the beads of perspiration were standing on his forehead and running down the crack alongside his nose.

"Don't, man! You make the creeps go all over me. What's the use of being so damned unpleasant? Ain't we uncomfortable enough without your ringin' the changes on ghosts and spooks and spectres?"

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"You may as well look the thing in the face," said I. "There's something uncanny about the place, and, though it has worked in our favour thus far, who knows what may be in store."

"For God's sake, Jones, let's get away, then! Call Cynthy and the others to come, and let's run for it."

"Where to?" inquired I. "We might run right into the arms of those villains. If even one of them were to see us, our secret would be theirs, and then farewell to hope."

"No, that wouldn't do. I wouldn't have those wretches see Cynthy for the world," said the Skipper.

"God forbid!" said I. My heart almost burst its bounds at the thought. "O Captain Schuyler!" I pleaded, "if you have a particle of power over that niece of yours, make her lie quiet until they are gone."

"*Make!*" said the Skipper, with much the same emphasis that he had used a little while before.

"There's something to be said for 'em after all," said the Skipper in a low tone, gazing down contemplatively on the strangers. "They're probably married men. Had to get away from home. Don't suppose they can stand it."

At this the Bo's'n turned on the Skipper with a determined air. His words let me into the secret of his life.

"Begging your pardon, Cap'n Schuyler, sir," he said, "but darned if you know everything, Cap'n Schuyler, sir! I've got a wife, and if she ain't a angel—"

"Darned if you know anything at all, sir," replied the Skipper in a thunderous whisper, "except how to be insubordinate!"

Cynthia had withdrawn to one of the stone projections and was sitting there, her head leaning back against the wall.

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She looked pale and seemed faint. I went near her to see what I could do. She opened her eyes when she heard my footsteps on the rocky floor.

"They mean to stay," she whispered. "How shall we ever get any water?"

"I will get you some water," said I.

This statement sounded extremely brave, but how was I to get it? Cynthia's look of appeal and suffering pierced me to the heart. That she should really suffer for a sip of that water which we saw so plainly bubbling out of the cavern below our hiding place made me wretched.

"If I had a cup," said I.

I walked to the latticed window, where the Skipper was again gazing down upon the pirates below.

"What do you say," said I, "to our beginning a fusillade on those fellows and picking off all we can, and then rushing out and fighting the rest?"

The Skipper shook his head. "It won't do. We are only three—the boy don't count; he has no pistol, and we have little ammunition. They would discover and overpower us. And then my little Cynthy—" The Skipper sniffed and shook his head. "No, no, Mr. Jones, we had best lay by until they go. They must go soon. The sun is setting, and I'm sure they won't stay after dark. Darned if I don't wish I had our six-pounder up here! I'd clear 'em out of there mighty quick."

"Have you a cup, Captain?" said I.

"Only that flat bottle, and that's filled with rum," answered the Skipper; "but when the sun's over the foreyard I intend to wet my whistle, and I'll ask you to join me, pirates or no pirates."

"The sun's been over the foreyard this long time," said I, "but you can't drink clear liquor."

At this moment Lacelle issued from the archway at the back of the room. She held in her hand Cynthia's funereal bag. She looked questioningly at Cynthia, and laid her finger on the catch. Cynthia nodded, Lacelle pressed the spring, and handed the open bag to Cynthia, who took from that wonderful receptacle a little silver cup.

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"My baby cup," she said, as she held it out to me. I looked at the engraved letters, and read:

*"Cynthia Schuyler Archer, June 15, 1803."*

I laughed as I read the date aloud.

"As bad as the family Bible," said I.

"For Heaven's sake," urged the Skipper, "go to the back of the cave if you mean to make so much noise. One of those wretches looked up here just now when you laughed."

Familiarity with danger always makes it appear less.

I took the cup from Cynthia's hand and started for the passage through which we had entered the cave.

"Oh, don't go!" said Cynthia, but very faintly, I thought.

"Whatever you do, don't let 'em see you," said the Skipper. "They must imagine themselves quite alone on the shore."

"I think I can steal down this side of the cliff," said I, "and get through the underbrush to the shore of the stream. Remember they are across on the other side, and they are sleepy after their liquor. The only persons who could see me would be the prisoners, and I don't believe they would give the alarm."

"No, the last ones to," said the Bo's'n. "If they could only get free, sir, we could, I believe, combine, sir, and kill those wretches and take the schooner, Mr. Jones, sir."

"Turn pirate yourself!" said Cynthia with a look of horror at the poor Bo's'n. "How can you suggest anything so wicked! I thought you were——"

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"Don't be such a fool, Cynthy! It would be a good job to rid the earth of those brutes."

"O Uncle! if you kill them, promise me that I shall not see it, especially that handsome one they call Mauresco. I don't know but I could bear to see the Admiral——"

"Her mother was a real bright woman, too," said the Skipper, turning to me with an expression of scorn. "You wouldn't believe it, now would you?"

Cynthia now arose from her rock.

"Uncle," she said, "you have called me a fool several times to-day, and before these gentlemen. I don't mind it if it amuses you, but I do have clever inspirations at times. I have one now; a very bright idea has come to me. How would it do if I should go and get the water myself? If that handsome pirate should see me, he might release the young lord, and he would give us, I am sure, anything we asked. I think they usually respect a lady's wishes, don't you?"

"No," said I, "not that I ever heard of."

"Girl, you will certainly drive me off my head," said the Skipper. "Talk about swearing! I'll—I'll—I'll—Lazy, take that girl away!" The Skipper's lips moved rapidly, and I saw that he was whispering a few oaths to point his remark. I turned and faced the blackness of the passage. I groped my way along, feeling certain that I could slip quietly down the slope, dip up a cupful of water, and return without being seen. There was a spice of adventure in all this, and I was not averse to showing Cynthia that I was not quite so cowardly as I had been forced to appear. Had I reflected a little, I might have wondered what use it would be to try to appear brave in the estimation of a girl who herself was not afraid to meet the pirates—in fact, rather courted such an encounter.

My soul filled with inspiring thoughts, I started boldly into the passage. I had come safely to the chamber; naturally I could find my way to the outside by simply walking forward. I had reached the point where the passage descends sharply to the level when my hand was taken in another. This gave me a shock for a moment, and I uttered an involuntary exclamation. "A pa' peu," whispered a soft voice in my ear. The tone was reassuring, and I knew the tones were intended to convey the idea that I was to feel no fear. As I remember now, it seemed as if I were suddenly turned about at right angles with the way that I had been travelling, and then gently impelled from behind. After a little I saw a gleam of light at a distance. All at once curiosity impelled me, and I walked eagerly ahead, fear and distrust vanishing like the mist of the morning.

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I followed this new passageway, striking my flint as I went, lighting up the dismal place for a moment, and finding myself in blacker darkness when my light was gone. The spirit of discovery was now rampant within me, and I could not hold my feet, they ran unchecked. The light increased, the darkness became a little less overpowering as I proceeded, and finally I found myself walking in a sort of semi-daylight, which prefaced my coming to what seemed real light after the utter darkness which had enveloped me. The passage grew wider, there was better air, and all at once I came out upon a narrow gallery, with a wall of stone in front of me. A screen of

vines like those before our cave hung from the noble arch overhead. They grew down from a nearly circular opening, and, trailing past the gallery, reached, some of them to the floor of the apartment on which the gallery looked. Thus they concealed the narrow shelf and its occupant. I did not discover this at first, but the knowledge of it came to me gradually as I pursued my investigations. The gallery reminded me of a box at a theatre in Barcelona, and I could not fail of being struck with the similarity. I pushed the vines aside and looked over the wall, which would have corresponded with the gallery rail nowadays. Below me was a grand interior, much larger than the room in which our little party were secluded. The first thing that I noticed was a raised stone receptacle of some kind which was planted squarely in the centre of the great hall.

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"Those pirates are a cleanly set," I said almost aloud. "That must be their bath tub. Where, I wonder, do they get their water?"

The receptacle rested upon several large stones, and thus was raised from the floor of the cavern. About the tub, as I named it in my mind, were some larger rocks, which I thought must be seats. There were great blocks of stone about the walls, which I thought might be used as tables, and around the base of the wall were stone seats, shaped like divans, such as I had noticed in the room where I had left Cynthia. There were some slight signs of previous occupation, such as, what at that distance seemed, candle ends, and upon what I took to be a table was a cimetar, such as I had seen in the belt of Mauresco. Directly opposite me, but on a level with the floor, was an opening like a doorway, through which a pale light shone, and I noticed now that a little of God's sunlight pierced its way in from overhead. It was now that I raised my eyes to the roof and found that there was a second opening, through which the vines hung in masses, one or two long vines of ropelike appearance trailing upon the floor. Lying upon the stone floor was a large lamp of antique construction. In the ring at its top was wound the end of the hanging vine. This I understood later.

I now leaned over the gallery as far as I dared to see how high it was above the level of the floor. It seemed to me to be situated about thirty feet above the base of the wall, and I could discover no possible way by which it could be reached from below. I could almost touch the roof from where I stood as it curved over my head. As I raised myself up from this inspection I turned my head sidewise, when some strange objects met my view. At first I could not make out what manner of things these were. At the end of this great apartment there seemed to be several niches in the wall. They were upon my right, and I could not distinguish them distinctly from where I stood. So I moved to the left, my gallery curving slightly there, and, looking fixedly at them in the failing light, I comprehended what this grewsome sight meant.

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There were six niches. Each niche, with the exception of one, had its occupant, and as I looked I perceived that they bore a resemblance to the human figure, some of them more strictly than others, but I knew now that these were some of the victims of those "handsome men" upon whose "mercy" Cynthia wished us to throw ourselves. They were, in fact, the remains of human beings, whose last living hours had been spent within those dreadful walls. There were five, I think, as nearly as I can remember. One appeared almost as if he were still in life and able to speak and ask for help. His clothes were well preserved, and his figure and head were almost erect, his bearing almost proud. But the others were in most instances fleshless skeletons. The skin had dropped from their bones, the clothes hung in tatters about their shrunken forms, their teeth glistened in the last light of day. There must have been a strong wind without, and upon the eastern side of the cave where this great hall was situated, for it would force itself into the passages and through the crannies. The desolate figures were affected by its insistence. A head wobbled languidly here, a rag of cloth fluttered faintly there, then an entire body swayed as if weary only with its tiresome position for so long a time, and as if it would fain seat itself or lie down to rest.

I gazed awestruck. I put my hands over my eyes, and, removing them, I looked again. There was a fiercer gust of wind, which rattled the jaws of some of the skeletons, and their teeth seemed to be almost hissing out words of appeal or of warning to me. I turned and fled back through the passageway, running as if for life, as if I, too, might be caught and left to die slowly in one of those empty niches. As I flew along I struck my light, but the flint fell from my fingers. I stooped and groped for it. I got myself confused and turned around, and in a second flight I found myself again in the hated gallery. Here I pulled myself together and started afresh. As luck would have it, in my second flight through the tunnel my foot struck against my flint and steel. I groped and picked up the little chain that held them together, and this time I got out of the tunnel, for I stumbled up against a blank wall and knew that it must lead to our refuge.

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I struck a light, and found that my surmise was correct. The light also enabled me to see a bucket of water standing upon the floor of the passageway, and in it floated Cynthia's silver cup. I must have dropped it in my haste to see where that passage would lead. I felt ashamed, but I remember that I was hardly curious as to how the water got there. I had so much more serious and terrible things to occupy my mind.

When I reached the room with the lattice, as I shall call it now, to distinguish it from the others, I found that the Skipper, the Bo's'n, and the Minion were alone. The two men were lying down to get a little sleep. The Minion was hanging against the vines, still looking down at the men who had come ashore from the schooner. I set down my bucket, which was almost at once surrounded by the three, and they were minded to drink from the very pail itself, as there was but one cup.

"We thought you would never come back. Gad! what a time you have been! The Minion thought the pirates had gobbled you sure," said the Skipper.

"Where is Miss Archer?" said I.

At that moment Cynthia advanced with Lacelle from between the pillars at the back. She gave me a welcoming smile, with which some reproach was mingled, and then bent over the pail and dipped the cold water from it with her cup. She handed it to Lacelle. The girl pushed the cup away and made Cynthia drink first.

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When all had finished, I took my share.

"You haven't had any?" exclaimed Cynthia. "How selfish we have all been! I thought you would get some at the stream."

"How did you get our pail, Mr. Jones, sir?" asked the Bo's'n.

I did not wish to alarm Cynthia.

"Oh, that's my secret!" said I.

Cynthia looked kindly at me now.

"Come with me, Mr. Jones," she said, "and see the charming room that Lacelle has found for me."

I followed the two back between the pillars, and after one or two turnings we came to a small room where Cynthia was entirely secluded and quiet. Here a faint light trembled down from overhead. I looked up and could see the branches of trees moving in the high wind, and behind them the red sky of sunset. Along the wall ran one of those surprising benches of stone, and on this Cynthia, or Lacelle for her, had laid the blanket and placed the pillow.

"Who brought these up here?" I asked.

"I can not say," said Cynthia. "I found them here."

There was not a sound in this remote spot. I judged that it was bounded at the back or west by the new passage through which I had gone on my voyage of discovery, by the entrance passage on the north, and by part of the great hall upon which I had looked down on the south. I had no way of proving this, but my bump of locality has always been good, and I thought that I understood the situation. I saw that there was but one way of entering this room, and made up my mind that so long as I had life and strength no living creature should pass beyond those stone pillars.

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"Are you not hungry?" asked I.

"Not very," said Cynthia. "We each took some hard bread when we left the camp. The Bo's'n told us to. I have been nibbling on mine. I am very tired. Perhaps we can all sleep for a while. I suppose when it is really sunset those men will go away, don't you? Then we can go down to the shore again."

I had my forebodings, but I answered nothing. When I returned to the outer room, the three whom I had left were standing close to the lattice and peering downward.

"Where can they be?" I heard the Skipper say as I entered.

"Round there," said the Minion, whose words were as rare if not as priceless as the pearls and rubies of speech in the fable.

He motioned with his hand to the side of the hill on the east, opposite where we had climbed the slope. I stood as near the lattice work as I dared and scanned the grassy plain below. The boats with their prisoners were still beached on the shore of the stream. The guards sat under the trees ashore, keeping watch with pistols cocked. But the rest of the sailors, the two Captains, the Admiral, and the young Englishman had disappeared as completely as if they had dropped into a bottomless pit. I wondered if they had gone to some secluded place known only to themselves, where they could make way with the lad unknown to their companions, the guard, and the prisoners. As we stood and surmised over the fact of their disappearance, we heard the sound of many footsteps and the sudden loud ring of heels upon the stone floor in the chamber next our own. I had just time to motion to the others to hug the party wall, and to lie down myself with my length stretched along the base of the partition, when the voice of Captain Jonas rang out with baffled tone:

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"Where are they?" he shouted. "Where are they? I thought they were here!"

"Lift me up! Lift me up, so that I may see!" squeaked the Admiral of the Red.

We lay as if we had been carved out of the very rock itself.

There were shouts and oaths and runnings here and there, and scuffling of feet upon the dusty footway. There was a flicker of light through the embrasures against our farther wall, and thence came an order—a roar, rather—from Captain Jonas:

"Search the whole place! Search every nook and corner! If it takes till midnight, the search must go on! They must be found!"



## CHAPTER VII.

### A VILLAIN MEETS HIS END AND A PRISONER ESCAPES.

We had been discovered, then! I lay close against the partition wall. My heart thumped loudly against my ribs, so that it seemed as if the strangers must hear it and find out our hiding place. I looked at the others. The Captain was crouched upon his knees, and the Bo's'n and Minion each were standing as near the partition wall as nature would permit.

What a scraping of feet was there! Lights flashed out, and there was a din of voices which threatened to conceal any specific expression which would be a guide to us. Then came a command in the musical voice of the handsome Mauresco.

"Silence!" he ordered. There was an attempt at quiet, but still the shuffling of feet and the low whispers were continued.

"Must the Captain speak twice?"

It was the high squeak of the Admiral of the Red. How that insignificant creature obtained control so great was to me an unsolvable mystery, but he certainly possessed it to an astounding degree over that lawless mob. Suddenly the hush was so impressive that I feared to breathe.

"A thousand louis to the man who finds them!" he said, and in those words I felt that our doom was spoken.

We heard them beating the bush, as it were, searching for us, we felt sure. I expected every moment that they would rush away into the darkness, make a long *détour* up over the crest of the hill, and descend to our entrance upon the other or western side. I rolled over and drew my knife from its ragged sheath, ready to sell my life dearly. I thought of Cynthia as I lay there, and I wondered if we had better warn her. I hesitated to frighten her, and yet I felt that the time had come to put a knife into her hand and tell her to take her life with determination if need be. Our case seemed hopeless. We three looked at each other. No one spoke. The din in the next chamber was so overpowering that we might have shouted, but the rest felt as I did—there was nothing to say. I saw them each examine their pistols as I had mine, and the Bo's'n gave the Minion one of his, at which the boy grinned with delight and nodded his head violently, but remained, as usual, silent. We heard the buccaneers still racing about. It seemed to me that they searched in small excavations in the walls. Some seemed to run a little way inside a passage and then return, for we constantly heard the inquiry "Found?" and the answer, "No, not yet." Then suddenly they all trooped out, and we were left in quiet. We arose and walked to the entrance to our cavern.

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"They are coming over the hill," said the Captain. I nodded, and there we stood and waited.

I thought that I had discovered the secret of the great natural cave. It was evidently divided in an irregular fashion along its length, beginning at the water and running backward. There was an entrance upon the western side, which we had used, and one upon the eastern side, which the pirates had used. There was no connection between the two except from the gallery, where I had gone alone and had made the discovery of that dreadful hall of death. I hoped that as the pirates had not come up the western bank to our entrance, that they knew nothing of it. And I think now that the two or three who discovered it later did so by accident only, and for the first time.

"Why not meet them at the archway?" suggested I in a low tone. "It is narrow there. Only one can enter at a time. We could kill each one as he came."

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"That's a good plan, Mr. Jones," whispered the Bo's'n; "I'll lead, sir."

"No," said the Skipper, "I claim the right. Thank God, I can fight, now that I am out of Cynthia's sight!"

It had grown dark in the cave, for we were on the northern side and night was coming on. Somehow I got ahead as we stole into the passage, and groped our way along its black length. I felt carefully with my foot, dreading the sudden descent to the level. It came not so soon as I had thought, and I turned to warn the others. I did not now dare strike a light, for I feared that with each moment that passed we should hear those dreadful voices at the entrance to the passageway. We walked along the level, and mounted the incline which led to the archway. And now we did indeed hear voices. Yes, our surmise had been correct. They had climbed up the hill, had rounded the back of the cave, and were coming to seek us. There were not many voices.

"They have divided," whispered the Bo's'n. "Some are searching here, some in other places." We heard their footsteps coming down the hill. The rocks and shale made a great noise. There was but a faint light at the entrance, and I watched to see when one of our pursuers should force his entrance to our retreat. There was a scuffling outside upon the rough stones, and a figure stood in the doorway. I waited for him to advance, hoping to cut him down without a great noise. He came on for a few uncertain steps, when, quick as thought, there was a flash from over his head, a sickening cut, and the intruder rolled upon the ground without a groan. Then I saw a figure busy over the fallen man. The body was pushed and pried against the wall, there was a final shove, and the dead man disappeared. All was still for a moment, then I heard a faint splash of water far underground. The strange figure had but just completed this ghastly work and had arisen when the darkening gleam at the entrance was shut out by a second stranger. He came groping his way into the passage. I heard him strike his flint. It was but a spark, and he tried to

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strike another; but that avenging hand was upon him, and he, too, was laid low. Not without a struggle, however, but I did not dare to approach within range of that busy weapon which was doing its work unaided. Again those unseen hands pushed and pried the slain man to the edge of the wall. It seemed to me that the hole was small and not high, for it was with difficulty that this second victim of our Nemesis was crowded through. I learned this more by sound than by feeling, for the very slight, small thread of light which filtered down the passage showed me most dimly two blurred figures moving in combat and nothing more.

"One of those prisoners got loose, I guess," whispered the Captain. "He's killed two, anyway."

And now the third intruder entered the passageway. In the tall, lithe figure I at once recognised Mauresco. It was now so dark that I saw but a dim form, his musical voice aiding me in determining his identity. I heard the sound of his shuffling footsteps as he came on, feeling the way. He, too, struck a light. He was more successful than his predecessors, and for a moment a flare in the passage showed to us two figures in all their distinctness, the pirate and his enemy in ambush. It showed to him four determined men. With a yell of rage he raised his cimeter high in air; but now I watched my chance, for fear of killing our unknown friend. The figure next us sprang aside, and my bullet went through the dastardly heart, I hope, for he never spoke. I watched the archway for more spies, but these three seemed to be the only ones who had discovered its seclusion. We came, all three, to the assistance of our unknown deliverer, and crowded and pushed the great body through the opening at the base of the wall. I listened for the splash with pleasurable feelings.

"If they were only all down there!" said the Skipper in low tones. We waited in the semi-darkness for some twenty minutes or so, but no one else came. I put out my hand to thank our unseen and silent friend, but he had vanished. We stole to the entrance of the archway and looked out. All was quiet. If the pirates were still on shore, they had found some very secluded nook where we hoped they would remain until they went aboard their devilish craft. We now began to retreat to our latticed chamber. I softly whispered to the others to follow me.

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"We haven't much choice," whispered the Captain.

I knew that there were no pitfalls, for I had been over the ground twice, and if my excursion of discovery to the grand hall were counted, I had passed in all four times safely over almost the entire passage. We regained the chamber with no incident, and, after taking some water with a little of the Skipper's rum, which we much required after the horrible encounter which we had been through, and eating each one a ship's biscuit, which the thoughtful Bo's'n had brought with him, we laid ourselves down for our needed rest.

We divided ourselves into three watches. The boy we thought too young. We could not trust him to keep awake. It was now eight o'clock. The Bo's'n said that he would watch from eight to ten. I was to take the second watch from ten to twelve, and then the Skipper was to be awakened and stand his watch from twelve until two. Then I was to relieve him, and so on until morning. The Bo's'n placed himself just outside the archway, with his face toward the passage. The Skipper and I lay down just inside the opening, our pistols ready cocked and in order. I remember that in the second after I laid myself down Lacelle came out from between the pillars of the archway with her finger on her lip, and approached the Bo's'n. She whispered in his ear two words. They sounded like "Li do'." The Bo's'n said that he thought she intended to say "Elle dort," which meant, he said, "The lady is asleep." I took his word for it, and turned my weary frame over with a lighter heart, to feel that Cynthia was getting some rest after the anxieties and fatigues of the day.

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Of what comes next in our history I almost hesitate to write, for fear that I shall not be believed; but I have often heard it said that truth is stranger than fiction, and so I have found in my adventurous life.

Should I sit me down to write a tale of fiction, I could not imagine anything more incredible than what befell us in our sojourn in that painful time when we were cast away, and so I have determined to recall all that I can of our dreadful experiences, than which nothing that I ever read has been more remarkable; although if I forget some of the incidents, it will be as well, for I feel that I can never hope to crowd into my story all the occurrences of our life upon the island.

I had been asleep, then, about an hour, perhaps, that first sleep when waking at a twitch of the sleeve is next to impossible. I remember that I felt as if something were pulling at my arm. I was shaken and roughly rolled about, my head was gently pounded upon the rock floor of our cavern, and I recall that I drew myself away angrily and rolled over with my head upon my arm. I was drunk with sleep, and it was not until I felt myself taken by the ankles and pulled along the cavern for a few inches than I realized that some one was trying to awaken me.

Dragging a man's hair upward from his neck by hauling him along a stone floor is not conducive to a perfectly sound sleep, and I finally opened my eyes with, I am afraid, some words upon my lips which I certainly had not learned in the Old Dutch Church at Belleville. I put my hand to the back of my head where the smart was sorest, and sat up and opened my eyes. The Bo's'n was standing over me with his finger raised, as if to say "Hush!" He need not have told me to be silent. The Skipper was snoring profoundly, the Minion was nowhere to be seen.

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I saw from the Bo's'n's look that something was afoot, and I tumbled up on my unsteady legs at his bidding and pulled myself together for whatever was to come. He uttered no word, but beckoned me to follow him, and together we began to traverse the passage which led to the

outside, he groping his way ahead, I following. Several times he stopped, and then I ran upon his heels.

"Keep your left hand on the wall, sir," he whispered, "and when you find an opening turn to the left, sir——"

I understood his actions now, and did as he bade me.

When, in groping along the wall, my hand suddenly left the damp stone and searched in air for something tangible to the touch, I turned sharply at a right angle, still following him, I was sure. I knew now that I was in the second passage which ran transversely across this great cave of many chambers, and that in some way the Bo's'n had found the way to the grand hall which I had discovered for myself in the early afternoon.

After we had walked some distance, groping in the dark, fearing to strike a light, I began to perceive the faint gleam that I had noticed before. I had been expecting it. At the same moment there fell upon my ear the distant murmur of voices. As we proceeded, they grew louder. There was a sound of gaiety and jolly laughter, and an occasional burst of song.

I saw that the Bo's'n was crouching as he went, and I did the same, though I saw no possible danger of discovery, as the gallery which I had explored in the afternoon was high up in the roof and was not connected with any other cave. As I was thinking thus, the Bo's'n sat down on the floor of the passage and began to remove his shoes, motioning me to do the same. I had not been accustomed to take orders from a Bo's'n, and so I whispered to him; but, with a "Beggin' your pardon, sir," he motioned to me that I could either remove my shoes or return the way I came. I had already done as he suggested, but I was a little crusty as yet from my sudden awakening.

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However, no one could get put out with the Bo's'n, he was such a mild-mannered man. I was soon bare-footed as he was, for we were prudent even in the midst of danger, and neither of us cared to use up his one and only pair of socks on the damp floor of the passage. The Bo's'n had taken the lead, and he kept it. I crept along after him, feeling sure that our precautions were useless, as the buccaneers were making so much noise that it would require a great deal upon our part to betray our presence.

The Bo's'n entered the gallery and turned at once to the left, into the curve which I had discovered just before I left the place. We pushed along near the end.

"Go up farther!" I whispered, at the same time giving the Bo's'n a shove with my elbow.

"Can't, sir, begging your pardon, sir," whispered the Bo's'n in return.

There was a faint light coming up from the centre of the great hall, and by its aid I discovered that there was some one in the extreme end of the balcony.

"It's that dam' Minion!" whispered the Bo's'n.

The Minion was certainly ubiquitous, and he was quite as useless. How he had been foisted upon our party I could not see, not being perfectly conversant with the ways of Providence. There seemed no moral for him to point, and I felt then as now that he certainly did not adorn a tale. That Heaven had sent him into the world for some good purpose I wanted to believe, but what that purpose might be I was quite confident would never be discovered in my time. Now, as usual, he was in the way, but I give the Bo's'n credit for squeezing him into the corner and nearly crowding the life out of him.

The Minion had the proscenium box, so to speak. He had pulled the vines aside, and was looking down as calmly upon this villainous crew as if the flare from below was not striking directly upon his features. I pulled him down with a jerk of the shirt which threatened to split it across the shoulders. Bringing the Minion to the floor made more noise than I liked, and caused the Bo's'n to look respectful daggers at me. The Minion only grinned, but clutched madly at the rough edges of the rock which protruded into the gallery. When he arose again he kept well out of sight behind the lattice work of leaves. From the time that we entered the gallery the shouts and revelry had been deafening. I could with difficulty restrain myself from parting the vines widely, that I might look unrestrainedly down upon what I knew must be an exciting scene, for when I arose from my crawling posture and found a convenient eyehole between the leaves the strange sight upon which I gazed almost made my heart stand still.

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What shall I describe first?

The glow which allowed us to see that which was going on beneath us, and threw its soft rays over the actors in this strange drama, was shed from the antique globe which I had discovered upon my first visit to this part of the cavern. Then, however, it rested sidewise upon the floor. Now it was raised so as to clear the head of a man, and swung safely from its rope of vine. I understood now that when last it was left to swing in the cave it had not been used for some time after, and the vine, growing during the absence of the band, had gradually laid the great perforated globe as gently upon the floor of the cave as could have been done by a woman's hand.

A subdued and lovely light filtered through its metal arabesques and sent a soft glow through the grand interior of the cavern. A clear beam was cast upon the walls. It lighted up the skeletons in their niches, and gave to the teeth glistening in its rays a fixed and dreadful smile. The brightest

gleam fell upon the central basin. The receptacle which I had noticed in the centre of the hall was now filled with some dark liquid. The fumes of this liquid were so overpowering as to leave no doubt in my mind as to its nature.

As to the living occupants of this strange interior, I saw that most of those whom we had seen debark were present. One of the huge blocks of stone which I had supposed were used for tables had been rolled or pushed to near proximity of the central bowl. Upon this great rock, which now partook of the nature of a throne, was seated the Admiral of the Red, his gnomelike figure and habiliments, which doubtless gave him his sobriquet, making him to appear like some grotesque figure from wonderland.

Captain Jonas sat facing the Admiral, but upon a lower seat, and the rest of the company were gathered about, giving respectful attention to their leader, who seemed about to speak. At a little distance, left quite to himself, stood the young Englishman. He was pale and ghastly. His eyes had the hunted look of a man who is in the last stage of agony and despair. I thought that once or twice I saw his lips move. He glanced upward, as if he felt that his only friend was not an earthly one. Again, I saw him turn his glance to the archway of the entrance, as if escape might not be in vain. But alas! in that doorway stood two ruffianly looking fellows, one on either side of the entrance. They leaned each one against the wall behind him, and held a great sword the like of which I had never seen. The point of the sword touched the opposite wall, and crossed the one held by the man facing, so that hope of escape, unless an angel came down from heaven to guide the way, was impossible.

The remains of a coarse feast lay upon the table, but the chief interest seemed to circle round the magnificent jorum in the centre of the hall. Each man held a cup in his hand, which swayed unsteadily because of his heavy potations. These cups were some of silver, some of pewter, and others of gold. The drinking cup which the Admiral held was of gold, and so tall that he could almost drink from it as it rested upon his knee. I wondered at his being able to lift it, but his strength seemed enormous, which is, I believe, one of the attributes of dwarfs in general.



**Pirates at play.**

Upon a table—I called them tables, these blocks of stone—were heaped together incongruously, handsome articles of ware. They were mixed indiscriminately with common pots and pans and cooking utensils. Standing among the articles of baser metal I noticed some pieces of a jewelled church service. There were drinking horns standing side by side with the most exquisite vases of silver, pewter cups and flagons cheek by jowl with the consecrated vessels.

"Where is Mauresco? Mauresco!" squeaked the Admiral of the Red. "He knew where our

treasures were stored. Bring Mauresco, that I may array myself as befits my position!"

"Mauresco! Mauresco!" The motley company took up the cry. The musical syllables rang through the vaulted cavern, and echoed back from the hollows and arches overhead. "Mauresco! Mauresco!" they rang, "Mauresco!"

The Bo's'n and I looked at each other, then turned again to survey the extraordinary scene, as if we could not bear to lose a motion or a wave of the hand.

There were some chests standing open on the floor, and several men ran at an order from the Admiral and burrowed and groped among the handsome stuffs that partly trailed their lengths along the rock beneath them. They had been used, I thought, to enwrap the flagons and cups. But, search as they would, nothing came to light that had not already been placed in view of the band assembled.

"Mauresco alone possessed the secret," shouted Jonas. "If you had only trusted me now," and in the tone one heard the plaint of long-standing jealousy, and we felt certain that, whatever the Admiral might experience should he hear how Mauresco had met his timely death, Captain Jonas would not shed half a tear.

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So it was treasure then that the buccaneers were seeking when they burst into the chamber next that in which we had taken refuge, and not ourselves. Thank God for that! I judged from this that they had not discovered the dual nature of the cavern, and that when Mauresco groped with curious fingers into our passageway he did it as an explorer, and not as one who had any positive knowledge.

"Mauresco must come soon," said the Admiral. "Meanwhile let Lord George Trevelyan step forth."

The young man started and looked uneasily at the group.

"Let Lord George Trevelyan drink to the health of the Admiral of the Red!" roared Captain Jonas in his burly voice.

The young Englishman started again slightly, but did not advance.

Captain Jonas fired a volley of oaths at the boy. He then drew his pistol from his belt and levelled it at the head of the young Englishman, who did not wince. This seemed to make the wretch think better of his purpose, for he fired the weapon into the jorum instead. The liquor splashed and spouted up in jets, whereupon the Admiral shouted in his thread of voice:

"Light it up! light it up! Give it life! give it life!"

Several pistols were held close to the liquor and discharged into the inflammable mass, but it remained for one of the most zealous members of the crew to ignite the fluid with his flint, which he struck with success. The fumes flamed high and lighted up the cavern, shadowing the buccaneers upon the walls in a thousand fantastic shapes.

"Fill up! fill up!" squeaked the Admiral of the Red. The band crowded round the bowl, and dipped the liquid fire from its glowing surface. Then they drank, as did their leader.

"A song! a song!" roared Captain Jonas.

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"Where is Mauresco? Handsome Mauresco? He has a pretty pipe. Bring Mauresco. No one can sing like Mauresco."

"Mauresco! No one can sing like Mauresco!"

"You'll never hear his pretty pipe again, thank God!" whispered I in the Bo's'n's ear.

"Where can he be?" roared Captain Jonas; "and Wiggins and the Turk?"

"So it was the Turk and Wiggins who went to keep Mauresco company," said I again softly in the Bo's'n's ear.

"An' a murderous pair they was, sir, Mr. Jones, if ever I saw such," answered the Bo's'n.

"A song, meanwhile, good Jonas," squeaked the Admiral. "A song! You sing a stave nearly as well as Mauresco. Sing——"

"I'll choose my song myself," said Jonas gruffly, "or I won't sing at all. It was sung in Ned England's day. Brave Ned England!"

"Choose it, then," said the Admiral hotly, "but sing it. Get one with a chorus, mind you, one with a chorus! We all like to roar a jolly chorus, hey, my lads?"

"We do! we do! The Admiral has spoke our minds, we do!" shouted the band in ragged unison.

Captain Jonas emptied his glass, limped to the table where the Admiral was seated, hitched himself up on the corner, crossed the leg fashioned by human hands over that made by his Creator, and with fingers clasped held it there, as if he feared that it would walk off by itself. He then opened a mouth more renowned for size than beauty, and sang that song with which I have often sung you, when you were my little Adoniah, to sleep, when mother had gone to Wednesday evening meeting. I am good at catching a tune, and perhaps some of the words I have supplied; but I am sure that for villainy mine could never equal the viciousness of the words which issued

"AS I WAS A-SAILIN' DOWN MALABAR COAST."

*Time drawing and slow.*

As I was a - sail - in' down Mal - a - bar Coast, I spies a fair

*Time drawing and slow.*

wes - sel a - lee, a - lee, Of gal - lant good rig - gin' and

*Sempre crescendo.*

sticks did she boast. We filled up our glass - es and gave her a toast, For

*Sempre crescendo.*

soon she'd belong, sir, to we, to we, For soon she'd belong, sir, to we

MALABAR COAST.

As I was a-sailin' down Malabar coast,  
 I spies a fair wessel, a-lee, a-lee,  
 Of gallant good riggin' and sticks did she boast.  
 We filled up our glasses and gave her a toast,  
 For soon she'd belong, sir, to we, to we,  
 For soon she'd belong, sir, to we.

She signalled her name, and she ran up a rag  
 Of various bright colours to see, to see.  
 We didn't wait long, but without any brag,  
 We hoisted the Cross Bones, the jolly Black Flag,  
 And merrily sailed down a-lee, a-lee,  
 And merrily sailed down a-lee.

We gave her a shot or two over the bows,  
 The wind moaned aloft and a-low, a-low;  
 We was down on our luck, and our spirits to rouse,  
 We started right in for a jolly carouse  
 Aboard of a wessel you know, all know,  
 Her name was the "Cadogan Snow."

We piled up her silks and her wines on the decks  
 As high as my head, sir, and higher, much higher,  
 And when we had made her the sweetest of wrecks,  
 We stopped all their mouths by just slitting some  
 necks  
 And took every thing that a gent could desire,  
 Then set the old barco afire.

We forced some sweet ladies fair over the side,  
 With many a jest and a lively prank.  
 To old Davy Jones each relinquished his bride,  
 And when they bewailed 'em, and mournfully cried,  
 We started 'em out on a wery long plank—

They moaned and they groaned as they sank.

Captain Jonas sang with spirit. When he reached the fifth line he waved his hands above his head, thus releasing his wooden leg, which waved also in midair. The rest joined in with a good will, and sang both the fifth and sixth line with so great a noise that I feared not only would they awaken Cynthia, but Mauresco, Wiggins, and the Turk as well.

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"That was the song Ned England used to sing. Brave Ned England! Merry Ned England!" squeaked the Admiral of the Red. "We shall never look on his like in this world. He was a dare-devil dog, if ever there was one!"

I watched young Trevelyan as he stood alone, pale and dejected. When the chorus had ended, the Admiral's thin voice was heard saying:

"A shooting bout! a shooting bout!" The lad winced and closed his eyes. But it was not yet time for his torture to begin.

"Turn me round! turn me round!" was the Admiral's next order. "I'll lead off."

Several of the Admiral's followers ran to twist him in the right direction, which we found to be a position in which he faced the niches where the skeletons hung.

"You see Sir Evelyln Wulbur's left eye?" questioned the Admiral. "The left eye for a thousand pounds!"

"A thousand pounds! a thousand pounds!" shouted the band. Crack! went the ball. There was a slight tremor of the frame, but the shining skull remained apparently uninjured.

"A fine shot!" said Captain Jonas. "Try the right eye, Admiral."

"The right eye," said the Admiral, complying readily.

Crack! again. And through the right eye sped the unerring bullet. It flattened against the wall, and dropped with a chink to the floor of the niche.

"Don't want to riddle that head at the back," said Jonas. "Try another skull. The next man!"

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Other marksmen levelled their weapons at other figures, and showed proof of skill such as I had never even imagined. One bullet only failed. It crushed in a skull between the eyes.

"Put him out! put him out!" squeaked the Admiral. "He's ruined the Chief Justice for life!" At this witty sally there was a great roar. I wondered that the figures still stood, each one in his niche. I could not understand why this was so, or why they had not long ago fallen to the floor of the cave. When the disgraced marksman was thrust outside the archway, Captain Jonas slid down from his seat and limped to the centre of the hall. He bowed low to young Trevelyan, with a certain sort of sneering deference which persons of his class usually feel for men of higher station.

"Would Lord Trevelyan like to try his hand at this very pretty game?" he asked.

The lad raised his eye, in which at once there appeared a gleam of hope. He thrust out his hand for the weapon.

The Admiral laughed in his high key.

"No, no!" he said. "That was not the meaning of Captain Jonas, plain Captain Jonas. He meant to reverse the order of things. He meant to inquire if Lord George Trevelyan would like to stand as a target. I promise you, my lord, you need feel no fear. We can shoot all round your body. Put a bullet so close to your left ear that it will deafen you for a week. Put one so close to your right ear that it will snap the drum merely from the concussion of the air. We will cut your pockets off one after the other, and touch neither your heart, your lights, or your liver. I myself can score a pathway through those golden curls on top of your very handsome head and never touch the scalp. I can—Why, what's the matter with the young lord? Chicken-livered, hey, my lord, hey?"

Trevelyan made no reply, but dropped his head lower upon his breast. The Admiral drained his cup and handed it to one of the men that it might be replenished at the flaming bowl.

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"Is it not time to finish this business?" asked the Admiral, jerking his head in the direction of the lad.

"We are waiting for Mauresco, Admiral."

"Yes, yes, the high priest, Mauresco! The handsome high priest, Mauresco! Where can Mauresco be? Call Mauresco! Go and call Mauresco! Searching as usual for his lost bauble, perhaps."

A dozen men ran to obey his orders. They disappeared through the archway, and there were cries of "Mauresco!" "Mauresco!" We heard shrill whistles and calls, but Mauresco did not appear. I was glad that I knew the reason why.

I saw that the lad turned his eyes ever toward the doorway, hoping probably that the watch would be relaxed, and once or twice I was almost tempted to cry out, "Try it now, Trevelyan, try it now!" The moment came at last, for it seemed to me that their potations had made the bandits somewhat careless.

"Go bring the sepulchre!" ordered the Admiral. At these dreadful words the boy shrank to the wall and stood there, his face leaned against the inhospitable rock.

Two men now entered, bringing what, I could not determine, except that they walked about six feet apart, and that the something between them glinted in certain places in the lamplight, and made a jingling noise as they came. Some of the ruffians were filling their flagons and cups, but as the two approached, bearing what the Admiral had called the sepulchre, they all came forward and crowded around this new object of interest. The guards at the door had relaxed their watchfulness and were gazing with the rest.

"Now is the time," I whispered. "Will he never——" A shout! Another, and twenty more! A rush to the doorway! The lad had made a bolt for it and was gone!

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## CHAPTER VIII. A LIVING DEATH.

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My determination was not taken before I was halfway down the passage. I felt myself running like the wind through the tunnel, my hand scraping the wall as I ran. I remember that it seemed to me possible that I could get to the aid of the young lad in the dark and bring him to our concealed retreat. I was bumping against the sides of the tunnel as these thoughts went through my brain, and when I came plump against the transverse wall of what I called the home passage I turned to the left, and was soon in the open air. I heard the footsteps of my companions, I was sure, but they did not follow me farther than the home tunnel. I remember the delicious smell of the fresh night air that filled my nostrils as I emerged from the cave.

It seemed light outside after the blackness of the passage. I tore up the hill. I forgot my bare feet. I leaped, I ran as I never had done before, and then I heard a rustling among the leaves. He had doubled upon his pursuers.

"Here! here!" I shouted. "This way! this way!" I was now at the top of the hill. Some one crashed through the underbrush.

"Where? Which way?" he panted. I held my hand out to him. He seized it in his, for even in the darkness he knew me for a friend.

"This way," I whispered, "this way. I will save you, lad. Come! come!" I clasped his fingers tightly and together we raced for life, but there were the sounds of many feet in pursuit. I kept in mind always that, whatever happened, the buccaneers must not know the secret of our side of the cavern, and so I pulled him still up the hill and back into the deeper forest. But the lad was weak and ill from long confinement on ship-board, and my feet were bleeding and sore. We leaped with the strength that despair lends to weary frames, but the energy of revenge was upon our trail, and I felt the presence of my enemy behind me. I heard his heavy step treading almost upon my heels. I tried to double by bending low, but fate, the inexorable, was on the other side, and I fell, dragging the lad down with me. A rough hand caught at my shoulder, and then other hands were laid upon me, and I was held by those about me as if in a vise. I struggled to draw my pistol, and managed to cock it and lay my captor low, thank God! But, for one who had seized upon us, there were six or eight to hold us fast. We were turned about and marched back to the cavern.

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"The Admiral will settle with you for that shot, my gentleman," said a rough voice. "I envy you very little," growled he. "That was 'The Rogue,' next to Mauresco, the Admiral's favourite among us all."

I had, indeed, got myself into a nice mess! All of my own deliberate choosing, too! How could I have been such a fool! The young lad must die doubtless, but why I should have elected to die with him I could not just then determine. While some of the men remained to look after the villain well named "The Rogue" others haled the lad and me to the door which opened into the Admiral's compartment. Our captors pushed us into an archway much like the one which led to our latticed retreat. We passed along a short tunnel. The light from within became strong, and in a moment we were thrust in amid the company. I had hoped never to make their personal acquaintance, and I entered reluctantly. As we came in among them, the Admiral and Captain Jonas gazed with delight at young Trevelyan, and with more than amazement at me.

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"Two!" shouted Captain Jonas, "when we expected but one. This is luck, great luck! What snare did you lay for this popinjay?"

The name used by chance did not bring up to me the most pleasurable feelings.

"Faith, and begorra, I think that he was layin' of a snare for us, Captain," answered my captor, a middle-aged Irishman.

"Another!" The Admiral craned his short neck forward. "And where did you come from, sir?"

"You must have seen my boat as you landed. It was on the beach a quarter of a mile below the cove."

"How did you get here? Been paying a visit to Christophe, perhaps, or have been trying to



discover our——"

"I am a shipwrecked sailor, sir," I answered. "My companions perished——"

"Ah! Was yours the ship we fired? By George! it was a jolly blow up, though not as successful as I could wish." The Admiral chuckled and shook with glee. "Of what nation are you?" said he, as he turned suddenly on me.

"I am an American, Admiral," said I, not, I confess, without some slight tremors.

He squeezed his eyes together and scrutinized me searchingly.

"And how, pray you, do you know my title so well?"

I pulled myself together.

"Have I not heard your men here addressing you, sir? Is your title a secret?"

"Tut, tut, I am not accustomed to be answered back. An American, hey? So you thought Englishmen and English manners not good enough for you rebels over there; you thought——"

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The blood flew to my face, and I blurted out hastily, regardless of my own safety:

"Is it English manners to capture a young lad like this and——"

"Ho! ho! So you take it upon yourself to question me? Let me tell you that for a wink of the eye many a man has met with a worse death than shall be meted out to you, Mr.——"

"Jones—Hiram Jones, sir," said I, "at your service."

"None of your insolence, Mr. Hiram Jones! Perhaps we can show you that Mr. Hiram Jones the American is not quite the great man that he thinks himself."

I could not help wondering if the Bo's'n and that tiresome Minion were looking down upon me and listening to these threats and insults. It roiled my blood to imagine the Minion's grin and his delight in what would seem to him nothing but a very pretty comedy. I glanced up toward the direction of the stone balcony, and I saw with great relief of mind that there was no sign of any opening at that spot near the roof, the vines seeming to grow flatly against the cavern wall. It looked from where I stood as if a flea could not have sheltered behind those masses of green.

"There is no help for you there," grinned the Admiral. "There is no opening from our audience chamber but the opening where you came in." I withdrew my eyes at this positive statement. Thank God, they were ignorant of the dual nature of the cave!

"And your party, where are they?"

I wondered myself. I hoped that Cynthia was sleeping quietly in her secluded chamber, and that the others were keeping watch at the doorway of the latticed room.

"They are all lost, sir."

"A rather lame statement. It was a lovely day when you came ashore."

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"That is true," I answered, "but they foolishly started to walk to the cape, and——"

"Enough! enough!" squeaked the Admiral, pulling out his watch. "We can parley no longer."

Contrary to all that I had heard of pirates and their personal belongings, this watch was not encrusted with jewels. It was a plain silver watch, and undoubtedly had been chosen for its excellent time-keeping qualities.

"It's growing very late; we must be off." He looked around the group.

"Stop drinking, some of you, and prepare the sepulchre!"

I glanced at the young Englishman. He was deathly pale, for he surmised as well as myself that it was his sepulchre of which this gnomelike brute spoke. Captain Jonas turned to a man standing near:

"You hear what the Admiral orders? Bring the blacksmith!"

"He is here, Captain; he came with the cage."

"The coffin, you mean!" roared the Captain, with an ugly laugh which froze the blood in my veins. "The coffin! the sepulchre! the sarcophagus! the catafalque! Where is the Smith?"

A stout, fair man stepped forward from the group. His face was gentle, and his kind blue eye contradicted the suspicion that he gloried in his ghastly profession. He gave a pitying glance at the lad—a friendly glance, I thought—then walked round behind the table where the Admiral sat, and raised on end the mass of steel which I had seen brought into the cave when I was in the gallery. Ah me! How long ago that seemed to me now! Then, nothing was further from my thoughts than that I should ever become a nearer spectator of this fearful scene.

The Smith dragged the frame to the close proximity of one of the empty niches and spread it upon the ground. He pulled and pushed and coaxed the thing into shape until, as I looked, I saw that it assumed somewhat the figure of a human being. There was the skeleton cage for the head,

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the band for the throat, the rounding slope to encase the shoulders, the form of the trunk, the arms, the legs and feet—all, all were comprised in this instrument of confinement. I cast my eyes toward the skeletons hanging in the other niches, and discovered on nearer view that they, too, had each one his confining cage, and I knew now, for the first time, why the figures remained upright in these places hollowed out for them, and why they swayed with the gusts of fierce wind, never losing their balance and never falling from their terrible upright positions. There was a ring in the top of the mask, and to it was fastened a chain. It seemed to be a strong chain. The cage which the blacksmith was handling was almost bright in places, but those upon the figures in the niches were rusted and dull, which told me why I had not understood how these grim remains of men had remained for so long a time in their original attitudes.

"Is that about the size of the Lord George Trevelyan?" squeaked the Admiral of the Red. I looked at the lad. His eyes were glued with horror to the dreadful machine. They seemed to grow large and dilate. His eyelids opened and closed rapidly; he seemed on the verge of insanity.

"And what about the ransom, Lord George Trevelyan?" the brutal villain added. "Will you ask it now?" But while I looked the lad sank down in a heap upon the floor.

"No time to dilly-dally with dead lords. Shut him in! shut him in!" shouted Captain Jonas.

I stood petrified with horror. I may truly say that all thought of self had flown. To see this boy, little more than a child, inclosed in this devilish contrivance, fastened there and left to die and rot piecemeal, was more than I could bear. My tongue, which has got me into so much trouble, as usual added to it in this instance.

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"Admiral! Captain Jonas! you don't mean to leave that poor lad here to die alone?"

The Smith, who was slowly fastening the clasps of the cage around the unconscious form of the boy, looked up at me quickly with a warning glance, and I saw that I might have better kept quiet; but impulse has always been my bane.

"Oh, no! oh, no!" sneered the Admiral. "He will have company—perhaps not the company that he has been accustomed to, but the company of—What did you tell me was your rating aboard the \_\_\_"

"Yankee Blade," said I haltingly. "I was the First Mate, sir. I have friends at home and friends at Christophe's court." I did not stick at a lie, since I had heard his tone. "They will—"

"Ah! will they? I fear not. Unworthy as your position is, Mr.—Mr. Jones—ah, yes, Mr. Hiram Jones—you shall have the honour of bearing the Lord George Trevelyan company. Thanks to me, Mr. Hiram Jones, you will associate with a more exalted personage than it has yet been your lot to meet. Another cage! another cage! Bring another cage!" called out the Admiral in excited tones. "We will see whether Mr. Hiram Jones, late First Mate of the Yankee ship—"

The Smith left the unconscious boy, whom he had fastened in his living tomb, and approached the Admiral respectfully. He glanced at me, hardly perceptibly.

"There is no other cage, Admiral. You ordered only one brought ashore."

"No other cage? No other cage? Hereafter, always bring two. One never knows what may turn up, what spies may be about—"

I broke in.

"I am no spy, Admiral. I happened to be in your neighbourhood and met the lad running, and I \_\_\_"

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"How about the death of The Rogue? Answer me that, Mr. Jones. You have shed the blood of—"

I saw that my case was hopeless.

The Admiral could hardly wait now to give his orders. He interrupted himself, he was in such haste.

"String him up! string him up! If you have no cage, put a rope round his throat and leave him hanging. String him up! string him up!"

A wild shriek rang out through the lofty apartment. I knew the voice. It was Cynthia's. Then all was still. In an instant fifty torches were alight.

"Some one has discovered us!" cried the hoarse voice of Captain Jonas. "Sarch the place! Sarch the place! A thousand louis for the man who finds the spy!"

Ah! she would be found! She would be found! They would seize her and carry her away with them on their floating hell!

"String him up! string him up!" shouted the Admiral, excitedly, pointing fiercely at me.

I saw, as if in a dream, that they had lifted the lad from the ground and had placed him in the niche, and that the blacksmith was engaged in riveting the chain at the top of the headpiece to a ring bolt in the roofing of the arch. Truly these devils took much pains to be revenged upon their enemies, the world at large! I saw the Smith's lips move, as if he were whispering something to the lad. His face had a pitiful expression, as if he would fain tender some help; but young

Trevelyan himself hung like a dead weight, and seemed unconscious of what was befalling him.

At the Admiral's order of "String him up!" one man had gone quickly for a rope which had been unbound from a coffer, and a noose was made and placed round my throat. The men ran, urging me along with them, looking overhead, as if to find a place where they could fasten their diabolical instrument of death.

Then the Smith spoke, leaving the lad where he had placed him. He came forward, trying, it seemed to me, to appear as bloodthirsty as the rest. [Pg 151]

"The Chief Justice has hung for a long time, Admiral," he said. "A hanging is quickly over. The other is a pleasant reminder of one's failings for some days to come. The agony of the Chief Justice has been finished now for some time. What do you say to taking his cage for this fellow who shoots our brave sailors as if they were dogs?"

"Well thought of! well thought of!" roared Captain Jonas, not waiting for the Admiral to speak.

"Yes, it's well thought of!" chimed in the arbiter of my fate.

"It is a tremendous compliment," rejoined Captain Jonas, "I can tell you that, Mr. Hiram Jones. Any man can die by scragging. You can scrag yourself. But to be placed in an elegant house, which no less a person than a Chief Justice of England has occupied before you, to be in the distinguished company of the Lord George Trevelyan——"

"Come! come! stop this nonsense!" snarled the Admiral. "Fasten the fellow up, and let us be off! That Frenchman will be along some time between this and dawn. Put him in! put him in! Where is Mauresco? How long he lingers! He should be here to read the burial service. Where is handsome Mauresco?"

"Where he will never need service more!" shouted I, but at a nudge from the Smith I did not repeat my scarce heeded words. The Smith then laid me down upon the ground, and two great hulking fellows stood over me with pistols ready cocked. The Smith left my side, and I heard a hammering and prying, and soon there was a fall and the rattle of something which caused a shudder to creep through my frame.

I watched them, fascinated, as they unhooked the chain and removed the bolts with which the Chief Justice was fastened to the top and sides of his peculiar niche. I saw them open the rusty clasps and remove the skull and musty remains from the house that was to be mine. I heard the bones rattle, as if in protest, as the men threw the Chief Justice carelessly into a corner. I saw them remove a few bits of cloth and mould from the metal before they dragged the ghastly thing across the floor to where I lay. I saw them lay the cage upon the ground and open its clever mechanism, the trunk, the head, the legs, the arms, to make room for my wretched trembling body. I turned sick and faint as the wires which had pressed those mouldering bones were bound against my face and head. I smelled the charnel house upon that rusted frame; corruption was in the cage which inclosed me and in the air that I breathed. [Pg 152]

Little time had been occupied in dispossessing the Chief Justice of his last home. I forgot myself long enough to turn my eyes upon the poor lad to see how he bore his dread ordeal. But he still hung limp and lifeless. Perhaps he would awake later to the full horror of his living death. For me, I intended to retain my senses to the last. The Smith knelt down beside me. He bent over my head, as if to arrange more properly the cage in which they had now laid me.

"The ring at the top is weak," he whispered; and then, "Forgive me; it is your life or mine."

"I forgive you," I said aloud.

The Admiral and Captain Jonas set up a hearty roar, in which the others joined.

"He forgives the Smith," said Captain Jonas. "How very polite of Mr. Jones! Of course, you feel better, Smith?"

"I want none of him or of his damned forgiveness!" said the Smith, leaning again close to my ear. "The fastening is a little weak." Aloud, "Where is that other pincers?"

There were shouts and a rush to find the pincers, during which he said in a whisper, his lips scarce moving: [Pg 153]

"A friend could release you. I will drop the tools." And then aloud:

"It is meat and drink to me to trice up a Yankee!"

And now, as I was raised to my feet—rather to a standing posture, for I was so closely confined that I could move naught but my eyeballs—and as I was being carried to the remaining niche, the villains began their burial service.

"If we but had Mauresco here, our high priest Mauresco," said the Admiral regretfully.

"I can say the service as well as Mauresco!" shouted Jonas with scorn. "Give me half a chance." And then there was poured forth a stream of blasphemy more awful than any to which I had ever listened. If I must die, give me some tender and consoling thought to while away my hours while death is approaching. But this! I will not sully my pages with the vile words which fell from the lips of these godless men. It was a travesty upon the beautiful service of the Church of England,

and was so ingenious in its obscenity that I would fain forget it. Thank God that I have forgotten it in a measure, but I do remember that, as I was being taken to that deadly niche in the wall, my whole soul revolted at what I could not but hear.

"It is nothing, sir, when you get used to it," squeaked the Admiral of the Red. "You've heard of skinning eels? Usage makes all the difference in the world." And then the old villain laughed his fiend's cackle, which set my teeth on edge.

I suppose that I was deathly pale.

"Courage, my man, courage!" squeaked my torturer. "There is no pain about this last sweet suit of clothes. It fits as neatly as my own.—Give him a jorum, Smith, to calm his troubled nerves."

Need I say that I accepted the offer, and drained the cup which the Smith held to my lips? He took that opportunity to murmur in my ear:

"I may have a chance to get back. I will forget the tools, anyway."

The liquor affected me no more than so much water. How I wished that the poor lad might also have swallowed some! However, perhaps it was better as it was. He had forgotten his misery. I felt them carry me to the niche and stand me there upon my feet; but this was mockery, as my toes only reached the narrow flooring. As the Smith riveted the chain, he whispered other consolatory sentences to me, such as, "I must make it strong enough to hold you, otherwise you would fall on your face." And then to the Admiral: "There, sir, how do you like Sir Popinjay now? Isn't he a dainty sight?" To me, "If you have friends near, they must hold you firmly as they draw out the bolts." To the Admiral, "He'll never move, sir, till the Day of Judgment." I must say that I was rather of his opinion. To me, "I'll let you down as low as I can." To the Admiral, "A dead weight, sir, a very dead weight."

"Get a new joke, Blacksmith, a new joke. That is as old as this hell of a cave itself."

Suddenly there was the sound of a gun. Then another. They came from the direction of the sea.

"Come! come!" said the Admiral. "There's the signal. You are slow, Pennock, slow, slow!"

"I must secure him well, sir."

"Perhaps they'll leave me behind," he whispered.

But though my heart rose with hope at the thought, such was not to be my good luck.

"Come, Smith, come! You seem very loath to part with your prisoner."

The gun sounded again, then several in quick succession.

"Something beside a signal, sir," said the Smith. "It's a fight, a sea fight."

"Take to your heels, all of you!" roared Captain Jonas. "They haven't enough men on board to work ship."

"Take me up! take me up!" squeaked the Admiral. "All go ahead. I'll see ye all out."

The Smith loitered, pretending to gather up the silver flagons and cups that lay strewn about.

"No time for that, Pennock, no time for that! Will you go on?"

There was menace in the tone.

It seemed to me as if I could not lose this my only friend—a friend made in the last ten minutes, it is true, but one who could save me when there was no one else to aid. I looked up at him imploringly; he sighed and gave me a glance which was at the same time encouraging and hopeless, a paradox which I explained to myself amid the confusion of my thoughts as if he said: "You see that I must go. But if I can, I will return and save you."

"Pick me up! pick me up!" squeaked the Admiral of the Red.

The habit of obeying him was strong. He was seized and raised on the shoulders of two of the strongest of the band.

A messenger burst into the hall. He was breathless.

"The ship is attacked!" he shouted. "We must run for it!"

Now all was confusion, all was excitement. It was the devil take the hindmost. The pirates tumbled over each other in their haste to be gone. I could not but think how anxious they were to save their own worthless lives, while not giving a thought to our terrible fate. I heard constant sounds of firing and the noisy shouts of the buccaneers as they trooped out of the cavern and down the hill. The Admiral saw them all leave, and was the last to go. As he reached the door, he turned and threw me some words over his shoulder.

"Don't tell Christophe of us, dear Mr. Jones, and I shall ever be your friend. Are we leaving you pretty comfortable? I am so glad. We'll take you down when we return next year. Meanwhile, good night, and God bless you!" The bearers vanished through the archway, and I was left alone with those dread travesties on Nature, and a young lad who perhaps had already joined the great majority. I cast a despairing glance at the shaded gallery. I called, I screamed in my agony; but I

might have saved my strength, for the noise made by the pirates drowned my words. I seemed to be slipping, slipping, away out of life. I suddenly lost all hope. I began to fear a thousand things. I felt sure that the Bo's'n and the Minion would never dream of my being left in the great hall. If I were left behind, they would argue, why not come to them. They would see and hear the embarkation of the pirates, and would imagine that I had been taken with them or else killed and left on shore. The horror of that awful cave would be too much for a man of the Bo's'n's nervous and exalted temperament. As he had flown from the mysterious ring, so had he also rushed from the cave. Perhaps he would never even come and search for me. As to the Minion, no trust could be placed in him.

I wondered how long I could live, half standing, half hanging there. My feet were not resting upon the ground. The ball of my foot touched the stone beneath, and I found myself making constant and ineffectual efforts to get my entire foot into a position of rest. My weight was almost entirely on the cage. And now I felt that my throat was pressed by the band about it, and I feared that unless I kept myself constantly pushing upward with my toes that I was in danger of choking. I prayed for death. I wished to die then and there, and not hang until I should go stark mad from the horror of it all.

Suddenly I heard a slight movement, a rustling such as one might make in turning a dried leaf with the foot in the forest. My eyes were drawn slowly round to the place of sound. Good God! had my terrors only just begun? Was there more in life to drive one mad? Upon the floor of the cave, at about ten yards distant, I saw what turned me to stone, what fascinated me, what held me to life, what made me pray God that if he had any pity he would strike quickly. The terror of the Haïtien woods, the scourge of the Haïtien caves, was upon me. Slowly and surely it was making its way toward the place where I hung helpless. The great, black, hairy, terrible thing was shaping its course as directly for me as if I had it hooked to a string and was drawing it to my feet. I started, I jumped so that my cage quivered in every joint, and the rusty clasps squeaked and rattled. I shouted, but the words, a roar as they left my throat, dropped from my lips in a whisper. "Help!" I cried, "help!" But I was like one in a nightmare, my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and there was no answering sound. Nothing but the slow, measured crawl of the tarantula, as with calculating crablike motion it came slowly on and on. The lamp was burning low, the cave was getting almost dark, a fitting light for the ghastly and the terrible. It brought to my vision another dread form. Beyond the black spider, from beneath the central bowl issued, with many a hiss and undulating movement, a long green serpent. I saw this only when the hairy beast turned as if to protest at the interruption. The snake coiled itself and raised its head. Its tongue played in rapid darts from open fangs. There was a moment of rest for the tarantula, and then again it resumed its measured walk toward me. I hoped that the serpent would give the creature battle, and thus draw its attention from me; but as I gazed with eyes starting from their sockets, I saw that it uncoiled and took up its line of march also toward the wall of the dead, but parallel with the path of the tarantula. I tried to reason with myself as to which attack would be the least horrible to me. I found that my lips were moving, that I was uttering incoherent sentences! I wondered what I could be saying. The dread creatures were approaching nearer and nearer. I watched them while I could. I tried to shout again, hoping that the sound might frighten them if but for a moment, but my tongue refused to move. My mouth was dry as a plaster wall, all the blood in my body seemed surging to my head. They were coming, coming, slowly, slowly, but surely also, near and nearer! Then I fell down, down, down into space, and, God be thanked! was no more.

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## **CHAPTER IX.**

### **I AM RESCUED.**

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How long I was dead I can not say. It seemed like death, and I shall ever feel that I have tasted of that other life which will be my portion now before many years have passed away. I will not weary you, Adoniah, with the experiences that seemed to be mine—the years in which I seemed to be floating through space. We will pass over the dreams and return to the stern reality.

My first return to consciousness was to feel a strange sensation in my fingers. I seemed to be in a cramp. I tried to stretch out my foot, but I had no power over my muscles. It seemed as if my extremities were swollen to twice their size. I tried to feel for the side of my bunk. If I were in the Yankee Blade, it seemed so strange that there was no motion. We were in port, then! If so, why had I not been on deck to take my place on the fo'c's'l? What was that gasping, sighing sound that fell on my ear? It must be the water sobbing against the sides of the old barco. I tried again to move my foot. Again there was no result, but a seasick motion of my body, a faint clink, as of metal. I endeavoured to open my eyes. The lids were closed as if glued together. If I could but get my hand up and pull at the lids. Suddenly it came back to me. I was shut up in the devil's cavern, and the tarantula and serpent were making in a straight line for my helpless body. I was one of that deathly row of counterfeits which hung against the damp wall of the cave. I was alone with the dead, myself a corpse, shut off from human kind forever.

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As these thoughts jumbled chaotically through my mind, I turned my eyes to the floor beneath. The light had grown so dim, and the smoke of the oil so filled the cave, that it almost obscured my vision. I remember thinking if those fearful enemies were to strike, I hoped that they would

not long delay. I was so tired, so tired. Let death come quickly and end it all. But would death end it soon? Would there not be suffering, the more intense from the poison of those denizens of the cavern than if my life were to slowly ebb away for want of food? I suddenly bore downward with all my weight. The band round my neck was tight. Perhaps I could choke myself. But beyond a sensation as of suffocation, there was no answer from the friend on whom I called. Death did not reply. Had those ruffians killed my friends, and was I to hang here as he had hung who had been removed to make room for me? Was I to be left to linger and rot, the flesh to drop from my bones, the threads of my clothing to fall in dust heaps around me? I tried to shout, but my tongue was swollen and filled my mouth. If I had been dead for so long, why had not the tarantula come closer to my helpless frame. Perhaps they would not touch the dead. I struggled, my cage swayed and struck against the walls of my open coffin. I tried to spring up or down to make my weight drop heavily on one side or the other. Perhaps the cage thus might fall. Even if it killed me in so falling, such death were welcome. The cage might burst asunder. Strange things of the kind had happened. I had heard many tales of adventure, but nothing more wonderful than this which had come to me. Why, then, should not this incredible tale be carried on to the end? Why should not my cage burst open and set me free, even if my friends were captured or dead? Oh, for life! Only life! That was all that I asked. Only that God would set me free. I have made many bargains with God and have seldom kept my contract. Man when in straits is prone to tempt his Creator into making a bargain with him, promising on his part the relinquishment of this sin, that weakness, the doing of that good or the other charity, if God will only surrender his plan and let man act the part of Providence for a while. I can not understand, with the doctrine of foreordination imbedded in the very fibres of my being, how God did really change any portion of his plans for me. But I wanted to be Providence for a little. So I prayed and promised, and it seemed that he heard me. He kept his side of the compact, and I have broken mine a hundred times.

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The fitful gusts of wind blew through the cavern and rattled the dry forms hanging near, and blew the air from them to me. But they also brought to me the sound of voices. God bless them, whosever those voices might be! They meant human companionship and hope. The chamber was very dark, but I heard steps which groped and stumbled as they came. There was a shout. It was the Skipper's voice, but I could not answer him. "He is not here," I heard him say. O my God! would they go away and leave me? Thank Heaven, that was not their purpose. I heard a fumbling, and flashes of light shot out; then all was dark again. And then they had come to the centre of the cave and had lighted the lamp. At first, the Skipper did not discover where I hung. I heard an exclamation, and saw that he was regarding something almost beneath his foot. I turned my burning eyes to the spot from which he had sprung, and saw that my two enemies had met and had given battle. The serpent, swollen to three times its natural size, was coiled round its enemy, out of which it had crushed the life, receiving each one the death that it gave. And now that the tarantula and serpent were dead, and the Skipper had come, and the lamp was again lighted, I seemed to have nothing more to worry about, and so I fainted.

When I awoke I was lying on the ground, my head wet with water, my neck and collar soaked with the rum which the Minion had tried to pour between my clinched teeth. He was still endeavouring to reach my stomach by the outside passage. I certainly think that a gallon of rum had been poured down my neck—in fact, I was bathed in that potent liquor, which probably saved me from taking an ague.

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"Suz! suz! suz!" growled the Captain. He clicked with his tongue like an old woman, as your Aunt Mary 'Zekel used to.

"You, Minion, run and tell the Bo's'n to come here at once!"

"Did," answered the Minion.

"Doesn't he intend to obey my orders any more?" asked the Captain. "He's in my pay."

"How?" inquired the Minion.

"That's so!" said the Captain. "I s'pose he saw a serpent or something in here. Got a mark or something, 't makes him to act so. How'd ye find the Mate, boy?"

"Lookin' for somepun," answered the Minion, in the longest sentence that I had ever heard him utter.

I felt kindly hands busied about me. It was so delightful that I lay there just to be taken care of. I felt the Captain unclasping those rusty catches and saying his "Suz! suz! suz!" over and over.

"Think o' bein' triced up and left for dead!" commented the Captain.

"'Tain't bad," I heard the Minion answer. "Pirates is fine."

"'Tain't bad, ain't it?" said the Skipper. "Why, boy, hell's a garden party to it; that's what it is, a garden party, hell is. Look there on the deck! See where those beasts were fightin' for the first bite of the Mate. Why in thunder don't this fellow come to?"

"Dead," said the Minion laconically. I promptly shuddered and opened my eyes. I did not say what every fainting or resuscitated man says when he first opens his eyes. Usually they ask, "Where am I?" I knew where I was, so I gasped, "Water!"

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Upon this, action being easier and more agreeable than words to the Minion, he ran to the bowl and redeluged me with liquor.

"The lad," said I, partly raising myself on my elbow.

"Think he's dead, anyway. You come first, Jones. Now we'll try what we can do for him."

I heard them go to the niche next my own and work over the lad's ingenious contrivance.

"Hold him up!" I heard the Skipper say. "Push back! push back!" Then there was the sound of the working of tools, and finally I knew that they had released my companion. I was now sitting up, and watched all their motions. The Minion bent over young Trevelyan, pushing the Skipper aside, who as promptly kicked him halfway across the cave.

"When I want your help, I'll ask for it," remarked the Skipper, which I thought rather ungrateful. "You don't know anything about this devilish contrivance."

The Minion, not at all abashed, nodded violently.

"How do you know?"

"Saw 'em."

"When?"

"Me and the lady."

So it was "the lady's" shriek that I had heard as they were riveting my cage to the top of the arch.

"What lady? My niece?"

The Minion nodded.

"Who brought her? You?"

The Minion nodded again.

"You fool!" roared the Skipper. "Get out of my sight! Do you know you've driven her raring, staring, stark mad?"

The Minion nodded again, as if such happenings were of daily occurrence. I smiled placidly. I suppose the contented smile which settled over my features seemed somewhat conceited to the Skipper. [Pg 164]

"Oh, you needn't grin, so mighty pleased and all," said the Skipper to me. "My niece never could bear to look at suffering. It wasn't you she was worrying about. It would be just the same about any one." I looked crestfallen probably, but I managed to gasp out a few words.

"How did you find me?" I said.

"Well, good Lord! don't wonder you ask. This young devil wouldn't have troubled himself to tell. My niece couldn't tell. She was stark, staring, raving mad! Crazy! Is now, for that matter! The Bo's'n has run away, the Lord knows where! He came tearin' into the cave, long before those devils left, a-shoutin', 'The serpent! the serpent!' Probably saw one. Queer man to stay in the woods." I thought that the solution of the Bo's'n's action lay in the fact that, like a historical gentleman named Hobson, the Bo's'n, as well as ourselves, had no choice.

The Minion had stolen near again, and was busy with the cage, and soon they rolled the young English lad out of his tomb and on to the dusty rock floor.

"You go and see how my niece is, do you hear? And see if you can get Lazy to come back for a minute with you."

The Minion sped away on mercury feet, and I crawled to the Skipper's assistance. Together we released the lad and made him comfortable. I will not weary you with details. Suffice it to say that, after we had given him some of the liquor, he sat up, dazed, it is true, but thankful. He did not speak, but I saw that his cheek was wet. He was little more than a child, and it would have taken a much stouter heart than his to suffer what he had suffered and make no sign. I arose unsteadily to my feet and tried to aid the lad; but the Skipper told me to go on ahead, saying that he would support young Trevelyan. As we dragged ourselves to the entrance of the chamber, we met the Minion coming in. [Pg 165]

"How is she?" asked the Skipper anxiously. I was no less so. I gazed on him with bated breath.

"Dead——" drawled the boy.

The Skipper staggered against the wall of the cavern, throwing young Trevelyan to the floor.

"Faint," said the Minion, completing his sentence. I was weak, but I raised my foot and gave the young villain a vicious kick.

"Ain't to yet," added he, as he was propelled toward the opening.

"Hold your jaw!" roared the Skipper. And then to me: "I want to get back to her, Jones. Help me, if you can."

He then turned to the Minion. "You go back and put out that light, do you hear?" said he.

I have spent too long a time over these incidents, but it is no slight thing to have been to the

gates of death in such company, and its dread experiences will remain with me while life shall last. I followed the Skipper and his young charge over and down the hill, and, finding the opening, I entered. It was early morning now, and I easily discovered the archway. It was black as ever inside, but I pushed through the passage and, on entering our chamber, came face to face with the Bo's'n. He started when he saw me.

"What about Miss Archer?" said I.

"Is it really you, sir?" asked the Bo's'n.

"Of course it is. Where is she?"

The Bo's'n nodded toward the pillars at the back of the cave, and then looked at me scrutinizingly.

"They didn't get you, then, did they, sir?"

"Yes, they got me fast enough," said I.

"Oh, the pirates! Yes, sir. But *they* didn't get you. I mean the——"

The man fell a-trembling, his face turned ghastly pale.

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"What under heaven do you mean, Bo's'n?" asked I.

"I can not talk of it," he said. "I saw them open that hole before they left. When you ran from the gallery, I ran, too, but my curiosity was too great for me, and I sneaked back to the gallery. I saw 'em bring you in, sir, and I'd have tried to rescue you, Mr. Jones, but suddenly I saw those——"

The man shook as if with an ague.

"You mean the tarantula and the——"

"Don't mention the name, sir, don't! It's uncanny, sir! After that, sir, I couldn't return. You don't blame——"

"You're no use at all, Bo's'n. You might better have gone with the pirates. Where are they, by the way?"

"Gone," said the Bo's'n, with a return of his confident tone. "Gone like the morning dew."

I looked at him in amazement as he stretched his arm toward the latticed opening and waved it toward the sea.

I remembered hearing the Skipper speak of the Bo's'n as "that dam poetry cuss!" What a broken reed he was! The Skipper came slowly into the cave now, upholding and almost carrying the young English lad, and we turned our attention to him.

Lacelle came also from the back just then, and I asked her how Cynthia was. She answered what sounded like "No compre," which the Bo's'n translated as meaning "No comprehendy," and I suppose he was right. I never was much of a hand at foreign languages.

The Skipper went into his niece's room. He came back, looking very mournful. He shook his head sadly.

"She don't move," said he. "She lays there just so."

"It's that dam Minion," said the Bo's'n, "begging your pardon, sir. He took her on what he called a voyage. I suppose he meant of discovery. I heard her shriek way in here, and then the two came runnin', and I believe she's been so ever sence."

The Captain went to the window and parted the screen of leaves boldly. He saw me start, So short a time does it take for a habit to become fixed that it seemed to me as if we must still be cautious about the strangers below.

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"Oh, you needn't be so terrible afraid!" said the Skipper. "They went out in the night. There was lots of firing. I shouldn't wonder if something attacked 'em. We heard a great whooping, and they rushed right down the hill, as if some of those ghosts was after 'em. They scrambled into their boats in a mighty hurry, and we saw the flash of the powder as they fired, and then we saw two ships racing out to sea. One was running away from the other. Don't know which, but, thank God, they're gone!"

"Yes, thank God!" said I.

"Did that dam' ghost fellow show you the way in again?" asked the Skipper.

"No," said I.

"Did me! I'm gettin' a little tired of him. Think I'll shoot next time he comes round."

"You might create a ghost instead of getting rid of one," said I warningly. "I don't think I'd shoot him. He seems a very kindly disposed ghost. He has done us only favours thus far."

"That's so," said the Skipper. "Don't you want some rest?"

In answer I stretched myself upon the ground. Although it was early morning, there was little or



no light in the cave. Seeing me lie down, the Bo's'n said that while I took a rest he would prepare some food.

"I can go down the hill now, Mr. Jones, sir. There is nothing to fear." I was weary in mind and body, and I turned over to lay my head upon my arm. As I did so there came a faint sound as of a footstep, and I saw Cynthia approaching. She seemed like herself. She walked with her eyes open, and advanced with confidence. I arose to my feet at once.

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"Are you better?" I asked.

"S-h-h-h!" said the Skipper, his warning finger upraised.

Cynthia started at the sound of my voice, put her hand to her head, rubbed her eyes and opened them. They fell upon my face. A smile of recognition overspread her features as she raised her eyes to mine, when a shout of terror filled the chamber. It came from the Bo's'n. The others sprang up, and with me followed with their gaze the direction of his pointed finger. We each, I think, emitted a sound of some kind, all but the English lad, who was still sleeping.

I can see the Bo's'n now, his hair standing on end, his arms raised across his forehead. Cynthia fell back into my arms and pinioned me against the wall, for it was a sight which made the other occupants of the cave fall each one upon his face.

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## CHAPTER X.

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### THE MINION POINTS A MORAL, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT ADORN A TALE.

Those who have never passed through days of wearing suspense, days of anxiety, days when water was scarce and food more so, days when, as in my case and the lad's, we were in danger of death, and, in fact, were very near to his dread presence—I say that those who have never suffered these things can not imagine how wracked and torn one's nerves become with a combination of such disagreeables and horrors. The scarcity of food was not a horror, but certainly the experience in the great hall had been more than disagreeable. We were weakened mentally and physically, so that it is not to be wondered at that we all showed overpowering signs of terror at the sight which now met our eyes. The passage was dark in itself, but there stood a little way down, amid its sombre gloom, the skeleton of the Chief Justice. I had heard him tossed, a mass of bones, into the corner, and here he was, standing erect as he had been in life, come to ask me, doubtless, what I had done with that last house of which I had deprived him. You will wonder how we could discover him in that darkened interior. But he shone refulgent. He brought his light with him, as it were, and it seemed to flood his body, and glisten and scintillate from all his whitening bones. His teeth appeared to grin at us, as if he were enjoying the ghastly joke. His head waggled from side to side, and the sockets of his eyes emitted a fiendish light. His legs trembled and his toes touched the ground. They seemed to dance—a dance of death. The Skipper and the Bo's'n had fallen prone upon the floor of the cave. Lacelle had shrieked and fled away, and I was left to support the form of the unconscious girl. Suddenly the light was extinguished. I heard several sharp blows and a sobbing sigh. Then a sound as if the skeleton himself was fleeing down the corridor in terror as great of us as ours of him. There was a rattling of bones, as if again they had sunk down into an inanimate heap.

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"For God's sake, let us get out of this accursed place!" whispered the Skipper as the noise died away. The Bo's'n raised his head and opened his eyes, as if he feared to see again the grewsome sight. The Skipper crawled along the floor and whispered in my ear a second time:

"For God's sake, let us get away!"

"Do you think I want to stay here, Captain?" I asked.

"You'd better give me that girl," suggested the Skipper, rising. "I s'pose you don't mind holding \_\_\_"

I laid Cynthia in the Captain's arms.

"She's pretty solid," said he, as her senseless form pressed with all its weight against his breast. "S'pose you help me carry her inside."

Without a word I put my arms around her shoulders.

Lacelle hovered near with a candle end. It looked to me like one of those I had seen in the great hall. We carried the dear girl through the archway and into her own chamber. We placed her upon the blanket and pillow which Lacelle had got ready. As I laid her head gently down it turned to one side, the chain which I had seen slipped out of her neck band, and the serpent ring and the locket were exposed to view. The serpent's eyes emitted two red sparks—a baleful light it seemed, but I cared little for that. Something else had caught my eye. Something pleasurable at last amid all this misery. The locket had fallen open, and encircled within its golden rim I saw a face, one that I had not often seen, it is true, yet one that I recognised. It was my own.

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I motioned to the Skipper to replace the chain and ring, for I knew that Lacelle would take fright

again at the sight of the strange bauble. I felt also that Cynthia would be enraged if she learned that any one had seen the face within the locket. I snapped the cover to, even as I saw it, and then the Skipper came to do what I asked of him. He stood between me and Cynthia, and bending over her, he did what he chose—I did not see what, but I saw him put his hand to his waistcoat pocket, and I felt sure that he had abstracted that dread circle of mystery.

When I returned to the cave, I found that the Bo's'n had made a fire and was cooking some of the pork. There were no vessels to be seen, and we were for the moment safe. He and the Skipper went boldly down to the shore and rolled the casks up to the cave. They brought water and all the things that we had carried ashore with us.

"It is a much better place than the open beach," said the Skipper. "We can sight all the vessels that come, and tell who are friends and who are foes."

"It is not likely," said I, "that the buccaneers will return very soon, especially as they have had a sea fight, and if they do, they do not know that we are here, or anything about this side of the cave."

"It's a good idea to stay here for the present," said the Skipper.

"And what of ghosts and skeletons?" asked I.

"Well, the place is haunted, that I know," said the old man, "but I'd rather stay here than to risk it on the shore. You don't know what's on that shore or who's comin' to meet you. I'd rather take my chances here a darn sight. Rather take 'em with the spooks than with the revolutionists."

"What do you think I've found, sir?" said the Bo's'n, coming in just here. "Begging your pardon for interruptin'." [Pg 172]

"Lord knows!" said the Skipper. "Anything from a diamond as big as a hen's egg to a coach and four. Anything's allowable for shipwrecked mariners like ourselves."

The Bo's'n looked sheepish and shuffled his feet about, a habit that seemed to grow on him.

"Do you remember, sir," he said, screwing up his eyes and turning his head to one side like a wise bird—"do you remember that hollow tree?"

"F course I do," said the Skipper, not waiting for me to answer; "the tree where we lay hid while those murderous vil——"

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, it was not the tree to which I was alluding Captain Schuyler, Mr. Jones, sir. It's the tree near the stream, not on our side, but on the other side, sir—the tree where you can't see much of a hole, sir, with branches low down, Cap'n, and big roots, Mr. Jones, sir, and ——"

"Well! well! When you have finished with your addendas and appendixes, we'd like to hear what you really have to tell us."

"Cap'n, sir, Mr. Jones, beggin' your pardon, to be short, sir——"

"*To be short!*" groaned the Skipper, with a weary look at me.

"In short, sir, that tree's full of the—most—mur—der—ous—lot—of—weapons—you—ever—see."

"Weapons!" roared the Skipper.

"Yessir. Chock-a-block, sir. The most mur-der-ous——"

"Wheugh!" ejaculated the Skipper.

"Weapons!" said I. "It is a lucky find, Bo's'n. They may be very useful to us. At all events, you had better go and get them and hide them up here in the cave. We don't know who may find them next." [Pg 173]

"Mr. Jones, you seem to have forgotten that I am the head of this expedition. Please allow me to give orders on board this ship."

"Yes, sir," said I.

"You seem to have forgotten who's paying you wages, Mr. Jones."

"No, sir," said I, "I haven't."

"Who the devil is it, then?" asked the Captain fiercely.

"No one," said I.

The Captain opened his eyes and looked at me in a surprised manner. He then looked on the ground and shook his head meditatively.

"That's so," said he in a tone of conviction. "It isn't the first time I've been reminded of it, either." And then he gave vent to a few choice expletives at my expense.

"Now, Captain," said I, "it's time to stop talking about who's the head of this expedition. We didn't elect to come here. I lost my job when the old Yankee went down. I am under your command, of

course. God knows that I am out of a job, and that I shall not earn a stiver from the day before yesterday until I get back to God's country and get another billet. I am willing to do anything I can to help you and every one, and I know that, according to the rules of the sea, you have the ordering of me. Anything you ask me I'll do if it's a possible thing; and I don't mind a decent order either, but I don't want to be shouted at as if I were a common sailor. Of course, you're still the Captain, we all recognise that, but the rest of us deserve a little consideration, too. We are all working for the common good, the Bo's'n as much as the rest of us. What touches one touches all. Of course, it is my duty and my pleasure to stand by you, but you have no more right to swear at me than I have to swear at you. And the next time you do it, Captain Schuyler, I shall pick up my hat, take my pistol, and walk."

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The Captain listened to this long speech with astonishment. Several times during its delivery he ejaculated "That's so!" under his breath. Then he looked round at me piteously.

"I'm an old man, Mr. Jones," he said with dignity. "I was brought up in a profane school. I have sworn all my life, but I suppose it is time to ease up a little. You know it was nothing personal, Mr. Jones; not at all, sir. You know what a habit is. It was just meant for emphasis, Mr. Jones. But if you object, I'll stop, of course. I don't know that I can stop altogether. If I should stop too short I might have a sort of delirium tremens in the way of swearing. Now you know we might get round that, since you and the Bo's'n object, by my taking it out in just a mild form, you know, on the Minion."

"He don't mind it," said I. "He'll think you're ill if you don't swear at him. He's had it all his life. He thinks it's the grammar you learned at school. I don't care for the Minion, Captain, but I do care for what you say before your niece. And then there's yourself! Captain, think of yourself! You are an old man, or getting to be."

"Not so old, Mr. Jones," argued the Skipper, as if there was time to talk the devil's language yet a while before the day of repentance should swoop down upon him.

"And now that's settled," said the Skipper, "why don't you damned miserable, worthless fellows go and get those weapons?"

We started for the hollow tree. We had become so accustomed to the dark passage now that we ran along, one behind the other, with our hands against the wall. I must confess that I never passed through it that I did not feel a creepy sensation and a shrinking fear that our unknown guide might again try to aid me. But it seemed now as if he appreciated the fact that we had become used to the darkness and inequalities of the tunnel, and, though I shuddered at the thought of his approach, I might have spared myself all anxiety. He did not come.

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"Where's that damn Minion?" asked the Skipper again.

"Can't find him, Captain. But my advice is that you pay no attention to him. He'll come back much too soon for the rest of us."

We three descended the hill together, and when we reached the level the Bo's'n led us to the tree. It was, as he had said, full of murderous-looking weapons—knives and Malay creases, which looked as if some pirate band had hidden them there; the machete of the Spaniard side by side with the sword of Damascus. They were all somewhat rusty, but in those days we did not have the appliances for sharpening that are in use nowadays, and we were not entirely lost without them. We drew these weapons of defence one after another from their hiding places. Had we as many men as weapons, we could protect ourselves against a small army.

"Now I can get some of those mangoes and mamey apples, sir," said the gentle Bo's'n, as he took from the pile a fine, sharp knife. He disappeared with these words, and only returned when he had climbed the trees and had cut more of these welcome additions to our table than he could carry. We had found various fruits which aided us much in disposing of our very plain fare, for in tropic lands one need never starve if he will only use his eyes, stretch out his hand, and take the gifts that the good God has strewn on beach, hill, and mountain.

We carried the weapons up to the cave, adding to them some pistols which we had discovered concealed beneath them and some well-wrapped boxes of ammunition.

"Some one has hidden these here and forgotten them," said the Skipper, "or else they couldn't get back."

"Perhaps, sir, those are what they were looking for, sir," ventured the Bo's'n, "when they came rushing into the cave next our own, Mr. Jones, and said that they must find them, Cap'n."

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"No," said I, "I am quite sure those were clothes of some kind, for I remember the Admiral of the Red said that he wished to be arrayed as befitted his position."

"At all events," said the Skipper, "they had not the slightest idee of our presence. It seems strange, when they have been here before, perhaps many times, that they didn't know of this side of the cave."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, they have always been up on the other side, I s'pose, sir."

"Of course, of course! Da—thank you, Bo's'n, for your suggestion, thank you, thank you," with a deprecatory look at me.

Among the machetes and other weapons I discovered a small dagger of foreign workmanship. It must have been recently bought or taken from some one, for its sheath was in good condition—indeed, almost bright. The blade was long and thin, and very sharp. I almost feared to give it to Cynthia, but later I did so, telling her that I hoped that the time would never come when she would be obliged to use it, but that if such time should come, I trusted her to take care of herself. She looked dubiously at me and said:

"How can you be so bloodthirsty, Mr. Jones? Do you suppose that I should be willing to kill several of those men just for a fancied grievance?"

"Oh, no!" said I. "When the grievance comes which I fear for you, it will not be a fancied one."

"But I thought all you men were going to take care of me, Mr. Jones?"

"We mean to," said I. "The good God letting us, but sometimes—Well, at all event, promise me that you will always carry this, and I shall be satisfied. Come, now, Cynthia, I have not asked much of you."

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"That is true," said Cynthia. "Very well, then, I promise. It's a pretty toy. I think I'll give it to Aunt Mary 'Zekel for a curiosity when I get home."

My pages will be too full if I try to set down each time the Bo's'n brought fruit in from the forest, or each time that I went along the beach and gathered oysters from their homes upon the mangrove roots. Let it suffice that I say here that the forest and the sea yielded us food. If not luxurious food, still enough to support life, and that, with the fresh water from the spring below the cliff, from which we were now not cut off, and the rum which we gathered up later from the great bowl in the flagons and cups that we appropriated to our use, we managed to have eatables and drinkables enough while we remained in the cave.

We were busy all that day in settling ourselves in our permanent abode. We cut branches and stripped the leaves from them, looked through them with care to see that there was no dangerous insect hidden beneath their shining green, and, piling the sticks and leaves against the inner wall, we made for ourselves beds, which, if not quite as comfortable as the bunks on board the old Yankee, still were better than we had hoped to find when we were cast away.

I had not seen Cynthia since I had discovered the secret of the locket. The Captain went sometimes to her chamber, and always brought the word that she could not be awakened. I was more than anxious, but I had no rights that others would recognise, and I did not dare suggest what I knew the Skipper would not approve. I should have liked to carry the girl down the hill, and place her on the beach in the shade of the great trees and in sight of the sea, where the cool, fresh trade wind could blow across her face; but the Skipper looked at me with so much apparent indignation at my interference, when I hinted at a supposititious case of the kind, that I held my peace.

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We all went to rest early. The Bo's'n had made a most refreshing brew of coffee, and, after we drank it, we laid ourselves down, hoping at last for a solid night of rest and sleep.

We were talking from one bed to the other as men—and they say women—will in those drowsy hours.

"I haven't seen the Minion to-day," said I.

"Nor I. The last I saw of the little devil was when I told him to put out the lamp in the cave."

"He'll come soon enough to bother us," said I.

Just then there was a step upon the floor, and Cynthia again emerged from between the pillars. She walked as she had before.

"My baby chain," she said, "my baby chain?"

The Skipper arose at once and approached her.

"Why, Cynthy, Cynthy, girl," he said soothingly.

"Don't touch her, sir," whispered the Bo's'n.

"My baby chain, my baby chain," said Cynthia in a strangely unfamiliar voice, fumbling at her neck the while.

The Skipper stepped quickly out to the passageway and felt in his pocket. He took something therefrom and returned some other thing to its keeping. While he was thus engaged, I noticed that the Bo's'n watched him with dilated eyes. He seemed to shrink backward, into himself, as it were. A look of horror overspread his features. He whispered to me: "If I didn't know positive, sir, that you threw that—that—you know, sir, into the water, far, far out into the water——"

"Don't be a fool, Bo's'n!" said I. "You say you saw me throw it out into the water, and, for my part, I don't think it has got legs to walk or arms to swim with. Just imagine it paddling ashore and crawling up the bank——"

"Stop, sir, in God's name!"

"My chain, my baby chain," said Cynthia, still advancing.

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The Skipper now turned and came our way. He had in his hand nothing more appalling than the chain and locket. He said, "Why, Cynthy girl, why, Cynthy girl, why, Cynthy!" He laid his hard old hand upon her arm as tenderly as her own mother could have done, and then he placed the chain round her neck and clasped it there. A satisfied look came over her features, she smiled, and laid her hand upon the locket. I wondered if she remembered that my face was there.

"Don't touch her, Cap'n, sir," urged the Bo's'n. But the deed was already done. The Skipper had turned her gently round and had led her back to the pillars, where Lacelle met her, and together they vanished in the gloom.

"That thing's hereabouts somewhere," whispered the Bo's'n in my ear.

"Well, if you will be a fool!" said I.

"She's all right now, I think," said the old man. "Hope she'll sleep and wake up all right."

I noticed that the Bo's'n shrank from the Skipper as he came near—in fact, I had noticed it many times of late, and I was convinced that there was something in the mere presence of the ring which affected this man's mental attitude.

"Suppose we sleep now for a while?" suggested the Skipper.

He started to stretch himself near the Bo's'n, but the man jumped to his feet.

"I can't sleep," said he; "I'm wakeful. I will go out, sir, and take a stroll around."

"Look out for snakes!" murmured the Skipper sleepily, in a teasing voice. The Bo's'n shuddered and bounded from the cave. I wondered where between the Skipper and the wilds of the forest the Bo's'n would find rest for the sole of his foot.

The young Englishman, of whom we were taking care as we would of a baby, was lying on his couch of ferns in a remote corner. All that day one or the other of us played the part of nurse, and many a time I wished for the Minion, only that he might take his share of such work. The lad was delicate to begin with, and God knows what he had suffered on board the pirate craft before they triced him up and left him for dead. I found from his later account that he had suffered from an affection of the lungs, and that his mother had sent him on a sea voyage to Algiers, hoping that the change would benefit him. The ship had been captured off the coast of Portugal, and was never heard of more. The lad knew her fearful fate. The boy and the Smith, a servant from his mother's estate, were allowed to live, for what, God alone knows. They had been on board the pirate ship now for six months or more, and the lad had become weaker and more weak from the hardships that he had undergone and the coarse duties that he was obliged to perform. His being left to hang until he died in that devil's cavern was the final straw which broke his spirit. He knew of no possible succour from the cave of death. He could not hope for aid. He did not even know that I was to be left to bear him company. And what good that would have been, except that he could for a time have had some human companionship, I could not determine. I, on the contrary, knew that my friends were under the same roof with myself, and, though I did almost despair and become lost to living impressions through bodily terror of those horrid creatures which had been let loose upon me, still way down in my heart there was, I now know, a faint hope that some one would come to my rescue. Thinking these thoughts caused me to arise and go to the place where the lad lay and put some water to his lips. He drank gratefully, but did not raise his lids nor look at me. And then, dead tired, I threw myself upon my couch of leaves.

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I had slept probably many hours when I was awakened by a touch on my shoulder. It was the Bo's'n. He was kneeling beside me.

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His finger was on his lips as he glanced toward the Skipper. He spoke to me in low tones.

"I have something to show you, sir. It is such a curious sight, sir. Do come."

I turned over sleepily:

"I'm tired of curious sights, Bo's'n," I said. "Where is it?"

The Bo's'n nodded toward the direction of the great hall.

"It's over that way, sir."

"Good Heavens! have you really awakened me to see more sights? I thought you were afraid to go there," said I.

"There's nothing to be afraid of now, sir," he said. "Do come, Mr. Jones, sir."

"Very well, Bo's'n," said I, "but no farther than the gallery. I've had enough of the cave."

"That's just where I was going to take you, sir."

"Suppose we waken the Captain and take him along?" said I.

"No, sir, I couldn't go then. In fact, sir, the Captain has become so abhorrent to me, Mr. Jones, that sometimes I think I must separate from the party."

"What under heaven do you mean?"

"Can't tell, sir; there is something about—— Are you sure, sir, that you *did* throw that——"

"If your own eyes are not sufficient witness," I began; and then, looking him square in the eye, "But tell me, Bo's'n, why that simple ring——"

"I beg you, sir," he said.

"You do not fear the halls of death, the skeletons of what were living men, you do not fear——"

"That is death, Mr. Jones," he said. "Death—quiet, peaceful rest, without fear of a beyond. This is life—horrible, torturing life. That sickening, coiling body which will crush the very being out of one. Those eyes with red flames of vision: they see the future. They know what will befall us, they gloat over our misery. As long as that thing, that dreadful presence, is even out there in the water, but so near, so near, we are fated! That it is which drew us upon the rocks! That it is which brought the pirates down upon us! That it was which put you in that cage of which you tell me! That it is which will hold us, and coil about us, and never let us go, man, woman, or child, until it has crushed the life from our bodies!"

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"But if you do not mind death, Bo's'n, and you say not—if you do not mind leaving this world and ——"

"Oh, sir, can not you see? It is the horror, the dread, the ever-recurring fear of evil, the tortured mind, looking forward to the torture of the body——"

"No," I said, "I can not understand you at all. Let us give it up, Bo's'n; but if you are not afraid of one death, I don't see——"

"My mother was a witness, was a witness——" The man's frame shook with some horror, I knew not what.

"A witness to what?" I asked. In the Bo's'n's eyes there began to appear a strange glare. All at once I began to feel that desire which overcomes most of us at times to possess another's secret. I fastened my eye upon the Bo's'n's, and began to speak in a low and mysterious tone.

"There was a serpent," I said, "a ghastly, writhing, coiling, deadly serpent. It crept out of the darkness, and began to move slowly. It came on, and on, and on——"

I was looking steadily at the Bo's'n as I said these words. Suddenly his eyes dilated and stared wildly at the cavern wall; some flecks of foam appeared upon his lips, he writhed like the beast that I had been describing, and dropped in a heap upon the floor. There he lay motionless.

"Clearly," said I to myself, "I must not try this again." I felt certain that the man had had some dreadful experience. Possibly it was something which had impressed the mother, and had left its mark upon the child. If I continue this sort of thing, I reasoned, it may injure the man more than any other illness could have done. We should need his services often, I knew, and in any case he was a gentle soul, on whom we could rely so far as his good will might go. I looked down upon the unconscious man with sorrow for my part in this sad state of things. I threw some water in his face and shook him gently, calling, "Bo's'n! Bo's'n!"

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He awoke after a few moments and sat up. He put his hand to his neck and felt the water upon his shirt.

"I see how it is, sir," he said with an apologetic smile. "I have been off again, sir. Oh, sir, if you wouldn't let me talk of it, I should not give way so."

I was really remorseful to have teased this unoffending creature.

"Come along, Bo's'n," I said, "and let us go and see your curious sight."

The man's palms were turned outward before his face, as if to ward off some fearful sight. His eyes had that look which expresses all that the human eye can of dread. I took his hands in mine and pulled them down.

"Come along," said I, "before the Skipper awakens."

At this he arose and almost ran out through the archway. As soon as we had got well into the passageway the Bo's'n seemed to recover himself. His tone became more natural, and he lapsed into the vernacular commonly employed on board ship.

"Careful, sir," he said, as he walked ahead. "It's the left hand you want to keep against the wall, so turn after me when you get into the passage that leads to the gallery. Softly, please, sir, or we shall scare our bird."

As we drew near the gallery, I heard pistol shots and what I thought were voices. My heart sank down a thousand fathoms below the soles of my shoes. Could those wretches have returned? The lamp was lighted. It had not been extinguished, then, after all. Or perhaps some one had relighted it, some one else who knew the secret of this dreadful place. I crept after the Bo's'n and raised myself from the floor of the gallery as cautiously as he had done. I parted the leaves as gently. The first thing I noticed was that the liquor in the central bowl was bubbling fiercely. It must have been refreshed, for the spirit would have been burned off by this.

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Upon the great block of stone from which the Admiral had ruled and ordered a figure was seated. At first I could distinguish nothing but a blaze of light. Rays seemed to dart from the body and shed their sparkles in every direction. They wavered, they scintillated, they gleamed, they

flashed. They sent flecks of brilliancy here, there, everywhere! The body of the person on the throne was covered, in the first instance, by nothing but a thin under garment, and over this was what looked like a garment of jewels. Almost every one has seen a suit of armour. No more completely were the knights of old encased in their coats of mail than was the person who sat upon the great block of stone enveloped in and encrusted with jewels and precious stones. The trunk was a mass of brilliant points of light. Chains hung across the foundation of the wonderful dress, and from them flashed, in searching rays, all the colours that the rarest gems can give—red, blue, yellow, green, pale pink, and the fire of the diamond. Each one glowed and sparkled and beamed, and made a central spot of light so bewildering, that our eyes were blinded by the sight. The feet of the figure were encased in jewelled shoes, which were pointed at the toe. A single great emerald glittered on each. From ankle to thigh the legs were clasped round with bands, anklets, and chains. There was a belt of gorgeous gems around the waist. The arms were bound with bracelets from wrist to shoulder. The short fingers were loaded with rings of all kinds. Upon the head was an eastern sort of hat, jewelled from crown to brim, and in the front shone a star of diamonds, above which rose an aigrette of sparkling stones.

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In the centre of the star was set a gem so large that it might have graced the crown of the proudest potentate the world ever saw. Every movement made by this remarkable figure lighted up the cavern like a thousand jets of gas. I can compare it to nothing else. We had nothing but lamps to compare it with in those days, and I said to myself, "I have never seen anything that would give a stranger to this gorgeous sight an idea of its magnificence."

There was a tall gold flagon standing on the throne near the figure's feet. I saw the steam escaping.

"He was down a-drawin' it, sir, when I was here before, sir," whispered the Bo's'n.

"His throat must be made of metal," said I.

I saw the figure bend over and lift the flagon from its place by his feet. I saw the head thrown back and the scalding liquor put to the lips. I saw the wince of the body as some of it ran down. I watched the strange antics of this wild figure with bated breath, and not until I heard the words, given with all the pomp and air of command that a monarch would have used, "Bring in the prisoners!" did I discover the identity of this marvel. I looked at the Bo's'n to see if he also suspected the personality which underlay all this magnificence. He nodded his head.

"Yes, sir," he whispered.

It was the Minion, whose voice, seldom heard, was never forgotten.

He raised the flagon again to his lips, he took a deeper draught, now that the liquor was losing some of its heat. It was a deep potation for so small a body, and then he squeaked in imitation of the Admiral of the Red:

"Turn me round! Turn me round!"

We watched this ridiculous child, wondering at his powers of imitation and art, the desire for display which lay buried beneath that utterly expressionless exterior.

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For want of a pirate band to turn him upon his throne, the Minion twisted himself about so that he faced the niches in the wall. He drew a pistol from his jewelled belt. This I recognised as a spare one of mine. He cocked it and began firing at the skeletons. The bullets flew, not with the precision of those of the Admiral of the Red. He whom the Minion had taken as his prototype would have put a bullet through the heart of so poor a copyist.

"Through the left eye, my jolly braves!" shouted the Minion in, I must confess, a more hearty voice than that of the Admiral. And at once he sent a bullet flying up to the arched roof.

"Through the right eye! The right eye for a thousand pounds!" roared the Minion, and his bullet took a toe off one of the hapless skeletons.

"Our safety lies in the fact that he is turned the other way," whispered I.

I shall never forget the glitter of that arm as it was raised to fire. With each movement it threw a band of light across our eyes which almost blinded us. The small back flashed in a thousand brilliant jets of flame, and made the cavern to seem as if it were illumined by the morning sun.

"Those are valuable jewels," I whispered to the Bo's'n. "A fortune is there, Bo's'n—a fortune for all of us. We must steal round and capture that young rascal and discover where he found them."

I glanced at the Bo's'n as I spoke. My glance was arrested by the utterly avaricious look which had come over his face at my words. His eyes seemed to swell from out their sockets, and even at that distance to gloat on the fortune of which I had told him.

"Let us go quickly, sir," he said, "before any one else gets there."

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As we left the gallery the lad had again raised the flagon to his lips, and was drinking deep of the potent fluid. The small body wavered, and I thought that the Minion would not long preserve his dignity, for he was guzzling the clear liquor as if it were so much water. We pushed out through the tunnel and then through the home passage, and finally reached the hillside. My feet were lame and sore, and the Bo's'n had to accommodate his pace to mine. We reached the top of the hill, and then descended as fast as I was able to walk. We entered the archway after a slow

journey, and were at last within the great hall. We looked with amazement at the throne and then at each other. There was no shooting, there were no orders, no commands, no Minion! We advanced cautiously until we got abreast of the rock. Our eyes fell upon the same object at the same moment, and I for one was not surprised at what I saw. Lying in a heap upon the floor, his brilliant form rolled ingloriously in the dust, lay the Minion. By his side was the flagon, drained dry. Rubies, sapphires, emeralds, diamonds, and pearls, chains of gold and corselet bestudded with stones fit setting for an empress of the Orient, encased the unconscious form of the young rascal. The Minion was helplessly drunk. We rolled the sodden little heap over and looked into his face. He was breathing stertorously, and I feared for his life. Not that the Minion's life was of any possible use to any living being, but because of a prejudice, inborn in each one of us, against allowing a creature made in God's image to die without some attempt at succour.

We unbuckled his belts and his bracelets, his collars and his anklets. We lifted the magnificent hat with its jewelled plume from the dust where it had tumbled. We drew from the childish and dirty fingers twenty or more gorgeous rings. We laid the gem-encrusted chains, the locket, and watches with which he had decorated himself upon the rock which had been his throne. And then we bent down and raised the pitiful little figure. He did for once point a moral, this wretched mite of a cabin boy. His gorgeous trappings gone, shorn of what for the moment he dreamed was authority, though brief and suddenly terminated, he was simply a drunken little lad—his only clothing a very ragged and very dirty undershirt.

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## CHAPTER XI.

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### THE BO'S'N HIDES THE TREASURE

Our first thought was for the Minion. Although the magnificence of this grand fortune dazzled us, we saw that the lad was like to die from the amount of his potations, and felt him to be our first care. We carried him to the outer air, and down the hill we went, quite to the beach and close to the stream which issued from the archway in the rock. Here we bathed his head and face with cold water. Then we laid him in the shade, where the gentle breeze blew not too strongly upon him. His face was crimson, his body like a bed of coals, and I truly feared for his life. The Bo's'n tore off his one remaining sleeve and drenched it with the cold water. This he laid upon the boy's forehead. He went often to him during the hours that he slept and continued this kind office, and perhaps it is to the Bo's'n that the Minion owes his life, and possibly the rest of us, arguing from cause to effect. There was no sail in sight, no creature or thing. The sweet breezes were laden with the spicy odours of that magic land, and they fell soft as a lady's fingers upon the rough skin of our weather-beaten faces.

We now returned to the cave to gather up the jewels. When we came again to the place where we had disrobed the Minion, we could hardly believe the evidence of our eyes. The mass of wealth was too overwhelming in its quantity, its variety, and its value for us to feel that the stones could be real or of great price. But close scrutiny forced me to believe that they were what we had at first thought, and I hastened to urge upon the Bo's'n the necessity of secreting them at once. There were several reasons for this. In the first place, the buccaneers might return, and then we, instead of Mauresco, should be their agents. In the next place, I had no intention that Captain Schuyler or Lacelle, or even Cynthia, should know of the presence of the jewels in the cave. The Skipper loved to talk, and there were times when his tongue was more loosened than at others. Furthermore, there was no knowing whom we might run across in this spot. No surmising what unwelcome guest was at present journeying to meet us, unknown to himself or to us, led on by that fate which rules the destinies of us all. I determined at once that this fortune, of which I could make no estimate, should be shared eventually by all alike. It would make us rich beyond what had ever been dreamed of the Belleville copper mines. The secret was not my own; the Bo's'n shared it. But a secret has no right to its name when it is shared by more than one person. I felt that I could trust the Bo's'n. He would not, I knew, forget his promise to me, or, leaving that out of the question, his real personal interest in this great source of wealth. I had sometimes been known to talk in my sleep. I was nervous and irritable since my horrid experience in the cavern, and felt that it would be well for me to try to forget the fact of the existence of the jewels for the present, and act as if the discovery were the Bo's'n's own.

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We stood by the table, picking up and turning over the various wonderful pieces studded with gems of all colours, shades, and degrees of brilliancy.

"These must be what the pirates were searching for, Mr. Jones, sir," said the Bo's'n.

"Yes," said I in answer. "Evidently Mauresco alone possessed the secret. That, after all, is the only way to have, or rather keep, a secret. I wonder now where we can stow these away until we can come for them in safety?"

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"What is your plan, sir, Mr. Jones?" asked the Bo's'n.

"Well, Bo's'n," said I, "I feel this way about these things. As whatever one of us suffers, the rest suffer, so whatever benefit one of us enjoys, all must share. If Captain Schuyler had found anything of value here, I should feel that you and I ought to share in it. Now we have found these jewels, and—"



"The Minion rather, sir, begging your pardon, sir."

"The Minion doesn't count," said I, "though, of course, he shall have as much as is good for him. There is an enormous fortune there——"

"Yes, sir," said the Bo's'n, with wandering gaze.

"What are you looking for, Bo's'n?"

"Only to see if there wasn't any more anywhere about, sir. It seems as if the boy might have forgotten some, or perhaps he didn't look——"

I laughed aloud.

"You avaricious old jacky!" said I. "Here is as much as would buy the Bank of England, and you are searching for more."

The Bo's'n looked down, abashed at my laughter.

"Don't mind my laughing, Bo's'n," said I kindly. "We are born that way, all of us. I have not enough in my pocket to buy myself a pair of shoes, yet I feel just as you do. That hill of riches seems to have grown small since we came back and looked at it again. Let's bury it out of sight before it vanishes altogether."

The Bo's'n stood gazing at the glittering mass. He shook his head. "How can we ever get it all to Belleville?" he asked.

"We can't get it there now, perhaps not for a long time," I answered. "Listen, Bo's'n. I want to talk quick before any one comes. When we get back home—it may be in a month from now, and it may be in a year—I want to fit out a vessel and come down and get this treasure and take it home. Never any more going to sea for us, Bo's'n, after that." [Pg 192]

"No, sir, that's so, sir," returned the Bo's'n.

"We shall have plenty of guns and plenty of sails. By that time, perhaps, the revolutions about here will be over. In any case, we must bury this fortune so that if those wretches come here again they will not be able to find it. One of us had better hide them, and not tell the other; not tell any one until the time comes to——"

"I think I know a splendid place, sir, Mr. Jones, sir," said the Bo's'n eagerly.

"Very well, Bo's'n," said I.

"It is in——" The Bo's'n waited a moment and looked questioningly at me.

"Don't tell me, Bo's'n, now don't. At least for the present. You hide them and tell me later."

The Bo's'n bent over the mass and began to make separate piles of the different articles, putting those of a kind together.

"There's one thing I want to say right here, Bo's'n," said I. "When we do fit out that ship, Captain Schuyler is to command her. I shall not agree to anything else."

"That's right, sir," answered the Bo's'n. "I shall be glad to have him. And you'll take me along, sir? I mean on the expedition, Mr. Jones?"

"Certainly, Bo's'n. You are as much a part of it as I am myself. I'm sure you are much more a part of it, since I am letting you hide the jewels."

"What do you think of putting——" The Bo's'n waited again.

"Stop!" said I sharply. "I do not wish to know anything about them now."

"Suppose I take this watch to the Captain?" I suggested. I took from the pile a plain watch. I knew that the Skipper's had stopped since coming ashore. He had dropped it overboard, and, though he had recovered it, it was quite water-soaked. [Pg 193]

"Certainly, sir; but why not take a finer one, Mr. Jones?"

"No, no," said I. "We don't want the Minion to suspect our having a hand in hiding the jewels. The watch must be the plainest that we can find, if it will only keep time, and as much like the Captain's as possible." The timepiece which I selected had no key. I found another with a simple chain attached, and to this chain was fastened a key. I wound the watch, and found that it started off at once as if it had never stopped at all.

"They must have taken this lately," said I.

"Would you like anything for yourself, sir?" asked the thoughtful Bo's'n.

"There is one gorgeous jewel, Bo's'n," said I, "that I should like very much to take. It equals a small fortune." I pointed to a great diamond which, whatever we did with the mass of brilliant things, was ever uppermost. I have since that time in our one trip across the ocean seen some of the court jewels of England and Germany, but I have never gazed upon anything to equal the size and brilliancy of that great globe of light.

"There is a fortune in that diamond," said I. "Did I say a small one? Well, I mean a large one. It would make us all rich."

"Would it, sir?" asked the Bo's'n.

"Yes," said I. "What a pity we can't take that or any of them with us! But, of course, the only thing for us to do is to hide them until more quiet times. If we are captured, we shall be searched."

"You're right, Mr. Jones, sir," said the Bo's'n. "Perfectly right, as usual. We must hide them, as you say. I hope you won't forget me, sir, when you come to get them—on that expedition, I mean, Mr. Jones, sir."

"Forget you, my honest man!" exclaimed I, clapping the good soul on the back. "As soon forget my own mother. No, no, Bo's'n, share and share alike, as I told you before;" for I had determined that, humble as the Bo's'n was, He should derive as much benefit from the wonderful find as any of the rest of us. [Pg 194]

I passed my hand over the mass of rings which the Bo's'n had been heaping together, rolling them about until I discovered the thing that I sought.

"I think I should like this, Bo's'n, if you say it's quite right." I held up to view a very little thread of gold, with a very small diamond caught in the top.

"It's a poor thing, sir, for a gentleman, and rather small for your finger, sir, begging your pardon, sir."

"No matter," said I. "It's all I want. Now you!"

"I what, sir?"

"You choose something, Bo's'n."

"Not now, sir. I will wait till we come to fetch 'em."

By this time we had the jewels wrapped in four different parcels, which seemed to be the Bo's'n's idea of arranging them. I let him have his way, for I saw that he had a definite idea of what to do with them, and I had puzzled my brains without finding any solution.

"I think this is the place where they were, sir," said the Bo's'n.

He led me back to a little passage which I had not noticed before, and by the light of the still burning lamp we saw a flat stone lying upon the ground, and beside it lay the tools which the Smith had left behind for my release.

"There may be many such places hereabouts. That Minion must have come here and peered and pried and poked about until he started the stone. Gad, sir, he must have been nonplussed!"

"Shall we put them there again, Bo's'n?" I asked.

"No, sir. There are lots of places. Hollow trees, places way up in the branches, deserted nests, real large mammoth ones. I might divide 'em, sir. Places down on the shore far enough from the stream, so that if the sea robbers do come back they won't have an idea of looking there. I should like to tell you, sir, when I have got them hid away——" [Pg 195]

The Bo's'n had wound the last thread of the fine brocade which he had been cutting for strings round the fourth bundle.

"Now I'll go," said I, "and good luck to you in finding a hiding place, only don't forget where it is."

"I don't think I can forget, sir," said he. "I'll take a range, and I am sure not to forget."

"Promise me one thing, Bo's'n," said I. "I am a very curious man. I do not really want to know where those jewels are to be hidden, and I want to be able to swear on my conscience that I know nothing of them. Now promise me that, no matter how I try to worm your secret out of you, you will not tell me until we start for home. I should surely tell the Skipper, and if Miss Archer asked me——"

"Yes, sir, I understand, sir; couldn't refuse, sir; would be done for, sir. Very well, sir. I swear upon my honour that you shall not know anything about the hiding place until we are able to sail again, Mr. Jones, sir."

I went out of the cave rather reluctantly, I must confess.

"Go far away, please, sir," called the Bo's'n. "Please go and sit in the latticed cavern with your back to the front wall, where you can't see me, Mr. Jones, sir, in case I need to walk along the shore, sir. I don't mean to say that I do mean to walk along the shore, sir, and I don't mean to say that I don't mean to walk along the shore, sir. I say this only in case I do want to walk along the shore, sir. I must go along the shore, sir, in any case to see about the Minion, sir. I don't say I'm goin' to hide the jewels along the shore, sir, and I don't say I ain't a-goin' to hide the jewels on the shore, sir. I want to be perfectly truthful with——"

I laughed aloud.

"You ridiculous, honest old fool!" said I. "For Heaven's sake, don't talk so everlastingly. I know [Pg 196]

now just where you intend to go, but I won't look, I promise you, and then I can say frankly that I know nothing about their hiding place if the question ever comes up."

"You can, sir," said the Bo's'n, with conviction in his tones. "I wonder if the question will ever come up, Mr. Jones, sir?"

"I'll run now," said I, "for fear you'll tell me just which tree on the beach you mean to hide them in."

"Go quickly, sir," said the Bo's'n, with distress in his voice, "and for Heaven's sake don't allude to 'em again, or I shall tell, I know I shall."

"Perhaps you can't keep it from the others," said I anxiously.

"Don't have no fear of that, sir. You are the only person I am afraid of a-divulgin' to, Mr. Jones, sir."

I ran hurriedly from the cave, my promise to the Bo's'n being strong in my mind. As I was leaving the entrance, I came plump upon the Skipper. I congratulated myself upon our lucky escape, and drew the old man away and up that side of the hill.

"Cynthy's awake," were the Skipper's first words. "She's been askin' for you."

Asking for me!

"For me?" said I, finding my voice. "Tell that to a sea soldier, Captain."

"She has, honest Ingun," said the Skipper. "She woke up a while ago. I was sittin' by her, and she opened her eyes and she said—What do you think, Jones?"

"How can I tell," asked I, very red in the face. There was a buzzing in my ears. I waited an hour, it seemed to me, before the Skipper continued:

"She turned over and she opened her eyes."

"You said that before, Captain," urged I.

"Yes, yes, so I did. Let's see, where was I? Cynthy was asleep, you know, and I was sittin' by——" [Pg 197]

"Please hurry a little faster, Captain," said I. "I have something very important to tell you, as the head of this expedition, you know, sir."

"Shesaidhramwhathaveyoutotellme," rattled off the Skipper.

I thought for a moment, and, saying the words over slowly to myself, I concluded that the Skipper had volunteered the information that Cynthia had said "Hiram," and that he next had asked of me the question, "What have you got to tell me?"

I gasped with bliss, but I controlled my voice and drew the watch from my pocket.

"I found this," said I, "down there by the cave. I have noticed that yours doesn't go, and I thought perhaps you would like one that does."

"You're dreadful kind," said the Skipper in a pleased tone. He examined the watch, turning it over and round. "Where did you find it?" he asked.

"Why, I just picked it up," said I, which was literally true. And then remembering first that Cynthia had asked for me, and then that I had made a promise to the Bo's'n, I dashed into the passage, the Skipper following. When I reached the latticed chamber, I saw that young Trevelyan had changed his position enough to be lying on Cynthia's blanket, with his head on her pillow. He was very pale and coughed at times, which, however, did not seem to awaken him. Cynthia herself was seated upon a projecting rock, occupied in mending her Uncle's coat. The mortuary bag was gaping wide, and giving up, on demand, such necessaries as thread, needles, scissors, and the like.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Jones?" said Cynthia, nodding carelessly.

"What do you want of me?" asked I.

Cynthia looked up in innocent astonishment.

"I?" she said.

"Yes; I thought you asked for me." [Pg 198]

"I asked for you? Oh, no! What made you think that?"

I did not reply, but seated myself flat upon the floor, with my back against the outer wall, as I had promised the Bo's'n that I would.

"How silly you look!" said Cynthia.

"I suppose I do," said I.

"What made you think I asked for you, Mr. Jones?"

"I don't think; I know."

"How?"

"Your Uncle told me so."

"Uncle! Uncle! How could you? I never——"

"Not when you was awake, Cynthy, girl. I know that. I didn't tell Jones here you knew it.—What do you want to fluster a girl so for, Jones?"

Cynthia was blushing furiously.

"How can you make me so ridiculous, Uncle?"

"I don't say you knew it, Cynthy." The Skipper spoke slowly and with emphasis. "I never said you knew what you said. All the same, I am not deaf yet. I was sittin' by you, Cynthy, girl—you will acknowledge that, won't you? Well, you just turned your head with the sweetest, prettiest smile, and you said, so soft I could hardly hear you, 'Hiram'—just like that, 'Hi-ram.'"

"I have no doubt it was so soft you could not hear it.—I never—never said it in the world, Mr. Jones, never. I do not call Mr. Jones by his given name, such a name, such a name—I nev——"

The rest of this incoherent sentence was lost. Tears of shame filled her eyes and ran down her blushing cheeks. She dropped the coat, got up and went to the lattice, and looked out.

I sat, my head against the wall, lost in the most pleasurable feelings. If it was true, she did like me a little, after all.

There was no sound in the cave for some time but the gentle breathing of the young English lad. The Skipper broke the silence and changed the subject by saying, "Let's have a drink."

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"Shan't we wait for the Bo's'n, Captain?" said I.

"Well, well, as you like," answered the Skipper, a little impatiently. "You know this, Jones: You're a short time living and a long time dead, and you'd better make all out of this life that you can."

I saw that Cynthia turned her tear-stained face my way, as if she endorsed this remark. But she withdrew her eyes at once when I returned her glance, and looked out to sea again. She stood gazing far out over the water. The morning was fresh and bright, a gentle wind rippled the surface of the wide bay. The tide was low.

"Uncle," she said, turning suddenly, "do you know that part of the Yankee is there still? A good bit of her stands up out of the water."

She handed the glass to the Skipper, ignoring me by even so much as a glance. The old man put the glass to his eye.

"You're right, Cynthy, girl, you're right; you're perfectly right in what you say. She does stand up, a good deal of her. Gad, how I should like to tread her deck again!"

I looked at the Skipper pityingly. Poor old man! So little left in life, while I felt that mine was just beginning. As the Skipper maundered along about the bark, and what good times he had had in her, and how she and they were gone forever, Cynthia crossed the cave to where I still sat, wondering when the Bo's'n would have finished his task on the shore.

"You mustn't mind what Uncle says," said she.

"Mind it!" I broke in. "I like——"

"Hush, Mr. Jones! No compliments, please. He has aged wonderfully, poor dear, since the Yankee blew up. There isn't anything I wouldn't do to please him. I won't contradict him again. I ought not to have then—I'll try not to mind——"

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Her face was pink, her eyes downcast.

"Gad! where is that Bo's'n? I'd like my nip now. Oh, there he is!—Come, come, Bo's'n, I want my toddy! I was just telling Jones here that we're a short time living and——"

I arose from my seat and looked at the Bo's'n, asking my question by only raising my eyebrows. He nodded affirmatively.

"Help yourself, Bo's'n," said the Skipper. We all stood round, in the fashion of seafaring men, and drank the health of "The Lady," and then "To you, Captain," and then "To you, Mr. Jones," and then "To you, Bo's'n."

"Give us a regular toast, Bo's'n," said the Skipper; "one of the old timers." The Skipper filled his glass to the brim and waited. The Bo's'n hemmed and hawed.

"I don't know anything very new, sir, Cap'n, sir," he said. "Just the same old one I always knew." He hawed and hemmed again, bowed to Miss Archer, bowed to the Captain, and bowed to me. He bowed to the recumbent form of the young Englishman. After that he gave a comprehensive bow all round. Then, with flushed cheeks and eyes staring straight ahead, he rattled off as a schoolboy would:

"The wind that blows and the ship that goes and the lass that loves as a sailor that's pretty strong cap'n sir."

We all drank to the Bo's'n's toast, knowing it well from time immemorial. Cynthia gazed in amaze at the Bo's'n, as if he were speaking a new tongue.

"Now yours, Captain," said I.

The Skipper cleared his throat, raised himself a little on tiptoe, and swayed back and forth with a swinging motion, to which his sing-song voice kept time:

*"Here's to all them that love this,  
And here's to all those,  
And them that love those.  
And those that love them that love this."*

I can see them now as they stood there—the Skipper, his face beaming with good nature; the Bo's'n, bashful, but enjoying the privilege of drinking on an equality with his Captain; Cynthia, looking on, half amused. I see them against the background of that dim cavern, the sunlight flecking the floor and wall in spots, where it had pierced the lattice work of leaves. There was a human background also, composed of two figures, the sleeping lad, and Lacelle who hovered ever near her rescuer and protector. And behind all we were conscious of a presence, we knew not quite what, but a kindly personality, which aided us with unobtrusiveness and in a thousand thoughtful ways. With all the privations that we suffered, with all the anxieties and troubles that we had to bear, there is still something which fascinates and draws me back to much that I experienced in those days—dead this many a year. The sweetest odours were wafted in through the leaves, the mocking-bird sang as nothing but a mocking-bird can sing, the vines swayed to and fro in the open window. Glancing between, one perceived the wondrous blue water of the Caribbean Sea, dotted with the white caps of which the trade wind is ever lavish, and, above all the sounds of voices and singing of birds, there was the lap and swish of the fierce little waves as they rushed up over the shingle. It was May, the latter part of May, and the seasons, following round as our seasons at Belleville do, brought each their variety of leaf and flower. If one leaned out of the natural window in the blazing sun, with the fresh wind blowing the hair awry, one's eyes rested on a slope of brilliant tropic colour, where creepers hung from the trees or threaded under and over fallen forest giants, or crept down the hill and made beds and masses of bloom too beautiful to be credited. Great yellow velvet cups stood out from their background of green. Lilies of white and crimson drooped from stems which glowed with life. Had we been but free from care, and had Cynthia possessed but the ordinary comforts to which she had been wonted, I should have asked for nothing better than to pass the rest of our days in this enchanting spot.

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We had drained our glasses dry. The Skipper looked directly at the Bo's'n's knees.

"What do you wear your trousers at half mast for, Bo's'n?" asked the Skipper.

The Bo's'n looked down and tugged at his shrunken cotton legs.

"For Captain Dacres, sir," replied he, with ready wit.

"We're through mourning for him," said the Captain. "Run 'em up or haul 'em down."

"They've shrunk to hell and gone, sir," said the Bo's'n, with superfluous explanation.

"And where's your toast, Mr. Jones?" asked the Skipper in his most enticing voice. His glass was empty.

"It's ready, sir, but my glass is dry."

We all took a finger more, and I, looking over the rim of my pewter cup at Cynthia, gave them "Sweethearts and Wives."

Cynthia expressed it as her conviction that we had all had quite enough, and replaced the bottle upon a ledge in the rock and then resumed her occupation of looking through the glass.

"Cynthy," said the Skipper suddenly, "you must get married."

Cynthia started as if a bombshell had exploded in the cavern. She dropped the glass, so that I feared it had been broken as it thumped upon the stone flooring.

"Married, Uncle? Are you insane? Married!"

"I mean it, Cynthy." The Skipper wagged his head and drained his glass dry.

Cynthia drew herself up to her full height. She was only a slight young girl, dressed in a blue dungaree not much the better for her stay ashore, but if I ever saw dignity personified, it was then.

"And to whom, Uncle? To one of the pirates, to the ghost of the cave, to the Minion, to this little English lad, or to yourself? I really don't see any one else I could possibly marry."

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"It isn't any of those," said the Skipper, as if Cynthia was quite as forgetful of my presence as she seemed. "You've missed one, Cynthy; it's Jones here," and he indicated me with a jerk of his short stub thumb over his shoulder in my direction.

## CHAPTER XII.

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### THE SKIPPER AGAIN ENACTS THE RÔLE OF CHAPLAIN.

I am writing the exact truth when I state it here as a fact that had the entire cave with its occupants slid down the hill and out into the waters of the bay, it would not have caused me more surprise or consternation. As for Cynthia, she burst into tears. I turned and ran, but not too soon to hear the words:

"So—so—mor—ti—tified. Doesn't—ca—care—fo—for—me—at—atall. Don't ca—care—for—hi—hi—him." I flew through the passage, up over the hill, and down the eastern slope. There I found the Minion, still lying stupid and heavy. I bathed his hot head and moved him farther into the shade, whereupon he snarled at me, and asked me, as far as his limited vocabulary permitted, to attend to my own affairs. Finding myself unwelcome, I looked about for occupation, loitered miserably up the beach, feeling that Belleville was the place for me, after all. As I walked thus, gloomily thinking, I raised my eyes, and looking along the shore, I saw something white underneath a tree not a hundred feet away. I quickened my pace, and there, at the foot of an immense ironwood, I discovered a necktie. I at once recognised it as the Bo's'n's. So this was the tree that he had climbed when he asked me not to look. There above me was desposited a part or the whole of our splendid treasure. I scanned the tree with curiosity. I saw some scratches upon the bark, and was pleased with myself to feel what a keen insight I possessed into the ways of man from the traces which I could procure in this way. I had heard of the Bow Street detectives, and I felt all at once that I might rank with the most clever among them. There were several large deserted nests in the tree, and I at once decided that these contained our hidden fortune. Well, it was a very good place, for no one would ever dream that jewels were hidden up there in the ironwood. I was puzzled as to how the Bo's'n had managed to get himself up the tree, but that he was a good climber I knew, going up any kind of rigging at all hours of the day or night and in any weather, and I felt that what would be a matter of much difficulty to most men would be merely child's play for the cat-like Bo's'n. I stuffed the necktie into my pocket, with a good mind to give the Bo's'n a few words of advice when we met. He had been careless beyond words, and if he must climb to hide the treasure, and if he must remove his neckerchief, why not put it into his own pocket, instead of forcing me to put it into mine? There was small need for the Bo's'n to array himself in a neckerchief. In the first place, it was hot weather, and then a man with both shirt sleeves gone has no need of beautifying. I felt very cross toward the Bo's'n for his carelessness as I wandered, not knowing where to go. I glanced toward the westward, and saw that the little boat was still there. She had been washed sideways against the beach. The heavy rock attached to the painter had held her there. I scanned the ocean; there was nothing to be seen but a small portion of the deck of the Yankee Blade standing up out of the water. This, of course, we could not see while the smoke hung round the wreck, and lately there had been so much to claim our attention that we had not thought of looking seaward.

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I crossed the stream on the great tree and ran down the beach toward the place where the boat lay. I was glad to see her again. I walked into the water and pushed and pulled and twisted her round, until finally I got her afloat. I climbed over the gun'l and paddled idly about, hardly knowing what to do with myself. I did not like to return to the cave. From Cynthia's last words, I felt that she wanted never to see me again. I was very wretched and extremely mortified. I landed the boat in the cove and went slowly up the hill, and sat myself down under a tree in a most dejected frame of mind. I had been there but a few minutes when I heard a tramping through the underbrush, and the puffing of some animal, brute or human. I pulled out my pistol and looked to the priming, but in a moment I heard a snort which I knew, and saw the Skipper making toward me as fast as his short legs could carry him.

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"Don't shoot!" said the Skipper; adding, with neither breath nor grammar, "It's me," Another gasp to get his breath, and then the words, "She's consented."

"Whose consented to what?" roared I.

"Why, Cynthy. She's consented to be married to you."

"Oh, she has, has she? Well, then, Captain Schuyler, you can go and tell your niece that it usually takes two to make a bargain."

"That's polite," returned the Skipper. "Ain't you ashamed of yourself after all the fuss I've had to get her to come round?"

"Ashamed!" returned I. "I should think you would be ashamed of yourself to propose such a thing;" and then, my feelings being too strong for me, I subsided with the brilliant exclamation, "The idea!"

The Skipper looked sheepish.

"Yes, it's all my idea," he began eagerly, but I cut him short.

"Are you really insane," said I, "or are you only feigning lunacy?"

"I'm as sane as you are," said he, "and a great deal saner. Imagine it"—he addressed a supposititious audience—"here's a man asked to marry a lovely young girl, plain but amiable——"

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"That's where you're wrong," said I. "She hasn't a plain hair in her head, and she's damned unamiable. Go on and tell some more lies."

"Now think of his gettin' so mad as that—at an old man who only wants to do him a favour."

"You've made me ridiculous, that's what you've done; you've made me a laughing stock, and I won't stand it, Captain Schuyler, I——"

"Oh, come, come, now, Jones! I want to tell you my idea. I know just how much you love that girl, and I know just as well that she don't care two straws for you."

"The devil you do!" said I sulkily.

"But something's got to be done! That girl has only me, her old Uncle, to look after her. I'm an old man, Jones. Perhaps I shan't be able to stand all that you young people may have to. If anything happens to me, I want to feel that Cynthia has a protector."

"I should always do my best to take care of your niece, Captain Schuyler," said I; "but how do you know she doesn't care two straws for me?"

"Why she says she doesn't, and any one can see it with half an eye. I reelly believe," said the Skipper, pointing his remark with a very horny forefinger, "that she would like the Bo's'n, or even the Minion, better."

"And yet you insult us both by asking us to marry each other."

"No, I ain't. I'm asking *her* to marry *you*. Lord, Jones, I ain't thinking of you. Now, you see, it's this way, Jones. You're more in her station of life. To be sure, you haven't the proud lineage of William Brown—his mother's great aunt is a Schuyler—but you're nearer to it than the Bo's'n, besides which your position aboard the Yankee Blade was enough. And then, you know, it isn't a reel marriage. You can give each other up at any time. She expects firmly to marry William when she gets home. He'll be waitin' for her on the dock. I presume she's told you?"

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"Yes, she has told me," said I.

"You see, if you were married to Cynthia, and anything should happen, and she needed a protector—— Oh, darn it all, Jones, can't you see what I mean?"

"What did you mean by saying that she has consented?"

"Why, she has, she reelly has. I put it to her in such a way that she says she sees my point, and she will go through the form of marriage——"

"A hollow mockery!" I broke in. "I won't consent."

"What, after all the trouble I've taken? You must, Jones. You can't refuse a la——"

"We have no clergyman," argued I. My heart thumped at the bare idea of standing up and holding Cynthia's hand before witnesses.

"I'm one," said the Skipper, drawing himself up proudly, so that I began to think that his recently developed fad for playing chaplain was at the root of his desire for this marriage. "A captain is always a clergyman on the high seas."

"On the high seas!" returned I, looking sarcastically round at the mossy hillside.

"Don't be a fool, Jones! See there!" He parted the low-sweeping branches. I looked out to sea, where a little bit of the wreck showed over the white-capped surface of the water.

He pointed with his short finger.

"You see that deck there? That represents power, Jones, one man power. I'm absolute monarch there, Jones. I'm clergyman on those bits of planks, Jones. There I'm prophet, Jones. There I'm priest, Jones, and there I'm king."

"You are not," said I, my orthodox blood boiling in my veins. "You're an old blasphemer, Captain Schuyler!"

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"Well, you'll see whether I am or not. I'm goin' to marry you to Cynthia on that deck, just as sure as I sit here."

"How did she happen to consent?" asked I, beginning to weaken at this delicious prospect.

"All on my account," said the Skipper. "Now stop askin' questions and come along."

I wondered why Cynthia had consented. I could not understand it. As for me, my brain was on fire at the thought, and I made up my mind then and there that when the words were spoken that made Cynthia mine William Brown might stand on the dock and whistle for his bride until the millennium. I felt in my waistcoat pocket for the little ring. Yes, there it was, quite safe. It would come into use more quickly than I had imagined. My thoughts were such happy ones that I arose with beaming face and started toward the cave.

"Oh, you needn't be in a hurry; she don't want you. Besides, she's got her dress to wash. Lazy's going to help her."

"You told me to come," said I appealingly.

"Yes, because she told me to take you away out of her sight. Promised her we'd take the boat and pull along the beach aways, and leave her free. The dress won't take long to dry in the sun and wind."

So it was to be a mock marriage, after all!

"I hope you've got some money, Jones," said the Skipper. "Not that I am anxious for a rich husband for my niece, but it's always well——"

I smiled consciously, feeling that the Skipper would be perfectly satisfied with my share of the fortune hidden by the Bo's'n for our mutual benefit.

"I don't own the Belleville copper mines, it is true," said I, "but what I own is rather more negotiable than their products. I will tell you a secret, Captain, if you will promise me never to tell a soul, not even your niece."

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"Honest Ingun!" said the Skipper.

I leaned over and whispered in his ear in exultant tones:

"I shall never need to go to sea after this trip, Captain." I was just on the point of telling him more, but my promise to the Bo's'n suddenly came to mind, and I shut my lips over my teeth as if they were screwed together.

"The reason I ask you is this," said the Skipper. "I shan't have anything to leave my niece, and my sister Mary 'Zekel is no better off than I am. You see," said Captain Schuyler, "there's usually a rich branch in a family and a poor one. I belong to the poor branch. We couldn't all be educated—money wouldn't hold out. I've got a brother who's fit to be a professor. Nothin' he don't know. Just as pleasant to me as if I was the most learned man in the world. That's the nice thing about the Schuylers. None of 'em ashamed of their relations. My mother was a cousin of the general's. I suppose you think I've got no right to the name of Schuyler, but I'd like to know who is nearer to a man than his own mother? Suppose my father's name wasn't Schuyler. I claim that I have just as much right to the hawk as if I was one of the rich ones, and my name is Schuyler as well as my mother's. Same blood runs in my veins. Maybe a poor quality of blood, but it's got Schuyler into it, and you can't get it out."

The day passed with a combination of haste and speed that I have never known equalled. It dragged when I thought that the setting sun would see Cynthia my wife. It flew when I thought how she would scorn me, flout me, and hate the very idea of being bound to me.

"Remember, Jones, it's only a 'sort-of' bond, not actual marriage," said the Skipper for the twentieth time as we pulled slowly along the shore, looking for a fresh supply of oysters.

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When we returned, late in the afternoon, Cynthia was sitting on the shore clothed, but hardly in her right mind. I could not help pitying her, my poor dear! though she began to, as I had expected, flout me at once, not waiting, as most wives do, until after marriage. The blue dungaree had been washed, but it was streaked and wrinkled in places, and still damp in spots. A wave of pity welled up in my heart for this poor girl, who must consent to marry me, willy nilly. It seemed so brutal to force her into this thing. And yet I reflected that it was my portrait, of which I had caught a glimpse, hanging to her chain.

"She says you may call her Cynthy," whispered the Skipper in my ear. I left him and walked up from the boat. "I'd start right in on it if I was you."

Cynthia sat on the shelving bank of the little stream, throwing pebbles into the sea.

I started in bluntly, waiting for no preliminaries.

"I understand," said I, "perfectly, that you are yielding to your Uncle's wishes in this thing. I promise to treat you just as I have heretofore."

Had I not known for certain from the Skipper, as well as from herself, that Cynthia could never care for me, and that William Brown had an irrevocable hold upon her affections, I should have thought that she looked a trifle disappointed.

"It is hard," returned Cynthia, "for a person to be forced upon a person by another person, when that person can't make the person that's forcing her on the other person understand that she don't care anything about the other person, or that the other person don't care anything about the person, but I don't see what we are to do about it."

"Whether I am forced upon you or not," said I, "I intend to tell you right here very plainly that you are not forced upon me. I have not the slightest intention of going through one of those ridiculous misunderstandings that one reads of in novels when one word can clear it up. What have I told you, Cynthia, ever since I saw——"

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"Miss Archer, please."

"Your Uncle said I might——"

"Oh, very well, then, go on," said Cynthia wearily.



"What have I told you since I first met you on board the Yankee Blade, Miss Cynthia, Miss Archer?"

"No matter about the 'Miss,'" she said. "You'll have the right to call me whatever you choose by sunset."

"To call you wife," said I sentimentally.

Cynthia arose.

"If you say that now, I'll go away," her face the colour of that sunset of which we had been speaking.

I resumed.

"I have told you ever since I first met——"

"Yes," said Cynthia, with spirit, "and you told it to me a little too often, Mr. Jones. One of those girls at Martinique told me all about you. She said that the handsome Captain of the Seamew had made love to her and had given her his picture."

"Which one was that?" said I.

"Were there so many?"

"Lot's of 'em," said I.

Cynthia arose with dignity. "I'm going in," she said.

"Why?" asked I, with all innocence.

"And I shall tell Uncle that this ridiculous marriage shall not take place."

"Just when you've washed your dress and all," said the Skipper, coming up in time to hear this avowal.

"Sit down a moment, Miss Archer," I pleaded.

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"I'm goin' to get the witnesses," called back the Skipper, as he walked quickly toward the hill. "Tide's nearly down."

"I've given my picture to a dozen girls, Cynthia. Girls are always asking for pictures, but as to loving any of those chocolate drops, I never really loved any but——"

"Heloïse Grandpré!" broke in Cynthia.

So *she* was the one! My conscience did prick me a little when I remembered certain veranda corners and vine-wreathed balconies, but, of course, I knew now that that had not been the real thing. None of them had ever been the real thing, and I had thought I would have died for some of those girls.

It's just looking for a ship at sea. You go on deck and discover a distant sail upon the horizon. The vessel is hull down, and without the glass you can't be sure what she is. You watch her until she gets nearer and nearer. She comes up over the curve after a while, and you say, "Pshaw! that's nothing but a schooner." You watch again for your full-rigged ship, and again you see a bit of sail down there against the gray, or the red, or the blue, and you say to yourself: "There she is this time for sure! Just wait until she heaves in sight." Up she comes again, and she isn't the one you're looking for, after all. Again you go on deck. You haven't any glass, and that new bit of white over there on the edge of the world, against the golden glow, isn't any nearer than the others. But there's no mistaking *her*. You know her at first sight, and you don't need any glass, either, to tell you that it's your ship, and that she's coming home from sea to you, thank God! with all her priceless cargo in her hold, her sticks lofty and straight, and her swelling canvas as full of God's breeze and blessing as they can carry. So it was with me. I had been in love with forty different girls in forty different countries of forty different colours and forty different ages—there was a widow down at the Cape of Good Hope. Oh, good Lord! how she did——

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"I see that you have not forgotten her," said Cynthia. I started, and returned suddenly from the Cape of Good Hope.

"No, and never shall, if she comes between us now."

"I am not so easily taken in, Mr. Jones."

"Neither am I. I had hoped yesterday that at least you had grown to care for me a little. I saw a chain——"

Cynthia put her hand quickly to her neck.

"You saw my chain?"

"Yes, while your Uncle and I were carrying you."

"My Uncle and you! O Mr. Jones! carrying me?" in a tone as if to say, "What shall I hear next?"

"Yes, we were. The locket flew open, Cynthia, and I saw——"

"You saw William Brown," said Cynthia in a very dignified tone.

"Not at all," said I. "O Cynthia! is it any wonder that I was encouraged?"

Cynthia was fumbling with her chain. She pulled the locket from its hiding place; a look of consternation overspread her face.

"I've lost my ring!" she said.

"What ring?" asked I. "Oh, that curious serpent ring! It is probably in your sleeping chamber."

She slid her nail under the edge of the case of the locket and opened it.

"There!" she said triumphantly, holding the locket as far from her neck as the chain would allow. "Who is that?"

"Shall I really say?" I asked, hesitating on her account.

"Say? Of course! Who is that? Oh, I forgot! You never saw William Brown."

"No, I never did," said I, "except in a sickly looking picture that's giving some shark indigestion, I hope, by this time. But the picture that you do me the honour to wear is myself." [Pg 215]

"It isn't!" said Cynthia flatly.

"It is!" said I.

"Good Heavens, no!"

She snapped the slide of the chain apart, held the locket up before her eyes, gave one glance at the face, and then, with a quick movement of her hand, she tossed the locket into the stream.

"Why don't you throw it into the sea?" asked I.

She answered carelessly, "Oh, I think the stream will carry it down."

Cynthia sat in meditative pose for some moments. "Now where could that have come from? Oh, yes! I believe I know now. Yes, that must be it. You see Heloïse and I were comparing lockets one day just before I left Martinique. I remember now that William Brown's picture was always loose. It fell out. Heloïse had this one of you, and somehow, as we were putting them back, they got exchanged. I remember Heloïse admired William Brown very much. She said she thought him the handsomest man she had ever seen. I can send Heloïse this, and she will send me William."

"Mine's in the stream," said I. "Did you know who the picture was meant for?" I asked.

Cynthia cast down her eyes.

"I had seen you passing the hotel," she answered. "Uncle told me that you were the new Mate."

I arose crestfallen. That perfidious Heloïse!

"Then this absurd marriage is off?" said I.

"Well," said she, "you know what Uncle is. He's set his heart—I hate to disapp—"

"Come and get your pork!" called the Skipper.

We went up to our early supper.

"Wonder what kind of weather we're goin' to have for the weddin'?" said the Skipper. [Pg 216]

"It may rain," said I. "You know there was a rainbow this—"

"Now! now! now! None of *that!*" The Skipper raised his hand as if in protest. "I know what you're agoin' to say, Jones. Everything that happens in the morning you must take warning about just because it rhymes. And everything that happens at night must be a sailor's delight because it rhymes. Why, one of the worst harricanes that I ever knew happened to me off Hatteras when we had had a rainbow the night before. Ricketts was Mate. He came up to me along about seven o'clock one evening and he says, 'Cap'n Schuyler, we are mighty lucky this trip. Do you see that rainbow, sir?' 'What of it?' said I. I didn't fancy that fellow much. He wore a ring. Well, the next morning it began to blow, and it blew so it nearly blew my teeth out. Did blow the Mate's hair off. It was a wig. I was glad of it. He shouldn't have been so presuming. Had to go all the way to Coenties Slip with a red waistcoat buttoned round his head. Another time, I remember, I had a young supercargo with me, taking a trip for his health. It wasn't a fair division. I know he made *me* sick enough before we got through. I came on deck one morning, and he had the assurance to tell me that we would have fine weather now right down through the Windward Passage.

"'How do you know?' said I. 'Ever been there before?'"

"And then, if you'll reelly believe me, he projuded a book, with all those rhymes printed in it, and he read 'em aloud for my benefit.

"'Here's one, Captain, that perhaps you've never seen.' And then he puffed out his chest and got up on a hawse block and read:

"'Evening red and morning gray

"Get off that hawse block!' said I. I threw the book overboard and kicked the supercargo down to leeward. 'You stay your own side the deck,' I said, 'and don't come here with your saws.' For just that moment there came along a squall which nearly took the sticks out of her, and we had just been experiencing 'evenin' red and mornin' gray,' 'When they made you a supercargo, Mr. Whiting,' said I, 'they spoiled a good loblolly boy.'

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"A little knowledge is a very dangerous thing, Captain Schuyler, as perhaps you'll find out when you get home,' said he.

"Don't answer back your betters, sir,' said I. 'I suppose you think you're a very superior cargo, but, if the underwriters ask my opinion, I shall tell 'em I consider you a blanked inferior one. Get down there to leeward, where you belong!'"

"Was he handsome, Uncle, that young supercargo of yours?"

"Well, not so's you'd notice it after I'd finished with him. It's astonishing how soon he lost his good looks.—I tell you, Jones, it's all because of the rhyme. That's all poetry's written for. Facts are not accounted of at all. Rainbow at night, sailor's delight; rainbow at morning, take warning. Did you ever hear such stuff?"

"What became of the supercargo?" asked Cynthia, who had listened, much interested. "I suppose you took off his head or something, Uncle. You are so fierce." She laid her hand on the old man's back and patted his shoulder gently.

"No, but his father took mine off. He was half owner, and I didn't sail for him any more after that trip. There was another idiot with me along in '9. If you wanted a proof that all the fools were not dead yet, there you had it. It was along back in '9, as I said. I was going from Australia to Singapore. We were running down our Easting, making very fine weather. He comes to me one morning, and he says to me, 'Cap'n, the cyclone is upon us!'"

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"Oh, it is,' says I. 'I suppose you got that out of your poetry book. Do you know that our Cook's half black, Mister Superior Cargo?'"

"No, sir, I haven't seen him yet. Is he, indeed?' says the fellow, with great interest. 'I never heard of one like that. Where do they come from?'"

"From the galley,' says I.

"Just then Cook brought me some of the men's mess to taste.

"You said he was half black, sir,' said the supercargo, looking in the man's coal-black face.

"He isn't half white, is he?' says I.

"Tell you the truth, that fellow never understood me, and thought the whole voyage out to Singapore that I had been lying to him."

After our frugal meal was finished, the Skipper led the way to the boat. Cynthia was very pale during the trip, and I felt once or twice as if it were my duty to forbid the banns. As bridegroom, I was not allowed to pull, and the Skipper, who had made his toilet by washing his face and running his fingers through his hair in preparation for his duties as clergyman, was not allowed to soil his hands on the oars, so that we were some time in getting out to the wreck. The Bo's'n had to row the whole dead weight. I can see the boat now, the Skipper and Cynthia seated in the stern, Lacelle on the seat athwart ships, close to them, the Bo's'n pulling steadily at his oars, and I perched high up in the bow, feeling like a little boy at a picnic.

It was quite a long row out to the wreck, and we were a very quiet party. The Skipper seemed to be mumbling the marriage service over to himself. The evening was calm and still. The oars dipped gently in the water, and made blue and pink ripples, the only disturbing feature of the scene except, perhaps, the marriage. Sweet odours came off from the shore, wafted how, I know not, for there was no breeze stirring. The moon was just rising, even before the sun had set, and her pale band ran undulating over the tiny wavelets that we made, and formed oblongs of silver and rose alternately.

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Finally we arrived at the wreck. I saw the Skipper's mouth working as he surveyed what had been his taut little vessel. No one spoke. It seemed more like a funeral than a wedding. The Skipper was the first to step upon the charred deck.

He stood there and waved his hand comprehensively in a circle, which included all that was left of the Yankee Blade.

"Here," said the Skipper, with a twitching of the lip, "lies the *sarcophagus* of all my hopes."

"It ain't a reel cheerful weddin', Mr. Jones, sir, now is it, sir?" remarked the Bo's'n in a whisper. "Seein' as I ain't dressed, I think I'll send my regrets. Somebody's got to be boatkeeper."

"Don't let your wardrobe trouble you," urged I. "I've got it in my pocket," and I handed the Bo's'n his neckerchief.

A strange look overspread the features of the Bo's'n. If I had not been certain that my action

ought to have provoked him, I should have said that he was pleased. But perhaps it was only at getting his neckerchief back again. At all events, he washed his hands, put on his neckerchief, took the painter in his fingers, and leaped on the deck.

"Now you go and stand right under all that's left of the Stars and Stripes," said the Skipper to Cynthia.

"I can't see how she's to get there," said I. "The rail's almost under water, and it's very slippery."

"Can't help it. That's where you've got to stand.—Here, Bo's'n, I'll hold the painter, while you help Miss Archer over to the mast."

"I can row her over in the boat," said the Bo's'n, "and come back for her husband, sir. There's hardly room for two, but if they stand close I guess they'll manage it." [Pg 220]

The Bo's'n's remarks were somewhat premature, but I held my peace and did not look at Cynthia.

Accordingly, Cynthia was rowed over to that part of the taffrail which showed a few inches of wet surface above the water line, and the Bo's'n, having deposited her there, returned for me.

We had to stand close, indeed. We could hardly hear the Skipper as he began the service. He seemed so far away, standing with Lacelle, Cynthia's maid of honour, while my best man sat in the boat and kept her stern close to the wreck by backing water.

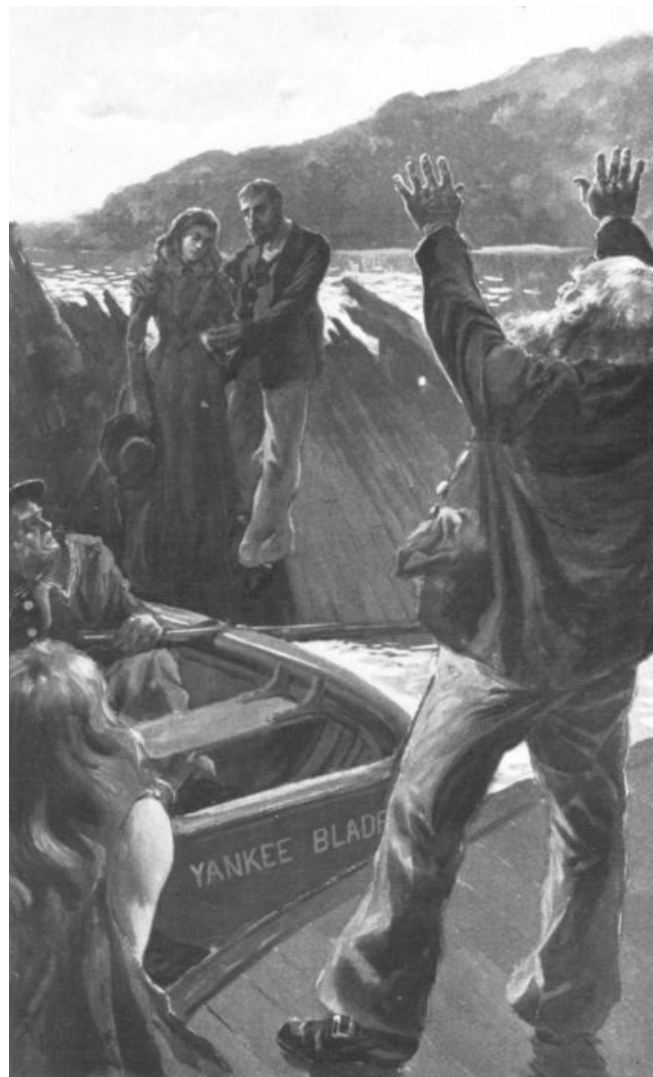
I placed the little thread of gold on her finger at what I thought was the right moment. I was like a lad with a new penny to spend. It burned a hole in my pocket.

"Ahoy there!" shouted the Skipper, breaking into the service and hailing me as if I were a foreign barkentine, "it ain't time yet."

"It's my time," said I.

"How's he to know, Captain Schuyler, sir?" called out the Mate as he backed water. "He's never been married before."

"How do you know?" roared the Skipper back again. "A true sailor has a wife in every port." Cynthia started and dropped my hand as if it had been a live coal. I seized her hand again, and held it as if it were all that I had to hold to in this world. She looked at me questioningly, as if she distrusted me, and I almost felt that we should never be friends again. Truly, a pleasant beginning to our married life!



**The Skipper's marriage service.**

I could not hear much of our wedding service, but I remember that it sounded extremely like that which the Skipper had repeated over the two sailors whom he had buried not far from this very spot. I know that he asked us if we would take each other for man and wife, and I remember that he ended with, "And may God have mercy on your souls!" I have seen this printed as a joke since then, but it was no joke to me, only sad, dead earnest. Then he piped up in his old lee-gangway voice, and sang the first verse of a missionary hymn, but because of this I felt none the less the solemnity of the occasion.

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I stood in silence, looking at the lovely girl whom I was taking for my wedded wife. She allowed me to hold her hand, as in duty bound. Her trembling little paw was cold, and she stood gazing, not at me, but far out across the wide and desolate ocean. How long we should have remained thus I know not had not the Skipper awakened us by bawling across the intervening swash of water:

"You're married. Do you hear, Jones? You're married."

Cynthia spoke to me only once that evening. As we were left alone a few moments while Lacelle and the Skipper were getting into the boat, she turned to me and asked:

"Was that Heloïse's ring?"

"No," said I; "it was found in the cave."

"Perhaps that handsome pirate dropped it," said Cynthia. "That makes it so much more interesting."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

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### I COMMIT THE ERROR OF MY LIFE.

We pulled ashore like anything but a wedding party. Cynthia seemed depressed, and to see her so made me feel like a villain. The Bo's'n still was stroke, and I laid to with a will in the bows. I reflected that I had probably touched Cynthia's hand for the last time for some months to come.

When we disembarked, Lacelle waited for Cynthia. She took her hand in hers and pressed it to her heart. She raised her eyes to Cynthia's as a dog or other animal of lower intelligence might look at a master, as if to say: "Is it as you wish? Are they treating you as you should like to be treated?" At this, Cynthia smiled and nodded her head, and patted Lacelle's hand when the girl returned the smile in a satisfied way. We left the boat and walked up toward the cave, where we found the Minion standing on the shore. He, however, was across the stream on the opposite side from us. I jumped into the boat again and went to fetch him. The Minion now, instead of looking red and swollen, was pale and weary. He tumbled into the bows in a weak and dizzy sort of way, and got out as feebly when we reached the bank of our own side of the stream.

"Secret," whispered the Minion in my ear.

"Very well," said I. "I will listen when I have the time. I am busy now."

We all sat upon the beach enjoying the beauty of the late evening. The Bo's'n made us some coffee, and with ship's biscuit, oysters, a small bit of pork, water from the arch beneath the rock, and some guavas and mangoes to top off with, we made an excellent meal.

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"You have given us a very nice supper, Bo's'n," volunteered Cynthia. "I find that a row like that gives one an appetite."

"Perhaps it was gettin' married, miss," remarked the Bo's'n, "though it usually takes away the appetite, ma'm. This you know"—waving his hands comprehensively over the remains of the feast—"is the wedding breakfast, Mrs. and Mr. Jones, sir."

Cynthia gave a start and glanced hurriedly at me. I must confess that it had never occurred to me that Cynthia would take my name—that is, not since she said on board the Yankee that "Jones was impossible." She got very red, and turned away and walked with Lacelle up the hill. The Skipper was taking his usual glass. He poured out a double amount. He held the cup out to the Minion, who, pale and headachy, was lying with his back to the dish of pork.

"Take some," said the Skipper, with his favourite addition, "It won't do you any good."

The Minion for reply edged away and closed his eyes. We sat silent a while as the Bo's'n washed his utensils and gathered up the remains of my wedding breakfast.

The Skipper was saying something about the horrors of the married state, when we heard the voice of Cynthia calling to him.

"What is it?" shouted back the Skipper.

Then we heard a sentence which ended with "gone."

"No, he's here."

"Who? Young Trevelyan?"

"No, Jones!—Thought she'd like to come down and enjoy the moonlight, Jones, if she knew you were gone." Pleasant for the bridegroom of an hour!

"Listen, Uncle."

"Well, I am listening; talk louder."

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And then came the words, "Young Trevelyan's gone."

"Oh, well, perhaps he's just taking a little stroll."

The Minion turned over and allowed two words to escape him:

"Run'd away."

"How do you know?" asked the Skipper; and then added, "But no one would believe you if you swore it on the Westminster Catechism."

"In a boat."

"Now I know you're lyin'."

The Minion nodded his head, still weakly persistent, and then laid down again upon the grassy slope of the beach.

"There ain't any boat hereabouts," said the Bo's'n, "begging your par——"

He stopped short and surveyed the Minion contemptuously, "Forgot it was you."

"Dinghy," said the Minion.

The Captain arose lazily. "Don't talk with that fool, Bo's'n. I'm tired as three men. I'll go to bed." Bed! Poor Skipper! The soft side of a rock was his bed. I followed the Skipper shortly, and found him in close conversation with Cynthia.

"How can you be sure he's gone?" asked the Skipper.

"Why, one proof is that my blanket and pillow are gone, too."

"The ungrateful wretch!" said the Skipper.

"I don't believe he's ungrateful," said Cynthia. "He never seemed ungrateful. Perhaps the pirates came back and took him off. I wonder"—with a look in my direction—"if that handsome pirate was with them?"

"No," said I. "You may quiet your mind on that point; he's gone where all good pirates go."

"Where?" asked Cynthia.

"To the nethermost hell," answered the Skipper. "And I helped put him there."

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"Of course, I don't believe you, Uncle," said Cynthia, "but——"

"The Minion seemed to know something," said the Bo's'n. "Suppose we ask him again."

"Torture wouldn't get more than two words out of him at a time," said I.

"I can," said Cynthia, with a triumphant glance at me. Accordingly, Cynthia proceeded again to the shore with her Uncle to interrogate the Minion. She gathered, after an hour's hard prodding and digging, interspersed with sudden roars mixed with a few judicious oaths from the Skipper to give her inquiries point, that the Minion awoke and found that he was quite alone. He raised up on his elbow and discovered our boat far out at sea. He supposed that it was our boat, as he saw several persons get out and on to the wreck. He laid down again, too dizzy to keep his eyes open any longer. He was aroused by a rustling in the grass, and turned over to see a man carrying the young Englishman in his arms. The Minion, afraid of nothing in heaven or hell, said "Hi!" when the man turned his head, and the Minion discovered that the intruder was no other than the Smith, who had riveted the cages upon the lad and myself. The Minion, with his limited vocabulary, managed to call the Smith a thief, and asked him why he was stealing the boy; whereupon the Smith asked him if his grandmother knew that he was in Haïti. This enraged the Minion to such an extent that he raised up on his elbow and threw stones at the Smith. He was especially angry when he saw Cynthia's pillow and blanket carried down and placed in the boat. The young man seemed to protest, but the Smith told him that it was the rule in the British navy to obey first and protest afterward, and the lad seemed too weak to make much opposition. The Smith helped himself to our biscuit and some of our water, taking one of our few utensils to carry it in. He also took a cup and got in and rowed away.

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"Which way did he go?" asked Cynthia.

The Minion pointed eastward. He furthermore informed Cynthia that he saw a name upon the bow of the boat, and again when she started toward the east he saw the same name, and that he spelled it over to himself, and that he was sure that it was "Yankee Blade, No. 3."

"That's mighty curious," said the Skipper, scratching his head.

"And he tells me, Uncle, that the man he calls the Smith left a letter for you. He says it's in a place where you will find it first thing."

"Must be the rum bottle," said the Skipper, with peculiar insight. And so it was, for he found the scrawl sticking in the cleft made in the cork.

"Paddon the libutty I takes," wrote the Smith. "I opened a sawtchell and got this paper and penzill wen I found the lad wassent yere in the bigg cavern i sarched i had a fite with a big brown feller but but wen i tell im ime goan fer young trevelin he lets me in i see the brown feller goan in or i never shuld have find the place we had a fite outside meanin a shipes fite it was dawd i see the dingee floatin i slips overbord and swimms fer her i tears up one of the planks and paddels i lies by all day wen you go i come the is a british vessel down the coast ime a rowin fer her if i git her ill come fer you i take my recompens before hand in shipes biskits and RUM the lady must excuse my takin her pillar my boys bad and needs em so wishin you luck and ill come if i git a chance no more at presens from yours till deth james taler penock."

Cynthia and Lacelle disappeared during the reading of this finished epistle, and the Skipper, Bo's'n, and I were alone. I forgot to mention the Minion. He counted somewhat now, as he had told us something of real consequence.

Before I lay down to sleep the Bo's'n drew me confidentially aside. "The Minion has been after me," said he in a low tone, "and he says he has found a cave full of jewels, and they're his property, and no one shan't touch 'em. He's goin' to declare it before us all, and call the Skipper and God to witness his statement, and he says he'll blow on us to the Government as soon as we get home if any of us touches a ring or a pin of it."

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"What did you tell him?" said I, rather alarmed, I must confess.

"I told him he had been overcome with liquor in the cave, and that he imagined all those things. He swears it's so, and I swears it ain't, and that's where it is now. I thought of tyin' him up and not lettin' him go in the cave at all."

"I wouldn't watch him," said I. "Just let him go in if he wants to. I suppose you have removed all the traces, Bo's'n?"

"Yes, sir," said the simple Bo's'n. "I suppose you kept your promise to me, and sat with your back against the outer side of the cave?"

"Yes, Bo's'n, I did," said I. "Of course, I couldn't help finding your neckerchief, you know."

"But I can trust you not to mention that, Mr. Jones, sir, to any one?"

"Oh, certainly, Bo's'n, you need have no fear of my telling your—our secret."

The night of my marriage was a very dark and gloomy one. I had been asleep but a short time when I was awakened by the Skipper. The Bo's'n was lying as far from us as he could get. His antipathy to the Skipper had not abated, and at night especially he seemed afraid to come anywhere near him. He was sleeping heavily, poor man! Most of the work came upon the Bo's'n, and I'm afraid we did not appreciate his willingness as much as we should have done.

"I have a favour to ask," whispered the Skipper.

"Ask ahead," said I. "You've done me a service to-day, Captain, which shall be a real one in time, or I'll know the reason why."

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"What's that?" asked the Skipper in amazement.

"Well, no matter, if your memory's so short. Now what can I do for you?"

"I've been lyin' awake thinkin'," said the Skipper.

"So have I," I answered.

"Not what I was thinkin' of, I'll be bound," said the Skipper. "Man, as a usual thing, is so regardless of his fellow-man." The Skipper nodded his head several times, as if he were the one considerate creature that God ever made. "Man is selfish, man is occupied only with his own small affairs."

"Yes, sir," said I. "That is so."

"I was thinkin' as I lay down to-night," continued the old man in a real Wednesday-evening-meeting voice, "that those poor critters need a rest, too."

"You mean the Bo's'n and the Minion?" said I. "Yes, they do, we all do! You as much as the rest, Captain."

"If noses can speak," returned the Skipper, "the Bo's'n and the Minion are getting all they need just at present. I'm speakin' of those poor soldiers of fortune who have been standin' up for years, perhaps."

"Soldiers of fortune?" I said inquiringly.

"Well, I call 'em so. And of a pretty bad fortune, too. Now what I want of you is to come help me bury 'em."

"Oh, you mean the skeletons?" said I.

"I do," said the Skipper. I saw that the religious mania had got the weather side of him again.

"What! now?" said I. "It's so late, and I want a little sleep, too."

"I can not sleep until they are buried," said he. "Poor things, with no rest for the soles of their feet. I shall sleep easier when they are under the sod." [Pg 229]

"We haven't any shovels, you know, Captain," I remonstrated.

"Under the sod figgeratively speakin'," said the Skipper. "We'll give 'em, as we did those two poor shipmates of ours, a burial at sea."

"But I don't see any sense in it, Captain. What is the hurry? Why won't to-morrow do? I'm so tired of funerals and weddings and bones and other horrors of all sorts."

I heard a faint exclamation, and looked up to see Cynthia standing at the back of the cave. She had come to ask for some water.

"Tired of weddings and other horrors," murmured Cynthia under her breath.

I rose to my feet, ignoring her, and addressed myself to the Skipper.

"You'll be getting ordained next, Captain," said I. "Probably as soon as we get back to Belleville."

I saw the flutter of Cynthia's dress as she vanished between the pillars, and then I turned to the Captain.

"Come on!" said I. "I wonder how many more of these ghastly, ghostly things I'll have to do before I can get any rest."

Clearly the wedding upon the wreck had awakened the Skipper's enthusiasm in regard to religious services as performed by him.

I saw that Cynthia had disappeared so soon as she made her observation upon my remark. Well, why should I be silent and willing to ever play the part of a brow-beaten lover? I let her go without a word of protest or remonstrance. I felt that I had protested too much, like some lady of whom I had read in a book picked up in some of my various voyages, and I decided to protest no more—at least to her about my love for her.

The night was overcast and dark. A slight rain was pattering on the leaves overhead. I discovered this as I emerged from the cave. I stumbled against the Skipper, who had stopped and was holding his hand out to learn whether we had falling weather or not. [Pg 230]

"It's a horrid night to go, Captain," said I, hoping that his religious fervour would weaken.

"Yes, it is," said the Skipper, "but that makes my conscience all the more satisfied. It's a disagreeable thing to do, and we have a disagreeable night to do it in, but I shall feel so much better when it is well over. The more unpleasant our task, the more rewarded I shall feel."

I saw that my remonstrances were of no avail, and I plucked up my resolve, opened wide my sleep-benumbed eyes, and prepared to play the game of follow my leader, as a soldier his general, an acolyte his priest, a sailor his captain. As I have hinted before, it was a real dissipation for him, and, oh, how he enjoyed it!

We stumbled up the hill in the dark, bumping against trees and catching our feet in roots, even falling on our knees at times, and once we fell over each other and rolled down the hill. I was rather angry at this fad of the Skipper's, but I kept my temper and struggled on up the slope, over the top, and down the other side to the entrance of the great hall. I struck fire and examined the lamp. The oil was gone. We could do nothing in that direction, as we had no more fluid that would burn. I made a little fire on the floor of the cave, though dry sticks were hard to find. While I was so engaged, the Skipper was going through with his self-imposed task of taking the skeletons down from the niches where they hung. I remember that he had rather a difficult piece of work, for the dreadful things fell upon him with many a chink and rattle after he had unriveted the chain at the top of each arch. The Skipper was a strong man for his height, and unaided, except by their own gravity, he took the grewsome bones down and laid them upon the floor. [Pg 231]

And now came the unpleasant part of the business to me. I had made a small torch of a pitchy sort of wood, that burns faintly for a while, and this I bound to my head with my handkerchief. The Skipper lighted the torch at my head, then he stooped and raised one of the bodies from the floor of the cave. I took the feet of the grewsome burden, the Skipper carrying the head. I preceded the old man. First we must ascend to the top of the hill, go over the crest, and then down on the western side, where our boat lay securely fastened. I was surprised at the weight of the bodies, but I recalled as a reason for this the presence of the cages, which we thought it best not to remove. They held the bones together, and kept them in position. I had found upon examination that in some of their visits the pirates must have had the bodies articulated, for in pirate crews were jacks of all trades, and thus at last I understood how the skeletons could stand there as they had for so long a time, the flesh and breath of life only wanting to make them again men in the image of God. The humour of the pirates evidently had been that the bodies should remain there forever, or until the cages dropped to pieces, and that might have occurred several generations hence. Four trips we had to make to the beach, not to speak of returning to the great



hall for our dead burdens. As we carried them down, down, over hummocks, through knee-deep leaves, across bare rock and shingle, the nature of our cargo oppressed me, and it seemed as if I must drop my share suddenly and flee to the cave and to the companionship of even the sleeping Bo's'n and the more than useless Minion.

Several times the Skipper called to me that some one was walking between us. It is true that oftentimes it seemed as if the weight was very much lightened, but I was hampered and found it difficult to even turn my head. In fact, neither I nor the Skipper could well let go after once we had started.

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"There's a brown fellow holding on to the middle of this lord," whispered the Skipper loudly to me.

"Nonsense, Captain!" spoke I. "It's eerie enough without your making it seem more so."

"It's a fact! Now I'm going to drop my end, and you'll see." Accordingly, the Skipper did release his hold, when, to my horror, the poor cage of bones came rattling to the earth.

"Lord! what a noise they make!" said the Skipper. "Well, I may be wrong. Something's playing the devil with my eyesight lately."

I felt like suggesting as a remedy the use of plain water at bedtime, but, though I had almost told the Skipper that I was no longer under his orders, my feeling of discipline was so strong that I could not make up my mind to say anything more of a rude or personal nature. So I held my peace and struggled on with the weights on the downward trip, and barked my shins and stubbed my toes on the return to the cavern.

At last they were all carried down to the shore—all those horrid, pitiful travesties on Nature. I struck my flint that we might lift them into the boat. It lasted but a moment; so finally I made a little fire with what few dry sticks we could find, and by its light we placed the four bodies on the thwarts. When we arrived at the beach for the last time, I found a pile of bones huddled together, and by the remnant of clothing which was still attached to the form I discovered it to be the remains of the Chief Justice. I laid these bones by the others and got into the boat. The tiny fire that I had made upon the beach was our guide and beacon. Strange to say, it began to glow brighter as we drew away from the shore, and I fancied that I saw a figure feeding the gentle flame and keeping it alight for us. We rowed for half an hour straight out to sea. The breeze was blowing fresh, but, beyond an occasional star, we had no sort of light. When, however, one has accustomed himself to going without a light at night, it is strange how well he can find his way. It has been my experience that it is never quite dark. I have heard of nights as black as Erebus, and even darker places have been used as comparisons, but I have never found a night so black that a little glow was not visible. The phosphorus of the waves as they foam and curl is a slight aid, and a true mariner always feels that he can see enough in the blackest night that good God ever made.

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I rowed while the Skipper busied himself in preparing the cages with their inclosures for final service. He must have been thinking of this for some time, for he had well-twisted and braided ropes made of some of the brocade ready to fasten to the cages, and he had placed rocks in the boat which had been selected with great care. In fact, he told me that he had aided Nature in hollowing the depression round the middle of the stones, so that the rope could not slip. As we dropped the great parcels over the side there was a splash, a sudden tightening of the rope and a quick rush downward, followed by the meeting of the waters above. For my part I wanted to get over with the business as soon as possible. The Skipper was going through all sorts of religious didos. I heard him mumbling part of the wedding service, mixed with the Declaration of Independence, which in those days we all thought it sacrilegious not to know. There was something holy about it to us, and it seemed very appropriate to me. But when the Skipper ended with "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust," I looked at the dark water which lapped against the boat and shook my head. The old man did not perceive it, and we rowed back to shore, I turning my head every now and then to see if the little spark of flame was still there.

At last we reached the beach, and glad enough was I when we had fastened the boat safely and had again climbed upward to the cavern. My coming in awoke the Bo's'n, for it was nearly morning now, still dark, but about half after three, as nearly as I could judge. The Skipper had left me at the entrance of the cave, saying that he wished to go round to the great hall which had for so long been the tomb of those dead men and offer up some prayers. I argued with him that it was not after the manner of Protestants to pray for the dead; but he turned away without more words, and I heard him scrambling up through the dark and solitary woods. I feared for the old man's mind; but I knew that nothing could turn him when once he took a notion into his head, so I entered the cave alone. The Bo's'n was yawning and stretching his arms placidly.

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I was the only one to greet him as he awoke.

"At last," said I, "I shall be glad to lie down, Bo's'n. Don't you disturb me in the morning until I can't sleep any longer."

"Yes, Mr. Jones, sir," said he. "Mrs. Jones has been in asking for her Uncle, and when she saw that you wassent here, sir, she seemed much worried. She asked if any new comple—compli—Well, something or other had arose."

"Bo's'n," said I, "I'm awfully sleepy, but I believe I will tell you where I have been. You will be

glad to know that one horror is removed from this unpleasant place."

"I shall, indeed, sir," said the Bo's'n, beaming upon me a joyful smile. "I shall be glad to hear any good news, Mr. Jones. What is it, sir? Do tell me." I was glad to be able to cheer this amiable soul, and, though overpowered with sleep, I began:

"Bo's'n, I was asleep a while back—yes, more than two hours ago—when the Skipper came and awoke me and proposed something."

"Yes, sir," said the Bo's'n interestedly.

"I was really too tired, and I thought of calling you to help me, but I reflected that you were as tired as I, so I said I would aid in anything he wanted to do."

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"That was kind, sir," said the Bo's'n. "It was like you, Mr. Jones. You can sleep now. I will see that no one wakes you."

"So I went with him to——"

"Yes, sir, yes, sir," the Bo's'n hurried me on breathlessly. "I'm wide awake now, sir, Mr. Jones, and it's so pleasant to hear something good once more. But don't let me interrupt you, Mr. Jones. Do go on."

"You will be glad, I know, Bo's'n, and so will every one of our party, really glad. When I think of this night's work, I do not regret the wind, or the dark, or the drizzling rain." The Bo's'n looked at me with impatience. "Well, to return to the Captain, he came and asked me to help him bury the skeletons."

"THE WHAT!" roared the Bo's'n.

"Skeletons, the skeletons, and we took them down——"

"WHAT!" roared the Bo's'n again, in a tone somewhat between a squeal and a howl.

"And we buried them——"

"IN THE GROUND, I HOPE, SIR!"

"No, Bo's'n, in a much safer place than the ground. A purer, sweeter place, the place where poor Jack always wishes to lie. We buried them in the deep blue sea." My eye was moist, and I felt holy and poetic.

"WHAT—! WHAT——! WHAT——!" With each word the Bo's'n's scream became more wild.

"At sixty fathoms, I should think, Bo's'n."

Now there was a faint "What?"

I looked at the Bo's'n. He was doubled up as if he had been taken with the colic. His arms clasped round his knees, he was weaving back and forth as if the agony that he suffered was excruciating in its intensity, and I doubt not from my own later attack that it was. He writhed, he groaned, he weaved, he wailed like a new-born infant. He roared like a lion, he gnashed his teeth and howled, he wept scalding tears. He rolled over and over in the dust of the cavern floor. He clutched his hair. His body shook as if he were in a rigor.

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"Bo's'n! Bo's'n!" I cried. "What is it? What can I do for you? There is a little rum left in the bottle—take this."

I seized the bottle and tried to force some drops down his throat; but he shook himself away from me, scrambled to the other side of the cave, where he squatted in a corner, and glared at me as if he were a wild beast, and as if I had been one, too.

"Bo's'n! Bo's'n!" I said to him encouragingly. But he sat doubled up in a heap, glowering at me with basilisk eye. He emitted at intervals howls of rage and pain, the like of which I had never heard equalled. I felt sure that he had suddenly gone out of his mind.

"What have you done to the poor man, Mr. Jones?" asked Cynthia.

I turned to see her standing there. Her hair had fallen down, and some of the wild fern of which we had made her bed was sticking in it, poor dear!

"Done to him? You forget yourself, Miss Archer."

She started as I addressed her. I turned again to the Bo's'n.

"I don't like your looking at me in that way, Bo's'n," said I.

Whereupon the Bo's'n leaped into midair with a howl and a gnashing of the teeth at me. They were swift, sharp snaps, that made me jump higher even than he did himself. I looked about for a place of refuge.

"They know a coward when they see one," said Cynthia. "They are just like animals for the time being." She approached the Bo's'n guardedly and held out her hand to him with a frightened look on her face.

"Here, Bo's'n, Bo's'n, good Bo's'n," she said, as if coaxing a dog.

"Better go away, ma'm. I'm afraid I'll bite," snapped the Bo's'n.

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Cynthia jumped back with a little squeal.

"Come, no more of this nonsense!" said I.

"Get out!" said the Bo's'n.

"I don't like to have you speak so to me, Bo's'n," said I. "It isn't pleasant, and it isn't respectful."

"You'll find it a damned sight more disrespectful, sir, before I've done with you, Mr. Jones, sir," answered the Bo's'n.

"What is it, Bo's'n? Do tell me."

By this time the Bo's'n had his arms held tightly round his stomach, as if the pain was too great to bear. I walked across the floor of the cave and stretched out my hand to him, speaking in a soothing voice, and begging him to let me do something to make him easier.

"Don't come near me, Mr. Jones, sir," said the man. "I am afraid of what I shall do to you. I knew—I knew it! When you threw that—that—you know—in the water——"

"If there has been mischief done, Bo's'n, let me repair it," said I.

"Can you raise the dead?" asked the Bo's'n in tones sepulchral.

"You have driven the poor man crazy, Mr. Jones," said Cynthia.

I turned my back on her. I was very angry with the Bo's'n and with her.

"Can you plunge to the bottom of the sea and bring up them corpses?"

"No," said I; "of course not. Why should I?"

By this time the Bo's'n had stopped howling and had taken on the sarcastic tone.

"Hope you took a range, sir," said he, surveying me with the most utter scorn.

"Why should I take a range? It was pitch dark. You couldn't see your hand before your face. I don't know where we were. We rowed half an hour, as near as I can judge, and then, after we had buried them, we turned round and rowed back again."

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By this time the Bo's'n had collapsed entirely; he lay on the floor without moving.

"Do let me do something for you, Bo's'n," said Cynthia.

At this the Bo's'n rose to a sitting posture.

"What you can do for me, Mrs. Jones, ma'm, is to go back to your room and stay there."

"O Bo's'n!" said Cynthia, who had never been accustomed to find her presence unwelcome.

"I can only pity you, ma'm, for havin' wrecked your young life on such a wuthless scandal as him."

Cynthia started, and looked at me as if the Bo's'n knew more if he only chose to tell.

I turned to the Bo's'n, much enraged.

"Go quick, please, ma'm, I want to swear, and I can't wait many minutes." Cynthia fled. Then the Bo's'n turned to me:

"Will you pardon me, sir, if I say, 'Damn you, Mr. Jones!'"

I gazed in amaze at the usually placid Bo's'n.

"You will have to damn the Captain, too, then," said I. "He planned the expedition, and I only helped him carry it out."

"I hope he'll come in while I'm a blaspheming!" said the Bo's'n. "I shall want him to get his full share."

The Captain had been standing in the shadow of the entrance listening to the Bo's'n's ravings. He now entered and approached the man.

"What's the matter with him?" he said, looking at me. "He's been working his jawing tackle for the last ten minutes steady."

"I think his case is serious, Captain," said I. "I really think he's lost his mind. He's been rolling round here like a madman."

The Captain turned his gaze on the Bo's'n.

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"You said you hoped I'd come in," said he. "Now don't put any stopper on that jawing tackle of yours; go right on. I shall know how to fix you, for it's mutiny, Mr. Bo's'n, and so you'll find out, rank mutiny!"

"Oh, is it?" said the Bo's'n, with stony face and glittering eye.

The Bo's'n raised his finger in air and shook it at me. He then took a long breath and began, his hand shaking alternately at me and at the Skipper.

"Damn you, sir, and damn you, sir, and damn you, sir, and damn you again, sir! Do you hear me damning you, Mr. Jones, sir? And that damn Cap'n, too, sir. Do you know what you done, sir, damn you? Do you know that all those watches, and all those sparklers, and all those rings, and all those chains, those emeralds, and rubies, and saffirs, and tuppazes, and diminds, and jools you said was worth a king's ransom—all, all, all was inclosed and enwrapped and encompassed and secreted in them damn carcasses?" I fell upon the ground and writhed worse than the Bo's'n had done.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

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### WE START OUT TO LAY A SNARE AND FALL INTO A TRAP.

And now began a period of experiences which was perhaps the most trying of the three chapters which make up the story of this part of our lives. I have divided the time of our stay on the island into three portions. The second chapter begins with the page that I am now writing.

For some days I had been reflecting upon the extreme seriousness of our situation. We should do perfectly well if left quite to ourselves, but how long would that state of affairs continue? Even if the pirates did not return, which I felt that they might do at any time, some band of marauders might discover us. There was no reason that I knew of why the place might not be well known to others, and, if it were, they might prove this later to our discomfort. It seemed to me that in any case we ought to possess two places of retreat. Our second home need not be far from the cave, and near enough the coast that we might see an American ship should one appear. Indeed, we might continue to live in the cave if we so chose, but that we should construct a place of shelter to which we might flee if danger threatened us there, I considered absolutely necessary on our part. I think, however, that what first caused this plan to awake in my mind was the pallor of Cynthia's look. Sleeping in that close cavern, in the bowels of the earth, was not good for any of us, and if not beneficial to strong men who slept near the outer air, how much the worse for her in that inclosed and damp interior. After thinking over this idea of mine for several days, I broached the subject to the Skipper. It seemed to strike an answering chord in his mind, and, as there was no one else to consult, we decided to begin at once.

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After breakfast we went prospecting. Our little family accompanied us, with the exception of the Minion. His movements none of us cared to control, for it made but little difference to us how he came or went.

The Bo's'n trailed along behind us, but he was limp and sad and so dejected that Cynthia asked him several times if it would not be better to go back and lie down a while. He agreed with me, speaking in sad and reproachful tones, that the Admiral of the Red might return when he found Mauresco missing, and a more thorough search of the caverns might reveal our presence. Certainly if we continued to live there, having provided no place to which we could flee, we might suddenly be made to feel the weakness of such failure to reckon with the future.

It was at this time that the Bo's'n began to suffer from attacks of toothache. Perhaps I should say face-ache. His cheek would suddenly swell up to the size of a large nut, and at such times he rolled upon the ground in an agony of pain. At these moments the poor man could not articulate distinctly. The attack would come on at the most inconvenient times. Usually when the Bo's'n was needed to aid in anything like an apprehended surprise, he was at the last moment found writhing in misery, his hand held to his face.

The morning after my marriage, then, we started back into the forest with the determination to select a site for a house. Cynthia had not looked at or spoken to me since she upbraided me in the cave, and I, having some spirit of my own, acted as if she did not exist.

We carried with us the knives and machetes we had found. These had been well sharpened, and we hacked at the branches as we went along. Our chief reward was the cabbage of the young palm, which grows beneath the tuft at the top of the tree, and is sweet and tender as a ripe chestnut from the Belleville woods.

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As we walked that day there were constant rumblings and groanings beneath our feet, and there were cracklings and mutterings which made the deep wood seem an uncanny and eerie place.

"*Le bruit du gouffre!*" said Lacelle, looking at the Bo's'n. "*Le bruit du gouffre!*"

"How can I tell what she means?" said the Bo's'n piteously. "I wish, Mrs. Jones, ma'm, you'd try to teach that savage a Christian tongue."

After looking about for some time, we at last pitched upon a little plateau or terrace with a gentle rise toward the eastward. This would hide our house from the sight of the cave. Below us ran a tiny brook of clear water. We were far enough from the cave to feel quite secluded, and yet so near that we could easily know what was going on there.

And now began the work of building our house. We cut young trees and saplings, we drove poles into the ground, and made what in this modern day we should call piles, and on this we laid our floor. We thatched our roof with branches—in short, we made a house much as the wild men of the forest have done from time immemorial, and the methods pursued need not be recounted here. We cleared a space about twelve feet each way round our house for better protection against insects. We built two rooms, one for Cynthia and Lacelle and the other for the rest of our party. A partition ran across the centre of this floor, and that some one might be able to get quickly to the next room, if one of its occupants called, we made a doorway between, and hung the opening thickly with leafy vines, so that a curtain impenetrable to the eye was thus formed.

We were tired when the day's work was done. I felt sorry to see my poor girl working as she did, aiding in gathering leaves for her bed and Lacelle's. But she laughed when her Uncle protested, and said that she should not be happy unless she gave what help she could.

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We returned home over a way more direct than that by which we had come, and it was in a little hollow that Cynthia discovered that which gave an additional horror to our stay in the island. She and Lacelle had been walking ahead. Suddenly she stopped and dropped to her knees. She gave a strange sort of cry and called to her Uncle. Her tones expressed such a mixture of feelings that I wondered what further could have happened. There was horror in the sound of her voice, and I thought that some terrible insect or beast was in her path. But with that note was intermingled one of pity and tenderness. We ran to her assistance. We found her bending over something upon the ground. As I came close to the Bo's'n's heels I saw him leap aside, as if he had been stung, and strike into the wood with a howl as if in anguish. I came next, and there I saw, lying bound with ribbons of various colours and decorated as if for a festival, a little child of the same light shade as Lacelle herself. Lacelle had shrieked, and was holding her hands over her eyes one moment, looking fearfully over her shoulder the next, and pulling Cynthia by the wrist, as if imploring her to flee. Cynthia, however, refused to be hurried away from this novel and sad sight. Novel, because finding a baby decked with ribbons in the depths of the forest is not a common occurrence. Sad, because the tiny thing did not open its eyes and smile at us, nor did it move its hands and feet. Cynthia laid her fingers upon the little creature. She shook her head. The child was stone cold. She felt round the heart, but there was no sign of life.

The Skipper looked at the little thing and then shook his head sadly.

"The loup garou has been about," he whispered in my ear. I asked no questions. I knew all that I wanted to know of the loup garou with which the little children in Haiti have been frightened from time immemorial. This time the threat had come true. I wondered why the child had been dropped among the leaves in this way, and could only argue that either its mother had discovered the horrible theft and had restolen the child, and was afraid to take it home for fear of vengeance, or else that the murderers had been surprised and had sent some trusty person as bad as themselves to hide the body deep in the woods and away from discovery.

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"What a strange thing," said Cynthia, "that a mother should leave her baby decked for burial alone in this deep forest!"

I knelt down and examined the babe, and now I discovered that it was so bound that it could not move. The contrast was so remarkable, the tiny corpse cold and stiff, bound with gay-coloured knots and bows, that I was struck dumb. The Bo's'n's behaviour had perplexed me, but I was beginning to think the Bo's'n somewhat out of his mind. I had also thought this of the Skipper, though for quite a different cause. I expected each moment to hear him express the wish to give the poor babe a Christian burial, so I took the child up in my arms and carried it hurriedly through the woods. I walked fast, the rest following at almost a running pace.

There were now continued mutterings, and suddenly, as is sometimes the case in the island, a thunderbolt shot from a clear sky and split a great tree near.

"Run!" called the Skipper, "run, the tempest is upon us!"

The rumblings underground increased. The whole earth seemed to shake. I ran with the child to the great hall, the Skipper going with the others to our own cave. When I reached the pirates' entrance I dashed in and along to the familiar apartment. One idea possessed me. I remembered the hole in the rock where the Minion had found the jewels, and it seemed to me to be a fitting place of burial for the dead babe, besides which I wished to prevent the conducting of any more ceremonies by the Skipper. I ran to the small passage which the Bo's'n had discovered, placed the child in the square receptacle, and raised the stone and leaned it against the opening. I turned to flee from this place of horrors. Running out, I met the Minion in the passageway.

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"Where are you going?" asked I. I heard something about "look" and "jools."

"Come out!" said I. "There is a tremendous storm brewing. No one knows what may happen." But the Minion, intent, I knew, upon finding the fortune of which we had robbed him, pulled away from me and hurried into the cave. As I emerged from the entrance, there was a tremendous rush of wind. It whirled round and round, and then the entire Globe seemed to be cracking open. Such a crash I hope I may never hear until the Day of Judgment. The top of the cave seemed to break off and slide down. The dust and earth arose in a blinding cloud and nearly choked me. Great splashes of rain fell like blows upon my face, and then there was another fearful gust of wind, and the water poured from the clouds like an ocean. It deluged me. It threw me upon the ground. The branches of the trees waved and shook and swashed up and down, and thrashed the grass and bushes beneath them. Some of them were split off and were strewn upon the earth. Some

were carried straight over the bank and out to sea. Some were whirled up in the air and came tumbling down upon other treetops. Some were uprooted and laid low. I feared to move. I also feared to remain lying there. I knew not where the Minion was. The thunder was bellowing beneath, above, around me. The lightning, it seemed to me, was playing among the very treetops over my head. I raised myself as well as I could. I advanced one step at a time. I clung to the branches and roots and vines. I was buffeted and blown about and slapped in the face and thrown again to the ground. Sometimes a branch to which I clung for safety was wrenched from its parent stem as I held it, and before I could let go I was lifted from my footing. I crawled and crept and struggled on up one side of the hill, then down the other. The fury of the hurricane was greatest on the summit, and I wondered as I fought with the elements if I should ever see Cynthia's face again. But perseverance and a strong clutch will sometimes overcome even a hurricane, and after a long bout I came off conqueror, and found myself within the welcome entrance to our side of the cave. Here I sank down exhausted.

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Fortunately the storm did not last long, but wore itself out like a mad person in a foaming rage. Its passion exhausted, there was a sudden lull, and the setting sun shone placidly upon the wrack and devastation it had made. I had not been able to look at the water during the progress of the hurricane, but those who had reached the cave before me said that the ocean was swept with great masses and waves of foam. Its direction being outward, the swells were not tossed upon the shore, which was an excellent thing perhaps for us. As I stood in the window where the vines were hung with a thousand sparkling diamonds, I looked in vain for the wreck. The Yankee Blade had at last found her resting place. She had slid off into the sea and had gone down to join her sailor lads.

The hurricane had cut a path of about an eighth of a mile in width, and there devastation had been rampant. On either side of this trail of the fury of destruction, there was little evidence of the warring of the more passionate child of Nature against his quiet and gentle brother. Although our house stood not more than a half mile from the track of the tempest, beyond a severe tropic downpour from the eyes of Mother Nature over the violence of her wayward son, there was little evidence that the god of the wind had passed that way.

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When I lay down to sleep that night the Minion was missing, but no one thought much about it. He always turned up again to the discomfort of every one, and much too soon.

We decided to remove into our new house as soon as the forest had lost the dampness which the hurricane left behind. It does not take long in that tropic land for the sun to dry up the water left on the grass and leaves, and by afternoon we were ready to start for our new home. The Bo's'n came to me before we left the cave and said that we were to be treated exactly as other shipwrecked mariners had been from time immemorial, for he said that some of the cargo of the vessel had come ashore, and that he had seen boxes and barrels floating in the water. We had no need to take the boat and pull out to meet this fresh supply of food, for the tide and regular wind of the trades washed them up anywhere from half a mile to a mile along the beach. When we had a spare moment we went down and rescued a box or a barrel. The boxes were for the most part water-soaked, but when they contained salt provisions it made little difference to us.

A description of the food that came to us in this way, like manna from Heaven, would only prove tiresome to all concerned. Few shipwrecked people have died for want of food, and we were not an exception. We had enough and to spare, but husbanded our resources carefully, and thus we were never in absolute want.

The first night that we spent in our new home was full of excitement in a pleasant way. The freshness of our beds of green, the odours of the sweet woods which had been so recently washed by the flood, the feeling that our abode was clean, that there were no horrors connected with it, and, above all, that in this secluded nook we should not be discovered, made the night a peaceful one to me. Every one seemed refreshed when daylight broke, and each set himself to accomplish greater tasks than heretofore, during the coming day. The rainy season would soon be here, and we had no notion of being flooded out of our new home. So each one occupied his spare hours in bringing branches and leaves to add to the thatch. The fallen palms of which there were many, were of the greatest service, as the dried leaf of this royal tree is the thatch most used to roof the native houses. The Bo's'n told us that in Santo Domingo they called it *yagua*. We made seats in and around the house for Cynthia and Lacelle, and the tough and strong vines made excellent hammocks when woven together.

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I heard Cynthia asking for the Minion as I left my bed. I did not go to meet and answer her, as I preferred my bath first, beside which, her treatment of me had been so cold and ungracious that I decided to let her make the first advances.

I ran, then, through the wood and toward the cave. Our constant journeys back and forth seemed to have created a path, so that we easily found our way. As I neared the cavern I saw that at the spot of my greatest danger the day before, the ground was upturned as if a giant ploughshare had passed that way. Great trees with enormous roots sticking high in air were lying strewn about. I had not seen this on my way to the new house, as we had gone to it in a more westwardly direction along the slope of the hill. I struggled through the debris and down along the pirates' side of the cavern. When I came to the entrance which led to the great hall, or the place where it should be, it had disappeared. A stupendous mass of rock and earth had fallen and blocked it entirely. And then suddenly I bethought me of emerging from the cavern yesterday and my meeting the Minion at the entrance. Yes, he had gone in, as I left the cavern, to look for his treasure, and there he must have been when the earthquake, or whatever it was, split off that

great mass of rock. In that case, the lad must be imprisoned. I went close to the place and called, but there was no answer. I called louder. All was silence. Then I bethought me of the gallery, and, though I was as tired of the cave as you must be by this, I ran quickly up the hill, crossed the grassy slope at the top, and flew down the other side. I entered our passageway, and, running through by feeling my way along the wall, I soon reached the gallery. I parted the vines in front of me and looked down at the interior. There I saw a surprising sight. Instead of finding, as I expected, the Minion alone, two figures were there—one a tall, light-coloured man, whom I at once recognised as the Haïtien who had held Lacelle captive by the rope on the day that our sailors attacked the party of natives. This, then, was the fourth man. His likeness to Lacelle was very striking, and I at once made up my mind that he was her brother. What he had been intending to do with her I could not determine at the time. I watched to see if he offered the Minion any violence, but, so far from anything of the kind, he seemed to be urging him to get up on the table, the former throne of the Admiral. The Minion, never noted for good manners, roared "No!" while the gentle Haïtien urged him by mounting on the rock himself and holding out his hand encouragingly. He spoke to the Minion in words which I could not understand, but their tone was so kind and gentle that I should have translated them to mean "Come, now! Get up here! I will save you. I shall not hurt you. Do not be afraid!" I have, of course, no idea what the Haïtien really said, but his manner showed that it was something of that kind, for finally the Minion was persuaded to raise one foot to the table and allow the Haïtien to aid him to stand upright upon it. I then saw that the Haïtien had released the great lamp from the vines which hung from the opening in the central top of the cave. He took them in his hand and busied himself in tying them round the Minion's waist. I watched, curious as to what the man intended, ready to call out and frighten him if he were to do the Minion any injury—this from a sense of duty, as the Minion was nothing but a very dead weight on the party.

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The Haïtien gathered the vines in his hand and wound them round the boy's body. He twisted some of them like a seat and passed them between the Minion's legs. Yes, I appreciated now that he meant to provide for the Minion's being hauled up from above. But who did he think would perform this act, when to all intents and purposes our party knew nothing as to what had befallen the Minion? Now, I reasoned, I can go to the top of the cavern, call the Bo's'n or the Skipper, and together we can draw the Minion to the top. But I had no reason to do this, for as I watched I saw that the Haïtien, having securely fastened the boy, had sprung with a great leap at the rope of vines, and, seizing it some inches above the Minion's head, he began to raise himself hand over hand to the circular hole in the roof. I thought it now time for me to run to his assistance. I gave one look in the direction where I had laid the dead child. I saw that the stone was laid upon the ground, and I caught a glimpse of some bright ribbons protruding from the cavity. I turned and ran out through the passage and up the slope of the hill. The Haïtien heard me coming. He turned and surveyed me with a frightened look, but he could not drop the Minion, who was suspended like Mahomet's coffin, and so perforce he must continue pulling the rope of vines out through the hole. I laid my hand on the rope, and together we drew the loblolly boy upward and out under the blue of heaven. I had my eye fixed on the Haïtien, for I feared that he would try to escape me, and just as we had given the Minion a secure foothold I slipped my hand suddenly over his fingers. He struggled to get free, but I smiled at him and made the same sort of sounds that I heard him make when urging the Minion to let him rescue him, and after a while he ceased struggling and sat quiet beside me. The Minion untied himself and walked off as if nothing had happened. If he felt at all grateful, he did not express this feeling in words. I wondered that the boy had not starved, as he had been alone in the cave, as far as I knew, for nearly two days; but when I perceived sticking from his pocket a large piece of well-browned fish, I felt sure that the Haïtien had attended to his physical wants.

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And now the mystery about the strange presence was accounted for, and Lacelle, who had learned to express herself in our language, though most brokenly, told us how she had come to be where we saw her at first.

She had been captured by a party of blacks, for what purpose I will not now say. There were two of these blacks, and they had left her tied to a tree in the woods. Her brother Zalee and three other Haïtiens had come to her rescue, had cut the rope, and were about to carry her away when a party of white men approached and gave battle. These were our wretched sailors, who had killed three of the Haïtiens and returned to our camp with their prisoner. How their nefarious schemes were frustrated has already been told. Zalee had not had the time to release Lacelle when our sailors attacked him, and he retreated with his comrades, firing and running until the three were shot, and two of our sailors, the ones we buried in the sea, also were laid low. Zalee had witnessed all that we had done for Lacelle, as well as Cynthia's kindness to her that first night when he buried the Haïtiens.

He communicated with Lacelle and begged her to escape with him, but Lacelle had fallen so desperately in love with Cynthia that she would not leave her, and she persuaded Zalee to remain near as a guardian spirit, he in his turn willing to do any menial service for the white people who had rescued his beloved sister, but also ready at a moment's notice to save her from danger.

Explanations are hateful both to him who writes and to him who reads. If you wonder why things were so, I will say only that I can not explain the motives which actuated people in that far-off land and time, and I can repeat only that I am setting down what happened with fidelity and to the best of my belief. And though some occurrences may seem unaccountable, I can only answer that they are facts, and there let all doubt end.

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We found Zalee a most useful and friendly creature, and, after we knew him as a living

personality, we were all much easier in our minds, for we felt sure that he knew the country and the methods of the people better than we, and that he would bring much valuable knowledge to our aid. We found that he had lived a few miles nearer Le Cap than the place where we first saw him; that he and his sister possessed a little hut in the forest; that they had often made an outing to the cave, and that was the cause of their familiarity with its construction.

I found upon touching Zalee's hands that they were moist and cold, a condition caused probably by his imperfect circulation, which was aided by his always keeping hidden in the damp of the cave. This condition of the young Haitien, while testifying to a highly nervous organization, aided, without intention on his part, the mystery of his touch and guidance through the cave. Even after we discovered that Zalee was a real personality he shrank from the light of day. His enemies had been many and his sorrows not few, so that he preferred to keep secreted, that should an enemy appear he could in some secret way, himself unseen, devise a mode of escape for his sister, if not for those of the rest of us, with whom he had so generously burdened himself.

The Skipper came to me that evening.

"What's all this about rubies and diamonds and precious stones generally?" he asked of me.

"Who is talking about such absurd things?" said I.

"Why, that damn loblolly boy!" said the Skipper. "He says he found a fortune in the cave, and that when he woke you said it was all nonsense; that then he went back to the place where he left them, and that some one had stuffed a dead baby in on top of 'em. But he says they are all there, and he calls me and God to witness that they are his."

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"I don't see what good they will do him," said I. "Supposing they are there, the place is closed to us forever; but, Captain, I am positive that there is nothing of the kind concealed in the cave. So let that end this nonsense."

"Dream, I suppose," ejaculated the Skipper.

I nodded my head. The Minion was standing near, and heard the last part of our conversation. He jumped up and down with rage, he rolled on the ground, he bit the earth. We stood laughing at him for a few moments, and then went about some of the business that every camp has for workers at any moment.

The Minion was constantly stealing our lights, or flint and steel, our candles, which we had had in use for some time, a few of which we found among the pirates' stores. Cynthia thought that there was some good in the boy, and insisted that if we were all of us somewhat kinder to the little wretch that he would respond to our teachings. She, with her unselfish generosity, began to teach the lad an hour each day, but I never saw that it improved him in the very least. On the contrary, it taught him a little more of the ways of people and things, and showed him how he could annoy us more frequently than before.

Thus we lived for some weeks. Nothing unforeseen happened, and we were fairly comfortable. Lacelle and Zalee also were beginning to pick up a few words of English, and thus we could learn much from them that we found it impossible to know before. They seemed to have attached themselves to us permanently. But we had the best of the bargain. They ate little or nothing of our food, subsisting, as far as I could discover, upon the wild fruits, which Zalee brought to us in abundance. Added to this, they performed most of the menial services, so that the Bo's'n said that he felt "like a gentleman onct more."

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When you were a little boy, Adoniah, I remember that you asked your mother if she used thorns for pins when she was a little girl. Children usually look upon their parents as having lived in past ages, and being of the antediluvian period. When you asked the question, I remember that I laughed heartily, if a little sadly, for it reminded me of the morning that I came down the hill to the brook and saw Cynthia pinning up her gown.

"I thought," said I, "that I heard a young woman complaining last evening that she had not one pin to her name."

"That is very true," said Cynthia, "but the Bo's'n has kindly cut these for me from that young palm up there on the hill. It stands just by the smaller palm that I intend to take to Aunt Mary 'Zekel."

"Oh, you intend to take her a present of a plant, do you?"

"Yes," said Cynthia. "I wonder where I could get a pot."

This conversation shows two things—one being the readiness with which Cynthia fitted her wants to her circumstances, and the other the confidence she had in our soon being able to return to Belleville.

There came a night when we started out to lay snares for the cooing dove. These are a delicacy, and, cooked as Lacelle could cook them, were always a delightful surprise for Cynthia. We left her with Lacelle, Zalee, and the Minion behind, and started, three of us, at about eleven o'clock at night. We struck to the eastward, hitherto a region unexplored by us. We did not fear to lose our way, as the shore line was always a guide, and when once we found the cave we could naturally find the new house. How sweet was the dying trade wind as it fanned our faces, for it was nearly on the turn. Soon the land breeze would arise and blow gently all night from shore out to sea, until the boisterous trade of the morning reasserted its supremacy. We walked a long way

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without seeing or hearing anything, setting our snares in what seemed the most likely spots for capture, and then going ahead again. After we had been gone about an hour from camp, and as we sat resting under a tree, I thought that I heard a faint wail. I listened, and again it came.

"Do you hear it?" I whispered to the Skipper. "What is that?"

The Skipper put one hand to his ear, as was his fashion, and turned as my finger pointed.

"Yes," he said, "I do hear something."

The Bo's'n seemed much perturbed.

"Perhaps it's a night owl, Mr. Jones, sir."

"No," said I, "I should say it was a cooing dove, but they do not coo at this time of the night, rather toward morning."

We sat there, listening breathlessly. One grows cautious in the forest of an inhospitable land, and we did not speak above our breath. What if it were some murderous natives calling thus to lure us on under cover of the night? Perhaps they had discovered our whereabouts, and while we were drawing near them some of the party would skirt the forest and capture those we had left behind. My heart stood still at the thought, for, though Cynthia and I exchanged no more than the merest commonplaces, still she was then, as she has ever been, the one woman in the world for me. Again that wail, but louder than before.

"It is a human being in distress," whispered the Skipper. I nodded. The Bo's'n's eyes were starting out of his head.

We arose and crept cautiously in the direction of the sound, and, after walking a minute or so, a dark structure loomed up before us. It seemed a rude copy of a church. It had doors larger than those of an ordinary dwelling, and in front there were some hieroglyphics cut roughly in the wood and painted in various fantastic colours. Upon the top of the roof, which was a few feet above our heads, there was an attempt at a cross. It looked altogether like a savage copy of a Catholic church; and that it was, for the French brought the Catholic religion to the island with them, and the Africans had compounded it with their own savage worship. As we approached the edifice—if I may dignify it by a word used for much grander buildings—the wailing grew more distinct. Just here I heard a stealthy step in the bushes, and, cautioning the others by a jerk of the sleeve and a "Hist!" we stood silent. I saw a form emerging from the underbrush. My heart thumped loudly, for I recognised Zalee; but as now he could speak a little in a very broken way, we found from him that all was quiet at the camp, and that he had only come to make sure that we had not lost our way.

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"What is that?" whispered the Skipper, as the wail broke again upon his ear.

Zalee raised his hand, commanding silence. Then he stooped and laid his lips to the crack between the palm board uprights. He called something in a sweet, low voice. It sounded like "Kala?" The Bo's'n asserted that it was intended for "Qui est la?" We listened intently for an answer. There was a long, sobbing sigh and a thick muttering in answer.

Zalee gave a subdued and joyful cry and ran around to the back of the building. We followed him. Here he found a place where some of the boards seemed loose. In fact, they had been purposely loosened, and, the building being so remote from all habitation, it had not been thought necessary to replace them. He pulled away the boards and crawled quietly through. I followed him, the Skipper came next, and finally the Bo's'n.

We found ourselves in a sort of church. There was a fairly well-constructed desk on one side of the chamber, and an altar on the other. There were some rude seats behind the altar, some metal crosses standing about, with one or two wooden cages which looked like an attempted reproduction of the places where the Catholics keep the holy sacrament. Masses of red and yellow flowers festooned the pillars, and gave a barbaric strangeness to the scene. Upon the walls was reproduced at small intervals a sort of copy of the ring which Cynthia had found on the beach. Sometimes it was the serpent, sometimes the goat's head, sometimes they were combined, the serpent body coiling round to meet the head of the goat, in so strange and natural though rude a resemblance to the symbol, that I could not but feel that the owner of the ring had had something more than a little to do with these barbarous people. Zalee had produced and lighted the end of a candle. He hoarded these candle ends, and as I know that he got them from the great hall of the cave, so I have always suspected that he knew where the pirates kept their secret store. Zalee seemed never to be without one when emergency demanded a permanent light. Again that wailing cry and a restless movement somewhere in the interior.

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Zalee was not at a loss. He at once approached the altar and raised a sort of hanging lid at the bottom. From thence he drew forth a boy of about eight years. The child had been so crushed and pushed into the receptacle that it was with difficulty that Zalee pulled him from the place. The boy could not stand. His knees gave way, and he fell to the ground. His face was bathed with tears, and he moaned as if in pain. He clutched with his fingers at his rescuer, saying over and over, "Zalee! Zalee! Sui bo," which the Bo's'n told us that he thought was intended for "Je suis bon," though how he knew I can not tell. The words seemed so unlike.

Zalee took the little one up in his arms. He was also decked with ribbons and flowers, the latter not fresh, which was proof that he had been there for some time.

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The Bo's'n had fallen on his face upon the palm board flooring at the first sight of the child, and he muttered as before, "*The goat without horns!*"

"That young one's trussed just like the baby we found," said the Captain.

Trussed! The word brought before my mind's eye the times immemorial that I had watched the young ducks and turkeys bound in this way and ready for the spit, and I turned away sick and faint.

Zalee quickly cut the ribbons which bound the child and took him up in his arms. The boy clung to him with every sign of affection, which proved to the onlookers that the two were not strangers to each other. Probably, I thought, he is some child who lives in the neighbourhood of Zalee and whose family he knows well. Zalee picked up all the ribbons and flowers that he had stripped from the child, and, going to the altar, he laid them upon it. Then Zalee lifted the boy in his arms. At that moment there was a pounding at the great doors which gave upon the forest glade.

"Le Papaloi!" whispered the Haïtien in a terrified voice, and rushed to the opening at the back of the building. Through this he began to squeeze, holding the child in his arms. The sounds outside grew louder, there were shouts and howls and continued knockings. The child clung to Zalee in terror, and Zalee, no less terrified, hurriedly got himself through the opening.

"We can't all get through," said the Skipper. "Look to your priming."

I had heard queer tales of these people, and I feared what would befall us; but, knowing the weakness of the Bo's'n, I pushed him through the open space. At that moment the door was burst asunder, and the Skipper and I turned to confront an angry mob of about twenty men.

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## **CHAPTER XV.**

### **WE MEET SOME STRANGE ACQUAINTANCES, ARE MADE PRISONERS, AND LOSE OUR ONLY MEANS OF RESCUE.**

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The newcomers devoured us with a gaze of no less astonishment than that which we fixed on them. They carried torches, whose unsteady orange-black flare gave to their faces a fierce and savage appearance. Their bodies were nearly naked, but their heads were bound with cloths of a strange shade of red. I hated to look at it, its colour was so suggestive.

These men were very black. Their eyes had the wild unreasoning stare of the gypsy eye. They surrounded us at once, waved their torches, and shouted something in concert. I took it to mean "What are you doing here?" Each man carried, besides his torch, a weapon of some kind; either a knife or the machete of the Spaniard, which had been in common use in the island for many years. They crowded close to us, and I recognised at once the fact that escape would be impossible. In front we should rush into the arms of the Papaloi and his followers, and escape by the back it was hopeless to think of, for the Bo's'n, I saw by a hurried glance, had had the decency to push the board back against the opening, and while we were thinking of even pulling those boards away we should be cut down. I had always heard that it was death to one who crept in unannounced and unaccredited to witness any of the hellish ceremonies of this sect, and I looked at the Skipper and gave one despairing shake of the head. He said in a low voice:

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"It looks as if our number was made, Jones, but I've been in tighter places than this down in the South Seas." His reminiscences were drowned by the shouts of "Papaloi! Papaloi!"

These words were uttered loudly in hoarse and discordant unison, and repeated again and again, "Papaloi! Papaloi!"

The excitement was contagious. It thrilled me, and I found myself, utterly forgetful of our danger, standing on tiptoe and craning my neck to see this Papaloi who awakened such enthusiasm. We looked for him as we would for some superior being.

And now I perceived that in the distance, lights were beginning to dance among the trees. In a moment more there emerged from the gloom of the ground-sweeping branches, a procession of strange-looking beings. As they came they chanted a low minor song, which struck terror to my heart. No words can describe this chant. It was like the dread song of fate.

All at once there was carried to us on the night wind the distant sound of a drum. Its tum-tum-tuning was at first faint and subdued, but soon it grew louder and more loud, until its bu-r-r and roar rolled in thunder notes up among the trees.

"Le Papaloi! Le Papaloi!" shouted the multitude.

They waved their arms in the air and joined in with the drum. They sang their weird chant slowly, and with a sort of solemnity which impressed me with a horrid fascination. Later I learned that the words of the song were:

"We will beat the little drum.  
You will witness who will come.

They will rise from out the ground  
At the ringing tum-tum's sound,  
Papaloi, O! Papaloi."

The drum was a hollow piece of wood, probably made of a section of the stem of a well-grown tree. Across one end was stretched the skin of some animal, brute or human, I could not tell which. The drum was carried between two men, who beat with their knuckles upon this vile instrument of torture to the senses. The tremor began almost imperceptibly. It sounded for some minutes before one awakened to the fact that it was the rolling of a drum that was heard. It increased by easy stages, until at last the sound was deafening, and hurt the ear as if with a physical pain.

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There seemed to be a fatal fascination in the sound of this savage music which had its birth in the far-distant land of Dahomey. The moment that it fell upon the ear an uneasy look overspread the faces of those who heard its summons, and I have been told that its sectaries must follow its subtle suggestion whether they would or no. The whole social system was so interlarded with the barbarous practice to which it called that it became a boast among its votaries. In later years than those of which I write, a woman was tried for participating in one of the revolting vaudoux feasts. On her way to prison she looked at her captors and said:

"Only let me have my sacred drum. I will beat it on the way to prison, and you will see who will follow. From the lowest to the highest they will join, not only the poor and humble, but those in high places."

And now, as the throng approached nearer, I saw that many of those composing it were almost unclothed except for the handkerchief round the head, always of that terrible shade which smelt of dark deeds. Then the crowd opened, and I saw one walking alone. He, too, wore a red handkerchief round his forehead, but the rest of his body was also bound with many red cloths. Around his waist was a brilliant blue band, which created a startling contrast, and his hair was knotted in a peculiar way, which I found was a characteristic of the priests of the vaudoux. Upon the handkerchief which crossed his breast was embroidered in rough but effective manner a green serpent, body coiled, head raised ready to strike.

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As the procession approached the edifice where we were standing, the Papaloi came forward with a slow and undulating pace. His look of surprise as his eyes fell upon us it would be difficult to describe. I heard him ask his followers one question. It was, "Q' bagga' ça?" Afterward, when I knew a little more of this remarkable mixture of the provincial French and the African, I found that these words, repeated often, were intended to mean, "Quel bagage est cela?"

The mob around us began to shake their heads in protest. There was a quick, short, decisive order, and then three or four of the men stepped behind us and began prodding us with their knives. Thus we were forced into the open air and out into the glade in front of the church. I saw that the primary object of the visit to the church had been lost sight of for the time. I should have been glad to recall it to mind, for I felt sure that it had to do with the child whom Zalee had rescued, but I had no way of making them understand me. You may think that was a selfish idea, but I felt that Zalee and the boy had fled to some safe place of retreat. Then again I argued against this first feeling of mine, for should I set them on the track of the child they might in roaming come across our new house and Cynthia. I shuddered to think of this for a moment. As these thoughts for and against were running through my brain, we stood gazing at the astounding figure of our principal captor, and he stood stolidly staring at us.

"Handsome, ain't he?" remarked the Skipper.

He was certainly grotesque, and I felt for a moment as much inclined to laugh as ever I did in my life. Perhaps it was well that the comical appearance of the Papaloi had struck me, for he saw that I was not in abject fear, and, instead of giving an order that we should be run through on the spot, he shouted a hurried sentence, which certainly was not what I feared. We were made to face front, the Skipper before and I behind him. Some of the motley crowd led, the rest closed in upon us, and thus, the Papaloi bringing up the rear, we started on our march through the wood. My position was most unpleasant. The Skipper could not keep up the quick march which was forced upon me by those in the rear, and I was prodded in the legs and pricked in the calves until I could almost have prodded the Skipper in turn.

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"Do go ahead a little faster, Captain," said I, "or they'll saw my legs in two."

We walked for some distance along a level, and then began to ascend a slight rise toward the eastward.

And now the drum began to beat again. The men all around us fell at once into a slow rhythmic sort of movement, in which only the upper part of their bodies moved, except for the fact that they were walking. The drum beat louder, and now I saw as we went up the hill that we came to an occasional guard or sentry posted at some tree by the roadside. This word I use for want of a better. I saw no path, but the route seemed well defined to the marching body of men. Each sentry held a staff or long pennon, to the top of which was tied one of the hateful red cloths. Each one whom we passed stood like a statue, never moving except to give the Skipper and myself a look of scrutiny, in which triumph was mingled.

And now others began to join our number. They seemed to rise from the very ground. I saw them lurking under the shadow of the trees. Then they came by one and two quickly forward, and

slipped into our ranks and proceeded with us on our march.

"I hope you're pretty tender, Jones, my boy," said the Captain to me, "for I think our destination's the soup pot." I turned sick at his words. We had a chance for much quiet interchange of thought, for the singing and droning of the dreadful minor chant, repeated with additional words, covered any sound that we might make:

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"We are marching toward the East,  
To the holy Serpent feast;  
To the worship of the true  
Calinda, Chica, and Vaudoux,  
Papaloi, O! Papaloi."

"Get on! get on!"

These words were spoken in my ear. I started. The Skipper could not have spoken them, for he was in front of me. The words came from behind. Who was it, then, who could communicate with me? I looked hurriedly round, but no one seemed to have noticed me. All those black wretches were singing, keeping time to the drum, whose minor cadence timed this dignified dance. And then as I walked along, hastening my steps, and pushing the Skipper ahead a little to save my own shins, I seemed to be hearing familiar words among the din, something like the following ridiculous jargon:

"Don't you have no fear,  
I will save you, I am here.  
Just put your faith and trust in me,  
You'll come out of this scot free,"

followed by the chorus, sung with gusto:

"Papaloi, O! Papaloi."

The poetry was not fine, the wording was ungrammatical, the verse halted and went quite lame in places, but I have never heard any lines before or since which gave me such unalloyed pleasure.

Was I dreaming, or had these words really been uttered?

I scanned the faces near me, on the right, on the left. I turned completely round, but the black man behind gave me a gentle prick in the calves, and it was again "Eyes front!" I will not repeat more of the ridiculous stuff. Stupid it may have been, but it gave me hope and courage to feel that I had a friend near; that I was listening to my own blessed English, though it did have a twang of something that I had heard called Cornish, or something else outlandish. It sent my spirits up almost to the seventh heaven. I determined to hold my place and my peace, and keep as close to the man behind me as circumstances would permit. Many of those who joined us were women. They also fell into the rhythmic march, and so we swept, a great following, up the slope to a secluded spot in the wood.

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"They'll post their sentries now," I heard. I turned quickly, but there was no recognition in any of the faces near me. Was I going out of my mind and imagining things? I pulled myself together. Such a giving way to weakness would never do.

I saw that the posting of the sentries had now begun around the glade through which we walked.

I learned later that at the slightest sign of interference on the part of those in authority runners would come into the camp and the votaries would scatter. But in the times of which I write the vaudoux worship reigned almost unchecked. It was carried on secretly and at midnight, but so long as no one in the towns was disturbed, and none of their immediate relatives carried off for sacrifice, no protest was made. At the present day—the day in which I write—there is good reason to believe that vaudouism prevails more or less in Haiti. It has been the subject of foreign inquiry, so that its sectaries are more prudent than they had any need of being in the year 1820.

We were now approaching a structure which had a character of its own. I can not tell you what feelings of horror thrilled through me as we reached the door. Here the two men who led us advanced to the doorway and swept the devoted and curious crowd aside. We stood in two ranks, through which walked the Papaloi. So intent were the people upon his movement that I might perhaps have found a moment when I could have plunged through the crowd and so escaped. I knew, however, that running was not the Skipper's forte, and I could not leave the old man alone. But I must not take the entire credit to myself, for I, in fact, had become so interested in what was going forward that at times I almost forgot our alarming situation.

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The Papaloi walked between the rows of his now silent followers and prostrated himself before the closed entrance of the long, low building in front of which we stood. Suddenly the doors were pushed outward, and from where I stood I had a glimpse of the bizarre interior.

At the end of the room was raised a sort of throne. This throne was covered with red—the same horrible deadly red. Upon this throne sat two figures, those of a man and a woman. At first I saw but the woman, for she was robed in white, and beside her there was to all appearances a head only, but presently the person beside her moved, and I saw that he was clothed in the same obtrusive and suggestive colour which was so hateful to me. Behind these two stretched a

partition done in their same favourite shade. Beyond, I knew not what!

The Papaloi bent low to the ground, and then advanced with the same undulating gait that I had before observed. I saw now that, great as he was in the eyes of the people, there were others much greater than he. I learned afterward, from one who was present, what was said during those momentous seconds that ticked, I thought, perhaps, my life away.

The Papaloi advanced slowly up the broad space, lined on each side by fantastic shapes. These figures had ranged themselves the length of the hall. They held their torches steadily in hand. The glare of this barbaric light shone on the throne, toward which they partly turned. When the Papaloi had reached the throne he prostrated himself, and waited until permitted by a wave of the hand from the Priestess, to arise. The person seated on the throne beside the Priestess I found to be the Senior Papaloi. This priest was acting his rôle until return of the Greatest of All. I found that the leading or Grand Papaloi had been lost to his followers for some months now, and that the Senior Papaloi, while jealous of the king of the sect, still feared him. For the Grand Papaloi had possessed great power with Christophe, they told me, and the entire sect must sooner or later reckon with that powerful king. I could not discover whether Christophe himself belonged to the vaudoux tribe, but that he protected his favourite minister, who had been Grand Papaloi, was well known to all the votaries of the different branches. When I became aware of these facts I can not exactly remember. They came to me gradually, and these and whatever else I learned that will make my story more clear to you I will set down, regardless of the time and place of my first knowledge of them.

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The Senior Papaloi surveyed the approaching priest impatiently.

"Where is the sacrifice?" he questioned in harsh tones.

The Papaloi, whom we had thought at first a man of great power, trembled and prostrated himself before the throne. He answered in a low voice and haltingly, as if he knew not whether he had done wrong or right:

"O! great Papaloi, the sacrifice is safe, but we found in the small temple some strangers, who would know our secrets, and we brought them to you before procuring the sacrifice."

The Papaloi smiled hideously. I have never, I think, seen such a travesty on Nature as that Papaloi of the vaudoux.

"It matters not," said he; "we have another sacrifice here among us. Bring the strangers forward!"

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Whereupon two of our guards pushed us ahead of them, and we found ourselves walking up the long apartment in full sight of the whole multitude. There were lighted torches stuck in upright posts, and upon the walls I noticed everywhere, without being conscious that I was seeing them, those terrible symbols of vaudouism, the serpent and the goat's head. It shocked and horrified me to find the cross often represented. There was a sort of font at the entrance to the temple, and other signs and symbols of the Catholic religion, and under this very cross of Christ these blasphemers from Dahomey carried on their horrid rites, thus debasing a Christian religion, whose laws and tenets they broke a thousand times in each one of their hellish orgies.

It was strange to see the fetish worship which the blacks brought from Africa, mixed with some of the rites of the Catholic Church. I have heard it said that the good priests tried their hardest to eradicate the evil. When finally one of them found that a serpent was confined beneath the altar of a lonely country church, and he remonstrated unsuccessfully with those whose religion was a mixture of the fetish worship and what of the Catholic form they could remember, he shook the dust of the place from his feet and went his way. He could not permit the serpent to defile the consecrated building in which he officiated, and the blacks would not relinquish their serpent god. This vaudoux sect called themselves "Les Mystères," and, indeed, their whole superstition is one of mystery, from the stealing of children and throwing them into a trance, to the concealment and final sacrifice. The human body is not used by them. It is only the cock, the goat, or the lamb that are offered up as a propitiation to the serpent god. Members of this latter sect are not tainted with cannibalism, but are simply idol worshippers, not combining with their other wickednesses the slaying and eating of human bodies. That these members of the vaudoux sect can, many of them, throw one into a trance at will, I know to be a fact, for I have seen it too often to doubt it. I should like to give you some instances, but my account will be too long as it is, and I must refrain.

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When the sacred drum begins with its low monotonous "tum-tum-tum! tum-tum-tum!" the votaries begin to feel an uneasy stirring within them. They can not settle down to anything else until they have responded and have worshipped with the other sectaries or taken part in one of the dreadful orgies which I have heard described by an eyewitness, but can not relate. I shall describe only that which I witnessed.

No pure woman or man would defile his or her pen with committing to paper the beastliness that follows, and which shows in its nakedness the nature of these animals, travesties made in God's image.

As we started on our walk toward the throne, I heard a muttering beside me:

"Haven't you got anything to conjure with?"

This sounded a reasonable request, but, beyond my pistol and my little appliances for snaring the cooing dove, I could think of nothing which would help me out. We approached the awful throne. At its foot we came to a halt, and stood there awaiting our sentence.

"Now they'll slug us on the head," said the Skipper to me in an undertone.

I raised my eyes to the occupants of the throne. I have commented upon the looks of the Papaloi, but I was surprised to see that the woman at his side was of a much lighter shade, and was almost pretty. She was slight and, as I found afterward, for a woman very tall and exceedingly graceful. She gave one passing glance at the Skipper, and then her gaze rested upon me. As she gazed I heard a hissing sound, and I looked down and around me to discover its source. The Mamanloi looked upon me long, with a sort of trembling of the eyelids, which made me feel as if she were a species of serpent ready to spring upon me. At the same time her flickering, caressing glance did not make me afraid, rather it fascinated and disgusted me at the same moment.

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The lids of the Mamanloi were long and narrow, and sleepy and nearly closed. The upper lid lay flat across the eyeball, which did not seem to protrude, as is usual. When she sleepily raised the eyelid, a sort of opaque green appeared, pale, but with a yellow light, that made one feel that this weird creature did indeed partake of the nature of the serpent which she worshipped. Those oblong green eyes seemed to send forth a gleam which came to you, as the ray of a street lamp does at times, direct to your eye, and apparently to that of no one else. Her lips were red, a vivid shade, and when she opened them her tongue, which outvied the trimmings that she wore, played back and forth and licked and caressed them as a serpent's might have done. I wondered, as I gazed spellbound at this baleful creature, whether she were woman, serpent, devil, or all three in one.

The Papaloi spoke hurriedly to the men who stood as guards for us. One of them shook his head, but the one next to me answered in a subdued tone, at the same time nodding his head. He did not look at me as he spoke. The Papaloi again addressed him, and he then turned to me.

"The old blackguard wants to know where you come from and where you are going. Hadn't I better tell him that you are friends of Christophe's? Sooner or later he must reckon with Christophe, and it's just as well to frighten him a little now."

I looked up in astonishment. Here was a man as black as any one present, speaking my dear native tongue, and, though it had a strange foreign burr as it fell from his lips, it was my own language, after all.

"Tell him what you like," said I. "You know best what to say. Tell him anything at all. Tell him I'm a king myself when I'm at home."

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"I don't believe that will have much effect, but I'll try it," said my black angel. He then bowed low to the Papaloi.

"This is a young prince, O great Papaloi, of a very powerful country called Amerique. It lies to the north of us. When he was sailing by our island he was wrecked upon the coast, and he and his old servant are trying to reach the citadel of Christophe, to whom he is accredited."

"Aaaah?" drawled the Papaloi, with an incredulous look at me.

"He belongs to the northern order of the vaudoux," added the guard.

"Now he's stuck us," said the Skipper, when our interpreter told me what he had said; but the old man nodded his head violently toward the throne notwithstanding, and said, "He does, honest Ingun!"

"They swear by all their gods, the Inguns whom they worship, that they do belong to the most secret order of the vaudoux," said our interpreter, looking toward the throne.

The Mamanloi now opened her lips and spoke. Her eyes rested on me with a look that I can describe in no other way than to call it a hungry look. This, I know, puts a ridiculous face on the matter when one is conversant with the methods of this dreadful sect, but I do not intend to have my meaning taken in a physical sense. I have never had a very exalted idea of my own powers of fascination. Had I possessed such, I am confident that Cynthia's treatment of me would have taken out of me any conceit of which I had ever been guilty. But I felt suddenly that, to use the common expression, this woman had taken a fancy to me, and, disgusting as the idea was to me, I intended to use the knowledge, as far as I could, to aid myself and the Shipper.

"If he is a prince, why do not his friends send for him, that he may return to his country Amerique?"

"They can not have heard the news yet, O! gracious Mamanloi! His vessel came ashore only a very short time ago. Since then he has been wandering, he tells me, trying to find the way to his friend, King Christophe."

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It seems incredible that the natives of Haïti should have known so little of our country as to imagine that we were still under the sway of kings and princes from whom we fought to free ourselves in '76. But when you reflect how little they know of us at the present day, and how less than little we know of them, you will not think it strange that in the year 1820 the blacks of the country districts had heard nothing of our ways, customs, manners, or even where our continent was situated. Their only communication was with France. They were half French and half African,

generally speaking, though there were modifications in the mixture of races. They were utterly ignorant, as what you will hear later will prove to you, and it is not a matter of wonder to me that they could be so easily gulled by my black friend.

"Have they anything to show that they are of our order?"

Suddenly a bright thought came to me. I looked at the interpreter.

"If the gracious Papaloi will allow us to retire to another apartment for a moment, I will prove to him that we are all that we say."

I was to try an experiment. It might succeed, it might not, but there was a chance for us.

The Mamanloi had arisen. She stood tall and straight upon the step of the throne, her slim foot, just protruding through the opening at the side of her robe of white, covered in open beauty with a sandal of exquisite make. This creature's taste was, to the outward view, refined.

I noticed some strange barbaric jewels upon her arms and neck. A blue and red girdle confined her slender waist, and about her head a red band was but a background to some flaming stones. She waved her graceful arm and pointed to the red partition behind the throne.

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She spoke in a soft, sweet voice. It gives me a chill even to think of it. She looked at me as she spoke with those sickeningly sweet glances. They made me feel that I might save myself, although in such case I should have to own her for a protector and a friend.

"See that the doors are barred," she said, "and then escort the prisoners to the secret banquet hall."

Two men who stood near the throne disappeared at her command. They drew the red curtain a little way aside. We waited in suspense for their return.

"I suppose the chopping block's in there," whispered the Skipper to me. "I wonder what poor little Cynthia 'll do!"

This thought nearly unmanned me.

"For Heaven's sake, do try to keep up your courage some other way than by jesting, Captain," said I. "This matter is really serious."

"God knows it is!" said he.

"Of what are the prisoners talking?" demanded the Senior Papaloi, frowning angrily.

"The young prince was admiring the jewels of the gracious Mamanloi," answered our mysterious friend with much readiness.

This answer had a good effect upon the Mamanloi, for she sent to me from the throne one of those dreadful looks which gave me a nausea as I stood there.

"I hope you've got something," said my friend. "Some credentials or something. There'll be the devil to pay if you haven't. You are being treated with the greatest consideration. I never knew 'em to wait so——"

And then turning to the throne:

"I tell the prince, O! gracious Papaloi, that the great Christophe would have sent an escort to meet so honoured a guest long before this, had he known that the prince had been wrecked upon the island. They were sailing for Le Cap, O! gracious Papaloi!"

And now the men sent to unbar the doors of the interior department returned and signified to the Papaloi that the chamber was in readiness. You may think that I started toward this room with anything but pleasurable feelings. How could I tell what these half savages intended doing; what violence they might commit? How did I not know that my interpreter was perhaps only amusing himself with us as he seemed to be amusing himself with the Papaloi? How did I not know that he was in league with that horrid sect, and that if we left the open hall for the mysterious chamber we might be leaving all hope behind? But even while these thoughts were coursing through my brain I put on a bold front and said:

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"Come along, Captain." For an idea had come to me some moments since. Seeing the serpent and the goat rudely but persistently hieroglyphed upon the walls, and finding in them a strong resemblance to the ring which Cynthia had found upon the beach, and remembering the wonderful and curious workmanship of the strange bauble and its effect upon even well-balanced minds when they viewed it, a determination had come to me. The symbol was the thing that I could "conjure with." The mysterious circle was the credential with which I should win my way to favour and to safety.

We stepped out boldly toward the opening between the folds of the red curtain.

"You can't die but once, you know," said the Skipper, ungrammatically forcible. "I told you you'd be a short time living and a long time dead, and I guess, Jones, the long time's about to begin."

With such cheerful prognostications did we proceed toward the opening. The red curtain was drawn but a little way, that the apartment into which we passed might not be exposed to the

vulgar view. The fact only of our being allowed to pass into its secret precincts argued well, I thought, for the confidence placed in our statements, and yet as I entered the doorway I remember wondering whether there were not perhaps a swinging axe overhead which might descend upon us, one after the other, and leave us dead in the horrid interior.

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I shall never forget the appearance of that dreadful banqueting hall. But even before I thought of its appearance the odour which it retained, and which was forced upon my notice by my keen sense of smell, made me faint. I perceived now that the structure had been built against the side of the hill and that the rock had been hollowed out, or else that a natural cavern existed, for there were fireplaces cut in here and there against the hillside, and in them piles of wood were laid. In some of them were strong cranes, upon which hung enormous cauldrons. In others I noticed heavy iron spits. In two of the fireplaces I saw that the wood was blazing. In the great iron receptacles above the flame the water was boiling madly and suggestively.

"That's where they cook long pig," whispered the Skipper to me. I reeled and put my hand to my head. I had heard some tales of these people, but that I should ever get so near to taking part in their orgies I had never dreamed. I saw that there were rough tables standing along the wall between the fireplaces, and on them stood great bowls and tubs. Just then I heard a crowing. It seemed to come from a corner of the apartment. The home-y sound gave me a little courage. All that I noticed flashed upon me in the short moment that I was whispering my ideas of procedure to the Skipper. I took from my pocket my handkerchief, which Lacelle had freshly washed that very day. The Skipper's, fortunately, was also clean.

"Captain," said I, "do you notice there are snakes and the heads of goats everywhere about these buildings? I really believe that the Bo's'n was right. There is something mysterious about that ring. I think that I can, as this black fellow says, conjure with it. Come, now, let me have it. We will go out with a great flourish of trumpets, and declare that we are past masters in the arts of vaudoux."

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"I was never a dancer," said the Skipper, "but I s'pose I could even dance to save my life."

"I guess you'll have to try," I returned. "You've got to do your share, Captain. I can't do this thing alone. Bind your handkerchief round your head as I do," said I. "We belong to the white sect. Don't forget that! Now," I whispered, "where is the serpent ring? That is good enough to conjure with, I think. At last it's going to do us some good. Let me have it."

I held out an impatient hand. The Skipper obediently slid his fingers into his waistcoat pocket. He began to feel for the ring. He pushed his hand down, down, down, and farther down into an opening on the right side of his nether garment. Farther and farther he felt. He slapped his thighs, his breast, his waistband. He poked and pushed deeper and deeper, and the farther down he went, so my heart fell with the depth of his unrewarded search, for I saw the look of misery which overspread his face at each succeeding trial. His face showed but too plainly what was the cause of the trouble. THE RING WAS GONE!

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## **CHAPTER XVI.**

### **THE GOAT WITHOUT HORNS.**

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"I can't find it!" whispered the Skipper. "The Bo's'n said it would bring bad luck, and it has by not being here when it's wanted."

I went close to the old man and began to pull and twitch his clothes about in my desperate desire to find the ring.

"It's gone!" said the Skipper. "No use looking! See there! There's where it must have slipped out of my pocket—that hole. Wouldn't let poor little Cynthy mend it. Didn't know it was so big. Suz! suz! suz! What a pity!"

I am sure that I turned the colour of ashes, for the Skipper said: "Don't lose heart, Jones, my boy! Perhaps that black fellow who speaks English can get us out of it in some way. Put a bold front on it, and act the American prince."

*The American prince!* I! With my ragged clothes and generally dishevelled air! I could have laughed had not our case seemed so utterly hopeless.

The interpreter, who was standing by the curtain, looked inquiringly at me, and asked rather anxiously, I thought:

"Well, what have you got?"

I shook my head sadly and despondently.

"Nothing!" said I.

"Good Heavens! Nothing, after all this fuss? I'm afraid you'll be worse off than before. Can't you make love to the she-devil, or something? You'd better, Mr. Jones, for, let me tell you, your case is pretty serious."

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"Who are you?" whispered I hastily, "and why do you take an interest in us? I see plainly that you know who we are."

"I will tell you later," said our guard. "That is, if you haven't had your ears pickled by that time."

"What can we do?" asked I anxiously.

"Don't worry, Jones; it'll all come out right," said the Skipper.

This remark evinced a most cheerful spirit on the Skipper's part, but I felt that it was one thing to make such an assertion and another thing to believe that it would come true.

Here the curtains were parted, and the extra guard came in to say that the priest and priestess were waiting impatiently for our proof, if we had any. Alas! I shook my head miserably.

"The prince has mislaid his credentials," said our black friend, "but I am quite sure that he will find them in some miraculous way."

I personally had no such hope, and I followed the guard dejectedly back to the large chamber.

We returned between the carefully drawn curtains, and I remember that even that foetid atmosphere, with the flaming torches and the shining black and dripping bodies, seemed sweet as a May morning compared with the horrible air of the banqueting hall.

Our interpreter explained our dilemma to the Papaloi and his companion, but it was received with scorn and a horrible look of triumph. The Mamanloi, I fancied, seemed somewhat disappointed, but, if this were so, she dare not show such feeling.

"These are impostors," said the Papaloi sternly. "Let them stand aside until the holy dance is ended, and then we will decide upon their fate."

We were then led to the side of the hall, but not far from the throne. I thought that possibly our captors feared that during the excitement of the dance we might burst through the crowd and escape. Indeed, our guard advised us to try it, but he told us also that it had been attempted before, though unsuccessfully, and that the sentries would certainly be on the watch. It was curious to hear our interpreter roaring out the most secret messages. Things that would naturally have been whispered, he shouted, which robbed them of their appearance of secrecy, and seemed to be, as he assured the Papaloi that they were, orders from himself to us.

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For instance, when I heard his stentorian tones telling me that the old idiot on the red hawse block was blind in one eye, and that if I got on that side I would have a better chance to escape, I was really frightened.

"Oh, you needn't look so scared!" added the guard. "The old nigger doesn't know a word of anything but Dahomey, mixed with a little French, and none of these rascals knows anything about a Christian tongue."

He then turned and made low obeisance to the Papaloi.

"I have asked the prince, as you told me, to stand farther back from the door. Meanwhile, O most gracious Papaloi, some miracle may happen to show you that he is a prince and no liar."

Now seeing that we were on the blacklist, the crowd gathered round and jostled us fiercely.

"You tell them," said I to the guard, "that they'll be sorry for this a little later," at which our friend harangued the crowd, which for an answer laughed and made obscene gestures.

"How dare these strangers intrude upon our sacred rites?" thundered the Papaloi.

"That nigger says," said the guard, turning to us, "that he wonders how you had the cheek to come in here."

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"Tell him we didn't want to come," said I. "We came quite against our will."

The Papaloi said something more to our friend with superior voice and gesture.

"He asks how you got into the temple."

"By magic," answered I, wishing not to betray the very commonplace method by which we had entered, or by which our companions, who were not any too far away, had left.

"He says he does not believe you," said the guard, "and that you must suffer the fate of the spy. But, first, the old monkey tells me that you shall witness a sacrifice which will only postpone your own for a little. You can be preparing, he says."

"I told you we'd be a short time living," whispered the Skipper mournfully in my ear. "What a pity you insisted on our hoarding up that rum so! I wish I had a little of it now."

This monotonous remark of the Skipper's set my nerves on edge. I had been conscious during this conversation and before it of a vicious hissing sound, and, though I had gazed earnestly about me whenever I heard it, there was no solution of its mysterious recurrence. I was now to know the cause.

The priest arose and waved us aside, as if too much time had been given to our affairs. The only reason that I could imagine why he allowed us to remain as witnesses to his dreadful rites was

that we should never go forth to tell the tale. This was not encouraging. He raised his hand and thundered forth to the waiting multitude the order:

"Release the god!"

Two men from the back of the hall now came forward and stopped at the foot of the throne. They opened the lid of a box that stood beneath it and made part of the lower step. For a moment the watching crowd saw no sign. And then as we looked there came slowly forth a green flat head, protruding eyes, and a darting tongue, which played back and forth in desperate wildness.

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The serpent crawled languidly from the box up the robe of the Mamanloi. He left a slimy trail behind, which shone in the flare of the torches. The dreadful creature was about four feet in length and very large in circumference. It seemed lazy and sluggish, and, after climbing up to the Mamanloi's neck, it wreathed itself round and hung there in flabby folds, occasionally laying its flat head against her cheek and letting its red tongue dart against her face, as if in affection. The sight made my flesh to creep.

Then the Papaloi, still standing, raised himself to his extreme height and harangued the multitude. He told them that the serpent worship was the only true worship, and condemned all those who did not believe in its holy teachings to be stung by the fangs of the poisonous python. He raved and screamed for the space of a quarter hour. Occasionally he shouted, "Will you obey?"

"As the Papaloi has said! As the holy Papaloi has said!" shouted the crowd in answer, bowing to the ground.

Then he began to intone the same weird chant that I had heard in the forest, the people joining in. And then began the dance.

How shall I describe that dance? How call up before your imagination the murky interior, the reddish flare of the smoking torches, the shining black bodies, the glittering eyes, the look on every face which spoke not of the lofty aspirations of the human being, but of the low nature of the brute? If there was ever any ceremony that combined as a whole the horrible, the soul-sickening, the disgusting, and the fascinating, it was that dance of the serpent. The whole community joined in the fiendish movement, each and all trying as best he or she could to imitate the movements of the reptile. They wound themselves about, in and out, and round each other. They twisted, they squirmed, they wriggled, they crawled, and all the time the Mamanloi sat gazing stolidly on like a sphynx. The serpent hissed and alternately caressed her cheek and bosom. Sometimes it disappeared entirely within the folds of her dress, and then again its great head would protrude from the open front of her robe, and we heard the hissing repeated, and saw the tongue dart its flamelike points against the flesh of her throat. Some of the dancers, the women especially, seemed to be overtaken by a wild state of frenzy. They circled themselves round the other dancers, regardless of sex. They even climbed with a snakelike motion up the posts which supported the roof. There they wriggled along the rafters or hung, glaring down on those below. Their tongues protruded and played back and forth like a serpent's; their mouths emitted a hissing noise, which was deafening. I feared that with these awful sights and sounds I should lose my senses. Of so bold an exhibition of the beastliness that still dwells in the earthly tenement I had never dreamed, and I hope that I may never be called upon to witness its like again. With much of it I will not soil these pages. Suffice it to say that the worst passions were depicted, if not actually represented. I turned toward the Skipper. The heavy drops were pouring from his brows.

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"By Gad! Jones, I'm sick," said he.

When the dancers had worked themselves up to a state of insanity that was almost unbelievable, the Papaloi suddenly called a halt. The noise did not stop at once. It seemed that the serpent habit had become chronic with the votaries. Some of the women still clung to the rafters and refused to descend, sending forth an occasional hiss. But when the Papaloi started a subdued and minor chant, they began to quiet down, and gradually dropped, limp and lifeless, to the ground. They reminded me, each one as he fell, of the leech as he drops heavy and clogged from overrepletion.

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That, however, was a phase of these diabolical orgies which was yet to come.

Far be it from me, Adoniah, to wish to shock or horrify any one, especially those dear to me. You have asked for a truthful description of what I saw, and, though I can not give it all to you in these pages, I can come as near it as decency permits. Perhaps you will say, nearer, and accuse me in your heart of having over-stepped the bounds of propriety and decency. If such be your feeling, do not let this cover fall into the hands of your children. It would unnecessarily shock and terrify them. There are many things happening in this world which they need not know. Perhaps you had better decide when you read to them these remembrances that you will skip some portions, saying to them at certain pages, which you shall mark upon its first perusal by you, "Your grandfather is not very clear at this stage, and I think that I had better relate to you what follows," or, "We will close the book for to-night, my child; I will tell you more to-morrow." On the morrow you may skip the obnoxious paragraphs. But for you, Adoniah, I am setting down these things as they occurred, and what I promised, I am in duty bound to do. When you feel that I have described with too much realism that which I was forced to witness, you may also close the book. But my task is to finish to the bitter end, that perhaps at some not far distant day some earnest votary of our holy religion of Christ may feel it his privilege to go as a missionary to this island of

the western main, and with labour which shall not fail try to bring some soul from out the darkness and lead it into light, and show these benighted creatures what is really meant by that symbol to which they are accustomed, the cross of Christ. You may say, however, "Why should we succeed, where other Christians have failed?" But I digress.

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"Bring in the white cock!" shouted the Papaloi.

Two men disappeared behind the curtain of red and returned with a handsome white cock, the one, probably, which I had heard crowing in homelike confidence. The priest seized the cock in his strong grasp. He now descended the steps of the throne. The Mamanloi followed in his footsteps. Their sandalled feet called back no answering sound from the earthen floor. The Papaloi stalked majestically toward the central post which up-held the roof tree, and mounting upon a low step, he stood facing the multitude. He waved the helpless animal round and round his head, repeating rapidly, and with fierceness of demeanour, some species of incantation which I could not follow. He then began to beat the body of the unfortunate cock against the post.

Now, any man who has lived upon a farm, as I have at Belleville, does not squirm at the killing of a fowl if necessity demands, but we perform the operation humanely and as quickly as time and dexterity will permit. To see that poor animal battered and hammered against the resisting wood, which was already stained red and black with previous ceremonies of the kind, made me shudder. I closed my eyes, but there was still that fearful thud in my ears. I can give no idea of the vengeful fury of the blows. Just before the Papaloi gave the animal what our black friend called the "final kew," it was struggling, though faintly, and when the Papaloi raised a glittering knife on high I saw one poor leg thrust weakly outward, as if the helpless thing hoped even then to elude its slayer. The throat was slashed through with a clean cut, and the torture was over.



**The Pythoness circled slowly around.**

During this scene the Pythoness had been moving, circling slowly, with a flat shuffle of the feet, around the central post. Her limbs and head were rigid, but the trunk moved in a thousand strange undulations. Her body protruded in folds and wrinkles, as if the serpent were still concealed beneath the transparency of her gown. Then, as the Papaloi threw the head of the cock far from him, the priestess slowly glided beneath the uplifted body. She seemed in an ecstasy of religious fervour, and I saw that the serpent hung trailing down her back, its extremity reaching nearly to the floor. His upper part clung tenaciously round her neck; its loathsome mouth lay close to her ear. The Pythoness threw her head backward, and came to a stand just underneath the body of the cock. Her movements were so timed that the first drop of the warm blood fell within her open lips. It streamed down over her throat and breast and the spotless robe which she wore. The serpent gave a hiss of delight, then raised its flat head, opened its horrid jaws, and drank also. The people crowded up and ran close, and rubbed their hands and their heads against the red-stained gown. They thrust out their tongues in imitation of the serpent, and licked the colour from the white robe as fast as it fell. As fresh votaries took their places, the pioneers danced again in imitation of the movements of the Pythoness herself. Keeping head erect and limbs motionless, they forced the trunk to roll in waves and folds from chest to abdomen.

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How long this terrible scene continued I can not tell. I have given as little in words as will describe its awful character, and have omitted much which is important as to detail, which decency forbids me to set down.

The Papaloi and Mamanloi had returned to the throne. She looked as if she had been in battle. There was a discussion, and finally an order was given. Our guide, who had listened intently, told us that the sacrificial lamb was now to be brought. Presently two enormous men, armed with long knives, entered from the banqueting hall. They led by the hands a little boy of tender years. He was clothed in white. He turned terrified eyes upon his jailors. Our guide repeated to us the conversation which ensued.

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The Papaloi leaned down toward the child, and, with a gloating smile on his hideous features, he asked:

"What dost thou desire more than anything else in all the world?"

The child's reply had evidently been taught to him, for he said in a low and trembling voice:

"I desire a little virgin more than anything that the world affords."<sup>[C]</sup>

[C] See Sir Spenser St. John.

Then appeared two other brutal-looking giants, and between them they led a little girl. She was also robed in white.

"Behold thy virgin!" shouted the Papaloi. The two little ones were then seized and thrown upon their backs. We saw the knives descend. If shrieks there were, they were drowned by the noise of the drums and the enthusiastic shouts of the sectaries. I close the scene. It will remain with me until life ends.

Recalling these happenings across the space of many intervening years, I wonder at myself, as you are probably wondering at me, that I did not drop down and die with very horror of such sights. There was but one thing which sustained me. Self-preservation is man's first law; all things become subservient to that end. The one thought that permeated every fibre of my being—and I doubt not that of the Skipper also—was the hope of escape. These dark and dreadful scenes showed us not only what might be our fate, but in so doing urged us on to more strenuous efforts to prevent the ending of our lives as had ended the lives of the wretched little victims. There is sometimes more virtue in telling than in withholding. We send missionaries to Africa. In God's name, let's send them nearer home, where iniquity of the vilest flourishes, and at our very doors!

When the executioners had disappeared with their inanimate victims, the Papaloi raised his hand, commanding silence. [Pg 287]

"Say your prayers," said the Skipper; "it's our turn now."

"I'll never believe it," said I. "At least, I'll shoot off the old villain's head first, if you'll take the woman."

"If we but had our pistols!" said the Skipper. And then I, too, remembered that we had been stripped of our weapons in the banqueting hall.

The Papaloi then made an address which I will not repeat. It was concerning us, and spoke of us as imposters and spies. I felt that I had not long to live, and I commended myself to God. Two of the executioners started toward us. I shrank as I saw them approaching. I, watching every movement, with nerves strung to the highest tension, saw that the Mamanloi leaned over and whispered to the Papaloi, whereupon he raised his hand again, and his voice rang through the bare interior.

"The high priestess suggests that these spies shall see one more sacrifice to the serpent god before they, too, die for our faith."

I know that it is not conceit which leads me to assert that I was confident that I caught a significant glance from the eyes of the priestess directed at me. It seemed to me that she wanted to gain time, and certainly every minute gained was a minute in our favour. The Captain turned to me and said in a voice of bravado, which trembled as he spoke:

"I hope you're tender, Jones. Now I fear I'm a little stringy or so. I certainly hope that I'll stick in that old villain's crop and choke him."

I turned away impatiently. I was trembling as if with an ague, which I tried my best to conceal. I felt that this was not the time for lightness of speech. I looked about me to discover, if possible, an avenue of escape. But there was no break in the ranks of dark bodies which hemmed us in on every side. There was a stir about the throne. The Mamanloi had again arisen. She stretched out her graceful arm and waved her hand toward the fateful curtain. [Pg 288]

She wreathed the serpent round her waist as a Northern girl would have twisted a ribbon, and said in her sweet and dreadful voice:

"Bring in the final sacrifice—*the goat without horns!*"

Then I heard to begin a faint tapping of the drum. As it grew louder and louder, taking upon itself the weird and gloomy "tum-tum-tum, tum-tum-tum," the music of the savage, many voices caught up the refrain, and sang not unmusically, and shouted until the rafters rang:

"*The goat without horns! The goat without horns!*" Then we heard the shuffling of many feet, and a crowd came pushing in from the back of the throne. The mass of people which surrounded this latest victim was so impenetrable that I could not discover what manner of person they had brought with them. The crowd approached the throne and lifted to a standing posture on the cover of the serpent box, a form. It stood, its feet dabbled in the blood of the recent victims, and faced us. My breath was taken away. I absolutely could not believe my eyes.

"Is it?" I asked of the Skipper.

"It is," said he.

It was the Minion, as cool apparently as ever he had been. He turned to his jailors and uttered two words:

"I'm tough!" said he.

The Captain looked at the Minion critically. He was grimy to a degree, and more unkempt than even I had ever seen him.

"I should hope they'd wash him first," said the Captain, "if I was to have any of the pie."

I could only adjudge the Skipper's seeming lightness of vein to the fact that he had escaped death often just by the breadth of a hair, and I was convinced that he would never believe that his final hour had come until he was no longer conscious of the beating of his heart.

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Our guard was called upon to translate the Minion's words. The lad had not caught sight of us at first, but when the Skipper gave an exclamation of horror at the probable fate of this poor boy, preceding ours by but a short time, he looked toward us with a grin upon his face.

The Skipper had apparently given up all thought of trying to please our captors.

"Boy," called he, "say a prayer, do, for the Lord's sake! Those devils are going to kill you. Shall I pray for you?"

The Minion glared at his persecutors. Consistent to his well-known character, he called across the heads beneath him, "I'll ha'nt 'em!" And then again, with a loquacity of which he was seldom guilty, he repeated, "I'll ha'nt 'em to the last!"

The Papaloi looked angry at this interruption, but the Skipper thought it now of little use to temporize with the wretches.

"Boy," he shouted, "you have but a moment to live, and I s'pose you're human. Is there any sin that you've committed that you want to confess? Any whom you have wronged? Any——"

But the Skipper stopped short, for as he spoke the Minion put his hand into the pocket of his ragged old trousers, slowly drew it forth, and held up in the face of the astounded Skipper the lost ring. I saw my advantage at once. I think that I heard the now loquacious Minion declaring truthfully, "'Tain't no use to me," but I had broken through the crowd and was close to the step of the throne before the Papaloi had realized what was happening. I had mounted to the very platform of the throne itself, regardless of the outraged looks of the Papaloi, and, standing there, I held up the ring before the eyes of the dazed multitude.

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"*Look and believe,*" shouted I, "*the ring of the Grand Papaloi!*"

My unknown friend echoed my words with a tone which left little doubt in the minds of his hearers. He shouted in African-French the words which fell upon astonished ears:

"*La ba' du gran' Papaloi! La ba' du gran' Papaloi!*"

I leaped from the throne. I held the symbolic circle high in the air. The eyes shot forth baleful gleams, which impressed even us men of the North with their wonderful brilliancy and power. To the ignorantly superstitious how much more convincing! I turned the dread symbol this way and that. I threw its red beams into the watching eyes of the crowds which surrounded us. They closed their trembling lids, and shook as if with a palsy. In as stern a voice as I could command I shouted again: "*Behold the ring of the Grand Papaloi! Behold! Behold the ring of the Grand Papaloi!*"

No one was more astonished than I myself at the effect which this ruse of mine produced. As I passed down the long space between the rows of sombre faces, I was surprised to see the bronzelike bodies waver and fall on the ground, as summer grain is blown over by a sudden storm of wind. The two upon the throne looked with amazement upon me. Shouts were going up around us as I advanced of "*La ba' du gran' Papaloi! La ba' du gran' Papaloi!*" The sectaries covered their eyes with their hands and fell before me. The tide had turned.

"It's working wonderful well, my boy," said the Skipper, who had joined me. He began to shout in the same breath, "The ring of the great Papaloi!"

As we neared the throne again I saw that great terror, humility and consternation combined were shadowed forth from the faces of the priest and priestess. On that of the Papaloi himself I perceived, creeping through the submission that fear develops, a look of the most malignant hate, but as I came nearer they both trembled, wavered, then arose, and, screaming with the rest, "*La ba' du gran' Papaloi!*" they sank down at our feet. The excitement had been so much for me that I almost lost my hold for a time on consciousness; but I controlled myself, and stood erect and commanding, though trembling in every limb. This was the best thing that could have happened, for such fits of excitement are common among the sect, and show religious fervour. The Skipper's apposite remarks aided me in keeping my senses. He drawled:

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"You've fetched 'em this time, Jones," and then the absurd side of the whole performance came over me and helped me to keep from giving way to weakness.

Finding that the priest and priestess were overwhelmed by the sight of the ring, I turned to my black guide and roared out in stentorian tones:

"What the devil's the matter with those savages?"

"The Lord knows," said he, bowing low with every sign of servility, "but you've got 'em jolly well scared this time. Crash all hurricanes! but you're a smart one."

Here the Captain turned to me and said:

"S'pose we condescend to let those devils get up?"

I waved my hand.

"Arise," said I, "noble priest and priestess, and resume your throne."

This was translated to the Papaloi and Mamanloi by my guide, whereupon they arose and stood looking at us as if waiting permission to reseal themselves.

"Tell them," said I, turning to the guide, "that they may seat themselves upon the throne, but they must prepare one for us also." While the guard was repeating this to the great people, I said hurriedly to the Skipper: "What a pity the Bo's'n isn't here! The ring is some use, after all. What do you really think it is, Captain, that makes them so servile?"

"I think the Grand Papaloi, who lost it probably where Cynthy found it, was a very great man, and that they tremble at the very sound of his name. He was protected, they say, by Christophe." [Pg 292]

"Perhaps, like some kings I have heard of," said I, "they think that he gave us the symbol as a safeguard. Something like a signet ring."

"But where is the Grand Papaloi himself?" asked the Skipper.

"Thank you for reminding me," said I. "That's just what they may ask, so I must fix up a story." I then turned to the guard. "I have something to tell the priest and priestess," said I, "when our throne is prepared."

It was not long before the followers of these vaudoux leaders had constructed a high seat for us. They brought some red cloth from the banqueting hall and began to cover it like the other; but I told the guide to say that in the higher vaudoux worship only white was used. Strange to say, some one soon appeared with a large piece of cotton like a sheet. This was draped over our throne, and upon this we seated ourselves. I then turned to the guard who had interpreted for us, and said with all seriousness:

"I suppose you do not belong to the sect in reality?"

"Belong!" said he. "I only did it as you do, to save my life."

I did not intend to divulge our secret to this stranger, as I was not sure at what moment he might become unfriendly, and so I determined that he should believe us what we had pretended to be.

"You seem to think that we are not really members of the vaudoux in North America," said I, "but there is where you are wrong, my friend."

"And the Captain?" broke in the guard.

I looked at him in astonishment.

"How do you know he is a captain?" asked I.

"Haven't I heard you call him so?" asked the guard. [Pg 293]

"I think not," answered I, wondering. "I want these people to know," said I, "that we are what we say; that the Papaloi, the Grand Papaloi, has gone to North America. That there he has established his sect, and that in reality we were coming to visit Christophe when we were cast away, as well as to inspect the temples here and discover if the rites are observed with all due formalities."

"What bosh!" remarked our guide.

"It is the truth," said I, "and whether you believe it or not it makes no difference to us, so you had better jump into our boat while you have the chance."

"I fancy you've hit on the right thing," returned the guard. "I don't believe a word you say, but these idiots do, so I can do nothing now but follow and let you lead."

This conversation was carried on openly.

"The coke's comin' off your face," said the Skipper. "Hadn't you better go out and put some more on?"

"It isn't coke," said the guard. "It is really a dye that I know of, to be found under the bark of a tree; but I do rub coke over it, and I'll just go into the kitchen, if I can, before they begin to cook the supper and repair damages."

My soul turned sick at his reference, but I felt that there must be some way of our getting free before that last awful rite began.

"Am I much lighter?" asked our guide.

"Not much," said the Skipper, "but if I was you I'd fix up a little."

The guide turned to the priest and priestess, who were awaiting with curious looks the result of our conversation.

"O great Papaloi and you, gracious Mamanloi, the high priest and prince, surnamed Jo-nes, orders me to procure for him a glass of pure water from the holy spring."

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The Mamanloi, whose affection for me had apparently increased so soon as she saw that I was an even greater man than the priest at her side, at once begged the guard to say that anything that we wished we had but to ask for. She begged him to hasten, as the ceremonies must be finished before morning cock crow. When she said those words the whole assemblage took up the words, "Cock crow!" "Cock crow!" and repeated them over and over again to the accompaniment of the drum. I have forgotten the words that they used, though I knew them at the time.

I spoke to the Minion hurriedly:

"You stole that ring from the Captain! Confess at once, that they may know that it is ours."

Our interpreter was near.

"If you want proof that the ring belongs to me," I said, "ask that young devil how he came possessed of it."

"Stole it!" said the Minion, evidently no more averse to living than the rest of us.

"From whom?" I demanded, with death in my eye.

The Minion nodded over my head toward the Skipper, and, with a comical glance of the eye at me, said, "Old man! Me father!"

Our guard then turned to the priest and priestess.

"O most gracious ones," he said, "these people are without doubt that which they claim to be. The sacrifice declares that he is the son of the servant of this grand young prince; that he stole the ring of the Grand Papaloi from his father, to whom the prince gave it for safe keeping."

The guard turned to the Skipper.

"You'll have to admit he's your son," said he. "It's all very well to let you go, but they see that he's stolen the ring and——"

"I'm everlastingly darned if I will!" blurted out the indignant Skipper. Forced to own paternity to the Minion was beyond the elastic limit to which charity and devotion should be called upon to go.

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Our guard now disappeared, the crowd making way for him because of reflected glory. He soon reappeared, however, with a skin much improved backward and a flagon of water. Not to expose his little ruse, the Skipper and I shared this between us.

I thanked the guard with every expression of dignity and graciousness.

"You can tell these devils," said I, "that now there is something required of *them*. They can see that we are what we declared ourselves to be. My servant's son has confessed his theft, which is proof enough for them. Now comes our turn. They must prove to our satisfaction that they belong to the true vaudoux sect. This they can not do unless they are able to repeat to us the name of the Grand Papaloi who gave to me the ring. If they tell me this to my satisfaction, the Grand Papaloi, should he return, will hold them still in his favour; if not, they know, perhaps, the doom that awaits them."

The guard translated these words to the priest and priestess, not, I believe, without some fear, but the communication seemed to have the desired effect. The Mamanloi turned and looked at the Papaloi, and he at her. There was a hurried consultation, and finally a sign of assent from the Papaloi.

The Mamanloi beckoned the guard to draw near. She leaned over and put her lips to his ear. I saw him wince as the snake thrust his head in between, and was thankful that I was not in his place. The guard said the word over once or twice to the Mamanloi to make sure that he understood it, and then with a look of recognition, which I thought strange at the time, he whispered the name in my ear. With a start of astonishment I in turn whispered it to the Skipper. He, too, gave a look of surprise.

"Suz! suz! suz!" said he, "'s that so?"

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I arose with all the dignity that these surprising events left at my disposal, and said with a grand wave of the hand:

"Tell the priest and priestess that they are correct. That they have named the Grand Papaloi who is head of all the sects in Amerique. But, alas! my faithful people, he is gone for a time. The great serpent god carried him away to the depths of the deepest wood. There he sits upon a golden throne, and will so sit until the day of reckoning for all. His mantle has fallen upon me. He left to me this sacred symbol. Behold and adore!" and again I held the ring on high. The multitude fell upon their faces, and there were murmurs of "*Le gran' Papaloi! Le gran' Papaloi!*" But upon the

lips of the pythoness I saw the muttering of another name and a look of regret in the eyes, and it was not strange to me, for the word which my sable guard had whispered in my ear was the name of

MAURESCO!

NOTE.—Papaloi and Mamanloi are the Haitien corruption of the French words Papa-Roi and Maman-Roi.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### I MEET AN OLD FRIEND AND LOSE MY ALL.

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I had been conscious even during the tense strain under which I laboured that there was some stir in the hall. Messengers had come hurriedly in and had approached the throne. The priest and priestess had seemed disturbed, and as my speech ended they both arose hurriedly.

"Arm yourselves!" shouted the Papaloi; "the enemy is upon us!"

You may imagine what a welcome interruption this was to me. At once all was confusion. The priestess disappeared into the red interior, I thought that probably she had some place of retreat among the caves, but the Papaloi bravely drew his long knife from its sheath and bade his followers come to the rescue. The doors were opened, and the crowd rushed forth to meet the enemy. The scouts and runners had come in and had joined the throng, so that the numbers were well increased.

"Now's the time for us," said the guard to me. "We must appear to join in with these wretches, but, whatever we do, we shall be badly off if we stay with them, so I advise that we cut and run at the first opportunity."

"Tell them that we are with them," said I to the guard.

The Papaloi had rushed quickly forward, but not without a hurried glance at us. Truth to tell, I could not bear that even these savages should discover me so soon in a lie, although it was a lie to save our lives. Should we flee, that were proof positive that we had not taken that interest in the secret sect which our protestations had claimed for us. I caught up a machete and waved it over my head, and, though my words were not understood, my actions were. The Skipper did not approve of keeping up the farce any longer.

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"It's all darn foolishness!" he said. "Look to your chance, and run."

"Let's keep together," said the interpreter.

"I want my pistols," said I. "Let us get them."

These words were spoken hurriedly between us as we dashed to the banqueting hall and forced aside the red curtain. An ancient crone, who looked more like a piece of parchment than anything that I had ever seen, was sitting before the fire busily employed. I will not give details, except to say that she was preparing for the feast. I heard a loud hiss. I looked toward the back of the cavern. It was lighted up by those fires of hell, and threw our forms upon the walls in a thousand weird shapes. I saw some red lips, the green light of those snakelike eyes, and the beckoning wave of a jewelled arm. I saw, too, that the heavy folds of the serpent were still coiled about the supple waist. I picked up my pistol, and that I did not turn it upon her was only because she bore the semblance of a woman. I turned hurriedly. I feared her almost as I would a sorceress, and together we three fled from that awful place of death.

We followed the crowd as they rushed forward to meet the enemy's army. I learned from the guard that such fights were not infrequent; that the different communities were constantly warring against each other. These newcomers, we learned from the talk about us, were coming from the direction of the East, thank God! I saw the people with whom we were, boldly rushing on to meet them. Whatever one might say about the sectaries of the vaudoux, one could not with truth call them cowards.

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"Watch your chance," said our guard, "and when the opportunity offers make directly down the bank to the shore of the sea. If you are cut off there, let us meet in the cave."

"What cave?" asked I.

"The pirates' cave," said the guard.

"The pirates' cave is closed," said I, wondering, I remember now, how this man knew of its existence. "Closed by the hand of God!"

At his look of astonishment, I added, "The earthquake."

"Is your side closed, too?"

Our side? Then he knew of the cave. How strange!



We said these words as we ran, shouting some unmeaning sentences. I saw that the Papaloi turned his head once or twice to see if we were following him, and, as he found no change in our demeanour, he again rushed onward, and we followed.

And now we heard the clash of arms in front and sharp battle cries. The invaders, I found from our guard, were the followers of an indignant father whose child was missing. Some traitor had deserted to him, and had informed upon the Papaloi. And though, probably, he would not have minded making his supper off the child of the Papaloi, he preferred that his own offspring should not go to make a feast for him or those of his sect. I heard the howls of wild men in battle. I saw the Papaloi set upon by two great warriors, who, I hope, tortured him a while before they put an end to him. It was every man for himself now, and I struck down the hillside. I was pursued a short distance, but under cover of night I got away, and was soon crunching the gravel of the seashore under foot. I ran right into the foaming breakers. I threw off my garments and flung them on the beach. I plunged into the delicious water. I swam out to sea. I dipped, I dove, I disported myself, I made a thousand brilliant drops leap high and shine with their glittering phosphorescence. I rolled, I wallowed, and drew the water, salt though it was, into my mouth and spat it out again, as if I would wash my interior, my mind as well as my body, from the foul stains with which I felt bedaubed and bedrabbled. As I thus refreshed myself, I heard a whistle. It came, of course, from the beach.

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"I wouldn't go out too far. You know there are sharks hereabouts," called a voice that I knew. I did not wait for the end of the sentence, but struck out hastily for shore, for I had just escaped from the jaws of one death, and had no wish to fall into the more literal ones of another.

"Where is the Captain?" I asked.

"I do not know," answered the guard. "I thought he was with you. But I am here, and I think I will get some of this stuff off me."

He squatted down close to the water's edge and began to bathe and rub his face, nearly tearing the flesh at times.

Finally, he said with a tone of relief:

"There!"

I looked up at him. There was something familiar about the man, and I asked, wondering, "Where have I seen you before?"

"Don't you know me?" he said. He struck a light and held it close to his face. It flickered and went out, but it had remained long enough to disclose his personality. It revealed to me the features of the Smith.

"You!" said I. "Where is young Trevelyan?"

"On his way to England, thank God!" said the Smith.

"And how did that happen?"

"Well, it's a long story," said the Smith, "and probably, as every one's else stories are very tiresome, this one is, too."

"I should like much to hear——" I began.

"I won't bother you with much," said the Smith. "You know I took your boat. I suppose that young beggar who threw stones at me told you. But it was a fair prize—she was floating out at sea."

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"Yes, we dragged it out of him somehow. He said you were going to join a British vessel somewhere down the——"

"Yes, that's true, too. Didn't you find the note in the cork of the bottle?"

"Yes, we found that," said I.

"I thought you would, from the Captain's nose."

"That's only sunburn," said I. "He's a very——"

"Excuse me, but we had better start. I can tell you as we walk along."

"Shan't we wait for the Captain?" said I.

"There's no chance of his finding us. See there!" He pointed to the great ball of red just showing its upper limb over the gray streak at the edge of the world.

"We had better get away," said I. "Come along," and we began to run toward the West. As we ran, the Smith told me that he had come up with the ship of whose whereabouts he had heard the pirates speak, and put young Trevelyan on board. That the next day he had been sent ashore for sand. That the day being fine, he had left the sailors in the boat and had started to walk to a tree, of which he knew, where the mamey apples were particularly fine; that while he was gone he heard firing; that he ran down hurriedly to the shore, and, to his dismay, discovered that the long boat was just nearing the ship. The boat's "recall" was fluttering at the masthead. Two vessels outside seemed to be engaged in a fight. That so soon as the small boat reached the vessel the

captain wore ship and stood down the coast, as if to avoid the sea fight, and the Lord knew where she was heading for. They will care for young Trevelyan and take him when they go home, if they ever do go, but the Lord alone knows when that will be.

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"And you," said I, "how did you get in with these fiends?"

"I have not much breath to tell you," said the Smith. "You walk so fast, and it makes little difference. I knew that I should come across some such wretches sooner or later, and so I set about staining my face at once. I have been in the island before, nearer to l'Arcahaye, a place on the other side of the island. There I learned the language, if you can call it so. I also learned to dance the *chica* and the *calenda*. It was just for deviltry that I learned. To think that it should come to such good use! Dear me! dear me!"

I then recited to the Smith our painful story, all the time hastening on, for I was anxious as to what might have happened at our new home. I asked how it was possible that the pirate Mauresco had been a Papaloi.

He told me all about Mauresco, or as much as he knew. He said that Mauresco was a wild dare-devil, fond of adventure and hairbreadth escapes. That he had somehow been thrown among these people, coming to them accredited by the then Gran' Papaloi. That the Mamanloi had become infatuated with his beauty. "And he *was* a handsome devil!" said the Smith. That the then Gran' Papaloi had died, and that Mauresco, through his influence with the Pythoness, had been made the Grand Papaloi; that he had ruled the sect as with a rod of iron, but that probably he had become sick of his bargain.

"We picked him up off this very shore," said the Smith. "I mean the Admiral of the Red did so, about five months ago. I remember to have heard him speak of a wonderful ring that he had possessed and had lost. He happened to tell me this, because he asked if I could not manage to make him another. He said he knew where there were precious stones in plenty. I recall his saying that he never could hope to find such jewels as made the eyes of the magic symbol, but that I could take my choice. The Admiral of the Red had stored many hundred pounds of coin and precious stones in the cavern; at least, he had given them to Mauresco to hide away. He only knew the secret. It is my belief that he meant to slip away from those buccaneers some day, and come back and take the jewels for himself."

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"He will never do it now," said I, "for two reasons: In the first place, he is buried as deep as hell, and, in the second place, so are they."

I then told the Smith of our killing the three knaves. He drew a long breath over each period of my recital, and jerked out the words:

"That's a good one!"

As I spoke, I gazed out over the water, where our treasure was buried. The morning sun had flooded the ocean now, and everything was swept with its golden glow. And then, as I raised my eyes, I found that we were approaching the vicinity of the cave.

"There," said I, "is the grave of your pretty friend Mauresco."

"You should thank him at least for dropping the ring," said the Smith in answer. "I can understand why the Papaloi did not want him back again. He, in that case, would have no more claim on the Pythoness."

And now we started to rise the hill. We had come quickly, walking on the wet sand just where it was hard set, and so escaping the brambles and rough gravel of the nearer shore.

As we struggled up the steep ascent, my heart began to glow in my bosom at the thought of meeting Cynthia. How would she meet me? Would she notice me at all? She would have the little boy whom Zalee had rescued. That would be a new interest for her. Well, God bless her, poor soul! Let her have any interest now and ever that would make her one tithe the happier. We were halfway up the slope. I stopped and turned to the Smith.

"There is something further that I must tell you," I said, "to prevent misunderstandings. The lady whom you will see here is my wedded wife. We were married by the Captain of the Yankee Blade, by virtue of his position as Captain, and on the deck of his ship on the high seas. For the present we are agreed not to consider ourselves as man and wife, except in name. But I want you to know this, and to know that whosoever harms or injures my wife in any way must reckon with me."

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"Bless your soul!" said the Smith, "I have a good wife of my own in Cornwall. She is the keeper of the house of the Lady Trevelyan. I can not say that I have never looked at other women, or that other women have not looked at me. But I have never wronged my good wife in deed, thank God! I could not hope in any case, were it ever so, that a lady of the standing of your wife would do more than look at one in my station."

"Stop there!" said I. "I did not dream of such a thing, but I want it understood that this lady must be treated with all respect, the more because of her unfortunate condition, and that no word shall be spoken which shall offend her dignity."

"She will get no such word from me," replied the Smith. "Thank the Lord, I know a lady when I see one."

The Smith's Cornish dialect was, I suppose, excellent. As I am an American, thank God! I can not pretend to say as to that. I can not speak the brogue, nor can I write it down, so that the Smith's speech must go for as good as mine. There were many words that I did not know. I have heard that the English say of us that we in America speak the language of Shakespeare and the Bible. I know little of the former, which, God forgive me, I placed before the Holy Book, but if we do speak the language of that book, what better can they ask of us? I have sometimes wondered if any one has ever considered what an excellent thing it has been for our country that our Pilgrim Fathers did not hail from Yorkshire, or from any counties but those where the purest English was spoken. Imagine all America speaking like my friend the Smith! Thankful also should we be that these forefathers of ours had not remained so long in Holland as to obliterate their good old English tongue. And let me say just here, Adoniah, that no matter what misunderstandings we have had with the mother country in the days just passed, and no matter how misunderstood we are of them at the day in which I write, I see a coming time when all differences will be forgotten and when English-speaking people shall rule the globe. I have a way of digressing, son Adoniah. You must pardon it.

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I asked the Smith as we came along why we had seen no natives if there were so many in the neighbourhood.

He said that these natives had all come from the eastward. That we ourselves had walked toward the eastward when we started out. That the temple was west of all the native homes on that part of the shore. That the vaudoux worshippers had come down from the back-lying districts, and from the southeast. That there had been an uprising against Christophe, and, from what he could learn, that the people from the east, who were on Christophe's side, had been told that the vaudoux sect who had captured us were inimical to Christophe, and, without asking any questions, they had attacked them, their whereabouts and their collecting together having been discovered and told by one of their native spies. I never tried to understand why the people of the island rose against each other. They had been rising from time immemorial, and one tribe or hamlet had as good reason as another. Sometimes it was because they did not like the French, who had ruled the island for a long time, and were part and parcel of it until Toussaint's massacre. Now they had returned to conquer it again. Sometimes it was a fight by the blacks against the mulattoes, sometimes the griffe against the white, sometimes the quarteron against any one of the three. They had been subjected to French rule, and Toussaint's rule, and Dessaline's, and Regaud's, and Pétion's, and Christophe's, and fifty others, and I learned from the Smith that there was no settled conviction about anything. And as to one's duties toward his neighbour, it was summed up in one word, NONE! The Smith told me that we had seen nothing as yet of the island, as we would discover later. I told him that my discoveries had been extended enough to suit me, and that my one hope was that we should find a ship standing off and on one fair morning ready to take us home. But the Smith did not encourage me in this. He said that the cave was commonly supposed to be haunted, and that was why no one ever came near it but the pirates. Even if they had heard the stories, they would not be afraid. If the ghosts of the people whom they had killed did not rise to haunt them, they need not fear the spirits of the island.

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As we talked we walked onward. Now, as we rose the hill, we came to the place where the great rock had slid downward and closed the cavern door.

"So that devil's hole is shut to the world," said the Smith, "but there is another entrance."

I said nothing. I was willing to let him believe that the gallery of which he knew nothing did not exist.

We struck into the path at the top of the hill which led to the new house. I can not forget, even though I must recall it across the vast chasm of years, the feelings with which I approached the place where my dear girl was waiting for me. No, not waiting for me, that I knew; but she was there, and all that I asked was that she should be there alive and well. It seemed to me as if I had been away a year. So many events and happenings had been crowded into the night between the hour when we set out to snare the cooing doves and the present moment, that I could not believe that it was at the most, eight or nine hours since I had seen Cynthia retire to her room with her constant and devoted companion Lacelle.

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"See!" said I to the Smith, as we walked along, "there is where we cut the palms for the laying of our floor. This is where we got the thatch." A little farther on: "That is where we cut the uprights, and it was of those straight young trees that we made our walls. Up that slight ascent we go; 'tis but a few steps more, and then we are on the crown of the hill. There we may stand and look directly down upon our house."

The poor Smith was breathless, for my thoughts and desires sent my legs spinning ahead of him, and he could hardly keep up with me. Yes, there was the old palm. Now we had passed the ironwood. Here, at last, was the mahogany which crowned the slope.

"We shall have some breakfast, at all events," ejaculated the Smith, "for I see even now the smoke of their fire."

"Down this way," said I; but even as I spoke I knew my disaster. We ran down the slope toward the open space that we had cleared with our eager hands, but a hotter, swifter hand had come to undo our work. I stood riveted to the spot.

"Is that your house?" asked the Smith, with pity in his voice.

"It was," said I. I fell back against a near tree, sick at heart and soul. The home which we had toiled so hard to make was gone. Our house was in ashes. The place was desolate.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

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### WE FIND A NEW ABODE, AND ZALEE DEPARTS TO SEEK SUCCOUR.

The place was indeed desolate! I could not believe the evidence of my eyes. The uprights of our pleasant home were still charred and smoking; the palm board floor was red and glowing, and in some places it had fallen through. There was no sign of any of the utensils, no sign of the hammocks or the articles that we had fashioned to make life supportable in this tropic desert. A strange combination of words, but home is where the heart is. Where my heart was at that moment I did not know, but I knew that the place where it was not, was a desert to me.

Imagine if you can the feelings to which I became at once a prey! My imagination ran riot. I thought of Cynthia, fallen, perhaps, into hostile hands, carried away by some terrible barbarians, forced because of her beauty to become a priestess; put to death if she refused. I did not forget the little dagger that I had given her, and I hoped that she would not forget it if the time should come. *If the time should come!* I turned sick at the thought. I must have shown my feelings in my face.

"Oh, it may not be so bad," said the Smith. "While there's life there's hope, you know."

"Do you call *that* life?" I answered; pointing to the smoking ruins.

I threw myself upon the ground. I seemed to have lost my senses. I had no thought for my own safety. The same hostile hand which burned the house might have made us prisoners again, but that thought never came to me until the Smith suggested it. Even then I cared little. If Cynthia was lost to me, it mattered not what became of me.

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"The only place for us," said the Smith, "is the cave."

"That cave again! I can not go there! Do not ask it," I exclaimed.

"We must," said the Smith, "until we find out something about your friends, and whether they are really mur—"

"Oh, do not—" I said, putting my hands before my eyes.

"Well, better come with me," said the Smith. I arose, and he led me like a blind man down the path toward the cave. We went through the passage as of old and reached the lattice chamber. Here we found traces of late occupancy. There was some food placed in an accessible spot, and I also found upon the floor a little handkerchief of Cynthia's. This I seized like a frantic man, and pressed to my heart and devoured with kisses. The Smith smiled, but I cared nothing.

"Just fancy me kissin' the missis's handkerchief!" said he. "Wouldn't she laugh!"

Possibly Cynthia would have laughed, too, but I was so miserable that just to press her handkerchief to my lips gave me a little spark of comfort.

We were famished, and we ate some of the food and left some for another time. At least, the Smith did so. I took what he gave me, and he put the rest on a jutting ledge of rock. We were both tired with the excitement and long and wakeful night, and, following the Smith's example, I lay down and soon forgot my misery in dreams—heavy sleep, rather, for I was too tired to dream. We slept the sleep of exhaustion. I judged it to be about six o'clock in the evening when I turned over. The Smith was still breathing heavily. As I turned back to rest my tired head again, something bright caught my eye. I put out my hand to grasp the tiny thing. I could not really believe that I was awake. "I am dreaming," said I to myself, and pinched my arm to awake myself. But no! I was awake, and there in my hand lay the little gold locket, half open, and my own face peeped through the opening. I sat and thought. What could this mean? Had some one found the locket down there in the stream? Yes, undoubtedly some one had found it. Who could that some one be? My heart told me at once. I had found Cynthia's handkerchief in that very spot. She had, perhaps, laid down there to sleep. At all events, she had been there not long before. She it must have been who had dropped them. She it was who at some moment, unknown to the rest of the camp, had stolen away and had fished my phiz out of the little stream. The thought gave me courage. I drank some water from one of our pails standing near and lay down to sleep again, the locket held close to my cheek. I awoke to find some one standing in the room. The bright moonlight streamed in through the lattice of leaves, and I recognised the tall slight form of the Haïtien, Zalee.

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He bowed to me respectfully, and then went and laid his finger on the shoulder of the Smith. The Smith, who had slept certainly for the best part of fourteen hours, rolled over and stood at once upon his feet.

"Now bring on your cannibals!" said he. "I feel like a fighting cock."

Zalee looked anxiously around upon the floor. I thought that I knew what he was searching for, but I did not help him out. Perhaps she had discovered her loss, and had sent him for the locket.

The Haïtien shook his head with a look as if much disappointed. Then he took up the pail, beckoned to me to come, and together the Smith and I left the cave, following in Zalee's footsteps. I noticed that Zalee did not seem at all surprised at the presence of the Smith. Then I argued that he had undoubtedly seen him before, at the time when he was unseen by us, and was to us a weird and ghostly personality.

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We followed docilely in the footsteps of Zalee. He guided us up the hill and along the path that led to the ruins of the house. He stopped a moment by the remains of our home and shook his head, then stepped briskly onward.

Zalee walked very quickly. We could hardly keep pace with him. I argued that he wished to be far from the place before morning. There was little of incident in our trip. The same sweet odours filled the air, but as we got farther away from the coast we felt the breeze less, and finally there was none. Now a gentle rain began to fall, and the wood was thick with a warm steam, which filled our eyes and nostrils and almost blinded us. The shadows in the wood were dark, and the great trees seen through the mist seemed like giants standing here and there to bar the way. We were all the time ascending, which made the journey a tiresome one. Finally we came out upon a plateau, and here it was bare of trees. We could look over the lower hills and the treetops where our house had been. We marked its situation by the column of smoke which rose steadily upward straight into the air. The rain had stopped as suddenly as it came, the mist gradually cleared away, the moon had a chance to shine out, and we stood for a moment looking downward across the waters of the indentation that we called the bay and out to sea. Then Zalee led us back to a thick fringe of trees which skirted the lower hill. As we turned to face it I saw the great citadel of Christophe, the grim and ghastly La Ferrière, loom out upon its mountain prominence, and I shuddered as I looked, for we were at least six miles nearer than we had been at the cave. Off to the left there was a steep precipice, and over this, in the uncertain light, I saw that many large birds hovered and swept downward.

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I looked inquiringly at the Smith.

"The precipice of the Grand Boucan," said he.

I had heard of this place. So that was where King Henry of the North flung his prisoners and servants when they did not succeed in pleasing him! I almost fancied that at that very moment I could see some poor wretch being hurled into the abyss which led to eternity. It was like a dreadful nightmare, and I turned away.

"I pray that we shall never get any nearer to that black brute!" said I.

Zalee put his finger on his lip and beckoned us to follow him. We again took up our march. As we were nearing the next steep rise, suddenly he put his hand on my shoulder and forced me down among the weeds and underbrush. The Smith did as he saw us do. In a few minutes there passed by us three tall men, griffe in shade. They carried enormous clubs, the most deadly bludgeons that I had ever seen. They were dressed in some light cloth, tied across their shoulders, and otherwise but for a clout were quite naked. They had large gold hoops in their ears, and upon the hand of each there glittered a thick silver ring.

"The body guard of the King," whispered the Smith. "I once saw one as a captive. I remember the dress."

The men plunged down the hill with great strides. They carried their clubs with ease, and swung them in their hands as they walked. They moved with light step and fast, and were soon lost among the lower trees.

I thanked Heaven that we had managed to lie hid without being seen. On looking back, I saw that we had come past well-tilled fields, and that there were some native huts in the distance, and I wondered again why we had never seen any one until the night of the vaudoux dance. I supposed that what the Smith said must be true, and that the natives were afraid of the cave, and so did not approach the vicinity of it. I had not noticed the cultivated land as we passed it by, because of the fog which had been so thick. Also I was in such a state of nervous tension that I could think of nothing but when we should reach our little party. I almost dreaded the arrival, for I had become so inured to disappointments that I feared what each day and hour might have in store for us.

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And now I saw that we were approaching a steeper slope than any which had preceded it. In fact, we were confronted by a wall of rock, upon whose summit grew some trees, and at whose base a fringe of foliage dimly showed itself. As we approached these lower trees I saw that they were of stupendous size, and spread their enormous roots to a great distance. It was like a forest of giants, and one had to be careful in walking that he did not stumble over the great ridges which were made by the roots, and seriously hurt himself.

We passed over a short sort of stubble, following Zalee as he skirted round among the trees. At last he approached near to the face of the rock, where grew an enormous mahogany. To all appearance its bark was close to the wall, but as we drew nearer I saw him slip behind it. The moonlight was very bright, but I thought for a moment that we had lost him. I, too, slipped behind the tree, however, motioning the Smith to follow me close, and there I found, facing me, a cavity in the rock. I involuntarily drew back.

"Another cave!" exclaimed I. Again Zalee's cold fingers closed on mine as in the old days when first we landed. I took the Smith's hand in mine, and together we walked in a line through a black

interior. I felt that we were ascending still, but I could see nothing. All that I could do was to trust to Zalee. Up, up, up, we went, until I felt that I could not drag one weary foot after the other; then we mounted a few natural steps and came out upon a level. I felt that we were taking a sharp turn to the left. The night breezes blew upon my face, and I began to see the stars overhead as we emerged from the passage upon an open plateau. It was a broad terrace of stone, half of it covered as with a roof by an overhanging rock, the rest bare of root or shrub.

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A wonderful view met my eye, and I drank it in with appreciative sighs, while wondering if Cynthia were near me. I walked to the edge of the plateau and looked downward. There was a sheer precipice below me of perhaps five hundred feet. The plateau stood out from the rock behind it, whose sides were also precipitous, rising at the back a lofty wall of stone to the height of a thousand feet or more. Nature had planted a great cube in front of the cliff, and we were upon the top of it. There was, apparently, no way of access or of egress except by the route over which we had come. I stood looking out over the distant water bathed in the moonlight, taking in the bird's-eye view, and wondering just where our cave and camp had stood. I walked to the right a distance perhaps of two hundred feet, and there I saw again those birds of evil swooping downward, and low in the valley beneath them and me I noticed some white specks glistening in the moonlight. The bones of Christophe's victims! I gazed upward and caught sight of a corner of the wall of the great citadel, and I turned away my eyes with the dreadful apprehension that we might be forced some day to make its nearer acquaintance.

It was a remarkable platform, this upon which I stood. I could see that there was no way of scaling the rock from below, as I had noticed that the precipice was undercut slightly at the base—a characteristic of many of the rocks of the island—thus giving no vantage ground for the foot. The rock above us sloped outward in the same manner over our heads. To climb it would be an impossibility, and I felt that I stood upon a pillar of rock isolated from the world. While I was musing thus, Zalee touched me upon the arm. He beckoned also the Smith, and we followed. We returned through the short passage. As we went he breathed an occasional "Hist!" and stooped and laid his ear to the ground. I saw him so when once I struck a light. Hearing nothing, he arose and proceeded, we following. Suddenly we heard the sound of feet, and I felt his hand draw me suddenly downward. I fell to the ground, whispering a caution to the Smith as I did so. There was a faint flicker as of the light of a torch. And as I lay there I heard footsteps passing the end of the passage, and voices busily talking. Why the men did not turn into the passage where we were in hiding could only be accounted for by supposing that there were many such passages leading out of the grand one, and that the secret of the plateau was not known to others beside the Haitien.

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As soon as the sound of the footsteps had died away in the distance, Zalee arose and went into the outer tunnel. There he listened intently. When satisfied that no one was coming, and that the strangers were gone, he returned to our first passage and struck a light.

I then saw lying upon the ground a tall, thin stone, which he motioned to the Smith and me to help him raise. This we did without much trouble, and we found that it fitted the opening into the passage almost perfectly—at all events, so well as not to be considered different from the other irregularities that I had noticed all along the walls. The Haitien then turned us about. He now lighted a small torch, and, Zalee preceding us, we were soon upon the terrace again. I tried to ask for Cynthia, but Zalee only shook his head, laid it upon his hand as if sleepy, and advised us to rest, as the morning would soon break. This he did by pointing to the east and then to the moon, which was disappearing behind the Grand Boucan. I saw that argument was useless, especially as we could communicate only by signs, so we retreated to the wall far back under the overhanging rock, and were soon asleep. I awoke to find the sun streaming into my eyes and to hear a voice saying anxiously:

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"Where is Uncle, Mr. Jones?"

I sat up and opened my eyes, to see Cynthia standing before me. She was in the old blue dungaree dress, and stood silhouetted against the red sun of the morning like a young goddess.

I shook my head sadly.

"I do not know," said I.

I thought that this would make trouble, and it did.

"Do you mean to say that you have left that old man alone down there?"

"I mean to say nothing," returned I, "until you speak to me more properly."

I found that I had said the right thing. You can't always be too subservient to a young woman, especially the woman who knows how you love her. She'll turn and rend you when you least expect it.

She spoke more humbly now:

"I only meant to ask where Uncle is, Mr. Jones."

"I haven't the least idea," said I. "We waited for him on the shore and in the woods. Then we thought he had returned to the house, and we made for that. When we arrived there——"

"Yes, I know," said she. "Zalee did it."

"What! fired the house?"

"Yes. He said that there was fighting down the coast, and that if the people came our way we would not be safe. So he fired the house so that it would look as if an enemy did it, and he took us to the cave where——"

"Where you lost your handkerchief," said I.

She blushed brightly.

"Oh, did you find it, Mr. Jones?"

"Yes," said I, "I found it," and I put the little white thing into her hand.

"Is—is—this all you—you found, Mr. Jones?"

I knew that she was mine then, but I was merciful. I did not answer, but turned away and walked to the edge of the cliff, where Zalee was beckoning to me. He was standing there, looking downward. On the plain, some three hundred feet below, stood a man. He was in the open, perhaps six hundred feet away as the crow flies. He was looking upward. He waved his hand, it seemed, as if in astonishment. Zalee waved back to him. Of this, however, I did not approve.

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Lacelle came up at that moment. The Smith followed.

"Tell him," I said, "that they will find us here if we show ourselves in this way." The Smith made Zalee understand this. He laughed, shook his head, and showed his white teeth.

"He says you may show yourselves as much as you like; they have no idea how to get up here," said Cynthia, who had joined us.

"Where is the Bo's'n?" asked I. At that moment the Bo's'n emerged from some concealment to the westward of where we were standing. In his arms he carried the little boy who had been rescued by Zalee the night before. Besides the child, he carried the spyglass. He had made the glass his special care. It stood to him in place of the family Bible. The reverence that he felt for this useful article stood us in good stead. I took the glass.

"I wonder what that savage wants," said I.

"He wants to know how to get up here," said the Smith.

"Can it be Uncle?" asked Cynthia.

"No," said I; "he's as black as that funereal bag of yours. The only difference is he hasn't a white spot on him." The man waved and gesticulated.

"I wouldn't show myself out on the edge of that terrace," said the Smith. "They'll surely find a way up here if they see us."

"Zalee said there was no danger," said I; but I retreated, leaving the man gesticulating.

"It's some ruse, I suppose," said the Smith.

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I could not help crawling to the edge of the rock a little later, however, and peering through the leaves which fringed its extreme limit. The man was still looking upward. So he stood for a few moments, and then turned reluctantly, I thought, toward the path leading to the one up which we had clambered, and was lost in the thick undergrowth.

"I think it extremely unsafe," said I. "I think we have tempted Providence enough."

"Zalee is always right, Mr. Jones," said Cynthia. "What do you think can have become of Uncle?"

"I think that he will go to the cave as we did, and that if Zalee goes down again to-night he may find him."

"But he can't go every night," said Cynthia. "We were very much worried when he said that he must go last night. It is many miles from here—eight, perhaps. Zalee went down hoping to find you all, and then you must remember that he and the Bo's'n carried all our belongings up here the day and night before. And then he had the child to care for."

"Oh," said I, "I was wondering what had become of the boy."

"What boy? Oh, that little friend of Zalee's. He seems to have found the child in the wood. Lacelle seemed so glad to see him. Wasn't it strange that such a child should be wandering all alone at that time of night. They have a queer way of treating children in this island."

"They have, indeed!" said I.

I saw that she knew nothing of the terrible practice which we had witnessed, and I had no intention of enlightening her.

We then sat down to eat such food as the Bo's'n had prepared, and the others resumed while doing so their surmises about the Skipper. As for me, I had much to think of.

Our party had now been augmented by the presence of a little boy who could aid us in nothing, who must be taken care of at all hazards. And we had lost the cheery presence of the Skipper. The Minion, too, was gone, but he did not enter into my calculations, for I thought that, though we were well rid of him, he was a young man who would always come up smiling. I could not but

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wonder how long we were to remain here, and if Zalee had any plan for us. It seemed so strange to suddenly be cast on the mercy and kindness of a half savage in the wilds of Haïti that I could hardly help smiling. How long, I wondered, were we to remain perched on this isolated cliff waiting for some one to come to our aid. I asked Cynthia what plans had been made, if any. She answered that Lacelle had told her that Zalee had a plan, and that he would tell it to us after supper. So that evening, when the work of the day was done, Zalee told us of his plan. Rather, he told Lacelle. She communicated it to Cynthia and the Bo's'n together, and they in turn told me.

Zalee said that American ships sometimes came into the harbour of Le Cap. He had heard of them from his uncle, who once had been to the town. That no one seemed to know where America was, as they knew of nothing but France, and the chiefs and generals in the island, against whom they fought constantly. But Zalee said that he had heard that coffee was sent to that far-off land America, and that if he could find a coffee vessel there, he would get the captain to take a letter to America for us. Then perhaps they would send a ship for us from our home. I shook my head.

"That seems a very uncertain way," said I. "We must have a consul there, and he is bound to help us if he hears our story. The only danger is that between all these contending parties and forces no one will consider himself responsible for our safety. Should anything happen to us, they can all of them lay it on the other, which won't help our case at all. I believe the southern provinces are beginning to revolt against Christophe already."

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When this was explained to Zalee, he shook his head and said that his way was best. That "consite"<sup>[D]</sup> liked to stay at Port au Prince. The Smith suggested that we should all start with Zalee and try to reach Le Cap.

[D] Haïtien for consul.

It seemed almost incredible that within fifteen or sixteen miles of us there might be an American of authority who could save us, and who undoubtedly would if he knew of our unhappy condition. Yet the difficulty was to get a message to him. At the time of which I write there was no respect felt in the island for strangers. The Haïtiens had overcome the French and were puffed up with pride of power, and nothing short of official authority would compass our ends. In the first place, the roaming bands which we might meet would not believe our story, and, in the second place, they could pretend to doubt it even if it sounded like truth in their ears. I might start and try to make the trip myself, but I could not expose Cynthia to the unknown dangers of such a journey, and I could not leave her alone with these men, who were probably trustworthy, but whom to be certain of, I had not proved sufficiently.

I turned to Cynthia. Her trials had told upon her. She looked thinner and more fragile than she had even a few days ago. I did not see how she was to compass the journey. I shook my head. There was, perhaps, a little moisture in my eye.

"We had better stay here," said I. "I can see nothing else for it. Then the consul can make a demand on Christophe for us, and threaten him with the wrath of our Government if he does not send us to Le Cap." Not that I had much faith in that plan, either.

"I would rather start," said Cynthia. "Why can't we, Mr. Jones?"

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"You could not do it. The natives are too uneasy. Bands of rebels may be wandering in these woods. And then there is the Captain. Have you forgotten him?"

"Oh, no, of course not. I am afraid that I did forget for a moment. No, I can not leave Uncle."

I knew that her remaining would make no difference to the Skipper, who, if he had not made a meal for some vaudoux chief, might be languishing in durance until they decided what to do with him.

"We will do as Zalee says," said I. "When does he purpose starting?"

"As soon as he gets food enough collected to be able to leave us for three or four days," answered Cynthia.

The next few days we spent in collecting what food we could, and making it ready against the time when Zalee should be gone. Lacelle told us that he must make a slight détour, as he intended taking the little boy back to his mother. Lacelle looked wistful when she told Cynthia this, and I gathered that it was because her home was near that of the child; but at a cheering word from Zalee she smiled again. She told Cynthia that Zalee had said that they must be wanderers until the island was more settled. That now no one knew which side to be on. That Dessalines and Regaud had been as bad as Pétion, and that Boyer was now warring against Christophe, and if one could not decide which would prove the winning side, he had better secrete himself until these unhappy days were over. I had been curious, I must confess, as to where Cynthia and Lacelle were housed, but motives of delicacy kept me from asking. Now Cynthia turned to Lacelle, and told her that she might show me the rooms which they occupied.

Upon the right side of the terrace a narrow path ran under an arch, and, passing this, one walked along the cliff for a few feet. The path crossed a broad crack in the rock and came to a small opening, which led to two natural caves. They were very small, one beyond the other, both facing the ocean, as did the terrace. One looked out from them as one does from an Italian loggia. I did not more than glance at the entrance to the first one, but I saw that if our position was

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inaccessible, Cynthia's was even more so.

I have not told of the trickling stream that ran down outside of the terrace from the mountain heights above. Certainly Zalee would not have chosen a place of refuge where there was not a plentiful supply of water.

And now came the time for Zalee to start. I must confess that I saw him prepare to go with a heart full of forebodings. I wondered when he would return, if ever. But he turned to me with his sweet smile, showing his white even teeth, and taking Lacelle's hand, laid it in mine with a bow that would have done honour to a courtier. It was if he had said: "I leave my all with you. I trust her with you. You can trust me to return."

We had food prepared to last for five days at least. We should not starve. And we sat ourselves down to wait as well as we could for Zalee's return. I had given him a note to the consul, written on a scrap of paper which Cynthia had torn from the little note-book, and he started off with it, in its double case of paper, tied round his neck with a piece of Cynthia's silk, and the little lad held safely in his arms. The child had frightened eyes, and I wondered if his reason was intact. He must have suffered terribly during the time that he was confined under the altar of the temple. He told Lacelle that he was in a box with a serpent. That the creature coiled itself round his body. That he was there for three days and nights; that he saw the light come and go three separate times. I could hardly believe this, but Zalee seemed to think it quite true.

When I asked why the serpent did not injure the child Zalee told me, through the string of interpreters, that the large serpents that are chosen as the gods of the vaudoux rites are harmless. This was at least one redeeming feature amid all the horrors of that dreadful practice.

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The Bo's'n and I put the stone up against the opening after Zalee's departure, and I must confess that I wondered who would remove it.

Something that happened during our stay in this new place I almost dread to tell you, and yet it is a more than solemn fact, and will show to you a tithe, perhaps, of the anxiety that our stay there caused me. One morning the Smith and I had volunteered to secure some mangoes. I had heard Cynthia express a wish for some, and she so seldom asked for anything but the simple food that we had to divide among us, that I decided to skirt down the hill to a tree of which I knew and bring some to the plateau. We listened at the door of our passage, and, hearing no sound, we removed the slab of stone and ran down the underground way, feeling the wall with our hands to guide us. When we reached the outer air we struck into the woods toward the west, and were soon at the mango tree. The Smith was an expert climber, and so I allowed him to climb up among the great branches, while I stood below to catch the fruit. I caught all that I could as he dropped them, that they might not be bruised, and when I had collected what I thought a sufficient quantity I called to him to come down.

"There are some fine ones out on that lower limb," said he. "I should like to get those for the lady, if you don't mind."

I saw him crawling out on the long, strong limb. He laid along it like a serpent, and, as it was a lower limb, he was not far from the ground. All at once I heard an exclamation of horror, and the Smith dropped from the branch. I ran to him, and found that he was bending over a figure lying among the grass and weeds. It was that of a young man of perhaps twenty years of age. He was lying on his back, his eyes staring upward. He was cold in death. How can I write the rest! From the region of the heart a tube or hollow sort of reed stood up perpendicularly in the air. No! I can not write it. The "loup garou" had been there before us, and without the excuse of the vaudoux rites! They had, indeed, been wolves to their own kind. Vampires, I might say! I turned my head while the Smith withdrew the tube and the sharp instrument at its end, which had made the incision.

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"First the trance," said the Smith, "and then death! Fortunately, the victims know nothing usually of the manner of their end."

We had no way to dig a grave for the poor young fellow, so we carried him to a cleft in the rock of which I knew and dropped the body down. This terrible incident impressed me as nothing else (not even the sacrifice of the children) had. There was something so horrible in the fact of the young man meeting his fate alone in that deep, dark wood! I was ready to slay the first creature that I came across, but we met no one in returning, and got safely into the passageway and replaced the rock. Then the horror of it all overcame me, and I dropped in the tunnel like a stone.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

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### WE MEET FOR THE SECOND TIME WITH "LE BRUIT DU GOUFFRE," AND I TAKE ANOTHER JOURNEY.

I awoke at the touch which, I believe, would bring me back from death.

It was Cynthia.

"How you *have* slept!" said she. "I have been here several times to call you."

I did not confess my weakness nor the cause for it. I arose at once, though my knees were weak and trembling, and followed Cynthia out on to the terrace.

"That man has come back," said Cynthia. "I wonder you didn't meet him when you went to get the mangoes. What is the matter? How pale you turned all of a sudden!"

I did not answer, but walked out to the edge of the rocky plateau. I looked downward and could see the man. He was standing in a little grassy glade, and was making motions as if he wished to communicate with us. He was very far below us, and we could hear no sound, although I thought that I saw him put his hands to his mouth as if to make a tube through which to call to us. I did not know what to do. Zalee, our dependence, was gone. We had already been foolhardy in making even the short excursion that we had taken, and I did not dare further to tempt Providence.

As we looked down, the man continued waving. He seemed to have a branch of some kind in his hand. He wore almost no clothing, and limped as he moved about, seeming footsore and weary. [Pg 326]

"Can it be Uncle?" asked Cynthia, with that womanly perception which was seldom wrong.

"The Captain is not black," said I. "No, it is not the Captain. Can it be Zalee returned?"

Lacelle shook her head when we asked her this. She said that Zalee would never go down there and make any sign or demonstration to attract the eyes of others to our hiding place. She thought that the stranger was some spy, who was trying to discover how we reached our present retreat. "He may be one of Christophe's men come to seek us," she added.

I still continued to gaze at the man, and he to beckon and wave eagerly at us. I wished in my heart that I knew just who he was—whether we ought to help him, or whether he was an enemy who would betray our hiding place, so that Zalee upon his return would find us gone. And now I saw two men come out of the wood. They were persons of great stature, and carried clubs in their hands, and I recognised them even at that distance as two of Christophe's body guard. As the stranger turned and saw them he started to flee, but they were upon him in a moment, whirling those terrible clubs round their heads and undoubtedly ordering him to stop. This he soon did, when I saw them come up with him and bend over him, for he seemed to have fallen from exhaustion or fright. I saw them busy themselves with him, and finally he was made to stand upon his feet and march ahead, the two driving him as if he had been an animal. They disappeared in the wood, and I saw them no more.

Cynthia was very sad and downhearted after this incident.

"Poor Uncle may be treated in just the way that those negroes treated that black man," said she. Her eyes filled with tears.

I tried to comfort her with the assurance that the Skipper must be far from that spot and in safe keeping. That perhaps he had walked to Cap Haïtien; but she did not smile, and I heard her in the recesses of our silent rock sobbing far into the night. [Pg 327]

I have said little of the wonderful vines that grow everywhere in this magic land. Like those that grew downward from the centre of our first cave, they trailed long and strong from the rock overhead, reaching almost to the broad, flat surface which now made our floor. They grew downward also from our plateau toward the ground. At the place where they ended others started, I suppose, and I know that the growth was such that they overlapped, and that one standing below could not imagine the nature of the place where we had found refuge. The green of the mountain seemed to have no break. Such was the assurance that Zalee had given Lacelle.

The third evening after Zalee's departure closed in sadly for all of us. It was difficult to be cheerful in our desolate situation, and my night dreams brought to me many a fearful thought and vision. There were distant mutterings of thunder, and again that same rumbling sound that we had heard the day before the hurricane had overcome us.

"*Le bruit du gouffre!*" said Lacelle again, over and over, as she looked anxiously toward the eastward, where the thick clouds were gathering. Before I lay down to sleep I heard Cynthia calling to me. I went under the arch and stepped across the rift in the rock, which by only a few inches separated her from me. But even this was too much. Somehow I was uneasy and nervous, and I met Cynthia with the words:

"I wish that you would come down to the terrace to sleep. Somehow I don't like to have you so far away."

Cynthia's face flushed as she said: "I only wanted some water. I can't see why we are not as well off here as down on the terrace; certainly, as no one can come through the passage, we are all of us safe. But should any one find out our secret, they might take you off without discovering us at all." [Pg 328]

"I wonder how you would live then?" said I.

"I wonder, too," said Cynthia, casting down her eyes. I pondered over this, and asked myself whether I could take courage and whether her tone meant more for me than the words implied.

Finding Cynthia stubborn, I went back and lay down again. Some drops of rain had begun to fall, and I got as far back under the shelter of the overhanging rock as I could. Here I was dry, as were the Bo's'n and the Smith. We lay near the western end, that the east wind might not drive

the rain under our roof.

I lay awake a long time listening to the storm. The wind had grown much higher, and was soughing and moaning round our eyrie. I had terrible impulses at times. I thought, what if I should crawl near the edge of the rock and throw myself off, and so end all this misery and anxiety! It seemed almost more than I could bear. No one would know but that I had fallen off in my sleep, and then this terrible question of how we were to get home to Belleville, or to any civilized land, would be set at rest forever for me. The desire was so strong at times to end my life in this way, that once I arose and walked halfway to the edge of the cliff. But suddenly I awoke to the horror of what I intended doing. I thought of the cowardice of leaving Cynthia to face the difficulties and dangers alone, and, with a flash of lightning to aid me, I ran back through the darkness to my shelter, and lay down and clutched at the rough projections of the wall and held to them with frantic grip, as if some being stronger than I were trying to drag me away. Thank God, my will vanquished those evil thoughts, and, after giving thanks for my rescue, soul and body, I succumbed, exhausted with the battle which the two combatants had waged within me, and was asleep before I knew it.

The rain poured down, the wind howled, but I slept on. I heard the faint rumblings of the "*bruit du gouffre*" through my dreams; then, all at once, it grew louder, there was a stupendous crash, and I sat up, the terrible sound still splitting my ears. Gradually, with a rattle and a rumble, it died away. I felt a clutch upon my arm. [Pg 329]

"For God's sake, what was that?" said the Bo's'n. His hand was trembling, his voice shook with terror. I found myself staring out under the edge of our roof, trying to see something in the darkness. I stood up. I groped about.

"Better keep quiet till we have some light," said the Bo's'n.

I struck my flint, but the flash only showed me the Bo's'n's frightened, drawn face, and made the night blacker than ever. We heard constant rumblings and crashes all around us, but we waited for a few moments, and then during a lull heard Cynthia's voice. I made a light again, and, holding to the rock, I crawled nearer to the place where she and Lacelle were.

"Don't move!" I shouted. "Stay in your cave until we have some light."

"What was that, Mr. Jones?" she called. Her voice trembled.

"I can't tell now," said I. "Try to sleep, and as soon as it is light I will come to you."

"Very well," called back Cynthia, with as confident a tone as if she had been speaking down the stairs of her own house at home. Whether she felt concerned or not she did not show it, and I felt that, whatever happened to us, she would put forth a brave front to the world, whatever world it might be with which she should come in contact.

I did not sleep again. I lay listening to the Bo's'n's snores and the Smith's groans, and wondered when day would break.

I had been lying wide awake for perhaps an hour when I again heard Cynthia's voice. These were the words that she said: [Pg 330]

"Mr. Jones! Mr. Jones!" she called; "I don't know where to put my foot. I can't find any place to put my foot."

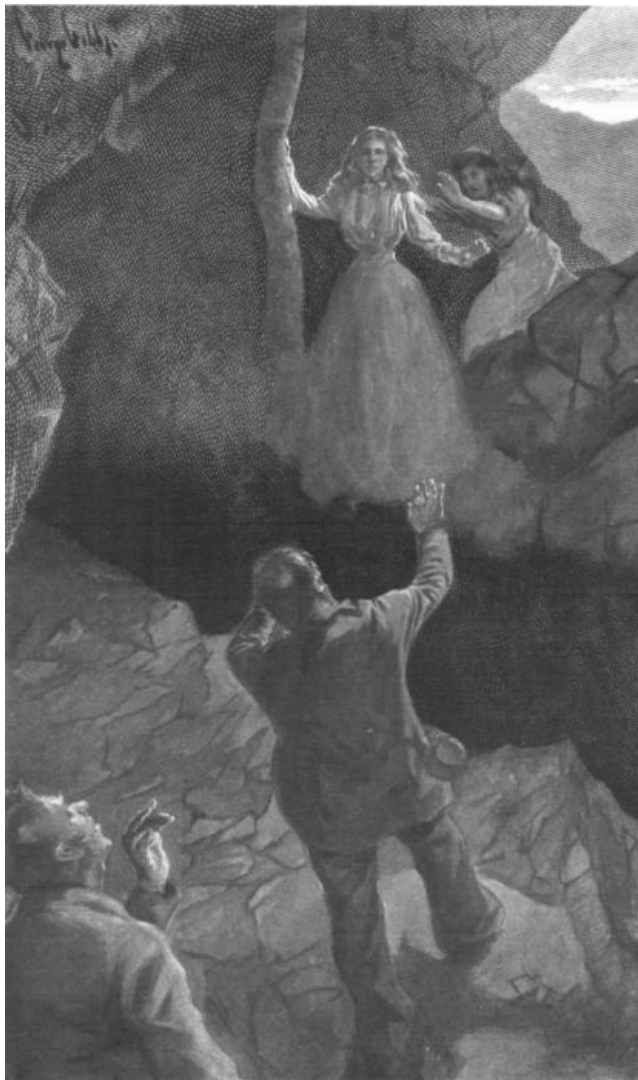
I arose hastily at her first word. There was now a very faint streak of light in the east, a dull light which betokened a gloomy day. I could, however, see enough to walk safely, though it was like the dusk of a summer evening at home. I groped my way toward where I heard her voice. As I approached her retreat, I heard her call again:

"I don't know where to put my foot!"

I had my suspicion of what the matter might be. I struck my flint, and just in time for myself, for I found that I had come to a halt upon the edge of an open abyss of perhaps ten or twelve feet in width. The small crack which we had crossed with such unconcern had been the weak spot of our structure. The earthquake had torn out a mass of rock and had left Cynthia and Lacelle upon the other side, entirely isolated from the rest of us. The light increased now with every moment, and I saw to my horror that Cynthia was standing on the very edge of the chasm. She had one arm round a young tree and one foot close to its base. With the other foot she was feeling down the side of the chasm, endeavouring to find a foothold. Her fine hair was hanging down over her shoulders, her eyes were wide and staring, and as she felt—felt—felt—with the toe of her poor worn shoe, my heart stopped beating, I am sure, for a few seconds. I knew not what to do. The chasm was too great for me to leap, for she stood some feet above me. I did not dare to speak. My God! if there was ever a worse moment in any man's life, I should like to hear of it.

Again she called:

"Mr. Jones! Mr. Jones! do come and help me. I can't find any place to put my foot."



**Cynthia was standing on the very edge of the chasm.**

God in heaven! What should I do? Can you imagine how my feelings overcame me when I saw Lacelle issue from the sleeping chamber? Her face was white and terrified. She came cautiously, and when she saw the great rift between the plateau and the place where she and Cynthia stood, her lips became bloodless. Her senses did not desert her, however. She laid her finger upon her lip and shook her head at me. Then she reached out one hand and grasped the tree behind Cynthia's standing place. She laid the other hand very, very gently on Cynthia's arm. She slipped her fingers up toward the elbow, and gradually drew the girl toward her. For a moment I thought that Cynthia was gone. She swayed slightly, and I feared to see her open her eyes and, perceiving the great chasm beneath her feet, dash headlong into it. But Lacelle was equal to her task. I have sometimes wondered if she had magnetic power. For in a moment more Cynthia had withdrawn her foot, had placed it on firm ground, and with Lacelle was slowly ascending the gentle slope which led to her retreat. I fell backward upon the rock floor. My strength seemed gone. I lay there limp as a piece of seaweed, my face covered with my hands. The Bo's'n turned over, took a long breath, and opened his eyes. The first thing that he saw was my recumbent figure, and that I was shaking in every limb. He knelt by me and took my hands from my face.

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"Why, Mr. Jones, sir," said he, "ef you ain't cryin'!"

Perhaps I was, God knows! The great dread and the sudden relief had shaken me physically and mentally. The Bo's'n brought me some water.

When I could speak, "Bo's'n," said I, "how are we going to get to her?"

"Who, sir?" asked the Bo's'n.

I lifted myself up on my feet like an aged man. The Bo's'n arose with me.

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"Look there!" said I, pointing to the abyss; "and she is on the other side."

"Does Mrs. Jones know it, sir?" asked the Bo's'n.

I started. It was some time since I heard the Bo's'n speak of Cynthia in that way.

"No," said I, "I think not. Lacelle does."

"Could you leap it, sir?" asked the Bo's'n wistfully.

"I don't see how I could," said I. "It isn't even like jumping down across a place that is as wide as that. It is not like jumping downward at all. I hardly think I could do it then. It must be anywhere from eight to ten feet wide. And, as you see, it is a little above us. No, I certainly could not do it."

The Bo's'n stepped back and looked critically up over the roof of our shelter. It was growing light—the light of a dull early morning.

"I thought there might be some way of getting to them with the vines on the roof, but I see that it is straight up, up, up, sir. Looks like there was no stop to it."

"Even if we could get up there, what good would it do them?"

"Suppose we go out into the passage and look for help."

"Who would help us? We should perhaps fall into the hands of some of these roaming savages. They might treat us well, and they might not. That is not to be thought of. Suppose we met with some of those—Oh, I forgot you were not with us! Let us consult with the Smith."

The Smith had slept through the entire storm. I now awoke him and told him what had befallen us. He seemed much concerned, and said that it looked serious.

"But don't you be worried, Mr. Jones," said he. "I've been in tighter places than this." This reminded me forcibly of the Skipper.

"You may have been," said I, "but I don't think I have, much."

And now I heard Cynthia's voice calling to me again.

I went to the edge of the chasm. There I found her standing on the other side, holding tight to the sapling.

"Don't come so near, for God's sake!" said I.

She was looking blankly at the great abyss, as if she were dreaming.

"How did it happen?" she said.

"How does anything happen?" asked I. "As if we didn't have enough to worry us without having that piece of rock fall."

"Do you think that we can ever get back to you?" asked Cynthia.

"If you don't, I'll jump off the cliff," said I.

"Don't talk so foolishly, Mr. Jones," said Cynthia, smiling at me. "While there's life, there's hope. Perhaps there is another entrance to the terrace from where we are. If Zalee were only here, he could tell us. He seems to know these mountains as if they were his own home, but I have asked Lacelle if there is any other way out. She says that Zalee said nothing about it."

"Don't you think she might prospect a little?" said I.

"How do you mean?" asked Cynthia.

"Why, walk up your little shelf as far back as it goes, and see if there is no way out for you. I feel so helpless." I wrung my hands nervously. "I can do nothing."

"Don't worry," said Cynthia, looking brightly at me. "I am sure we shall find some way out of it. The only trouble is that I am dreadfully hungry."

"We can throw you some food," said I.

"And water?"

"No, I'm afraid not. But it won't be long, I am sure, until we have devised some means of rescuing you."

Cynthia sat down on the rock and put her hands over her face. I thought that she was crying until I heard the laughter bubbling forth.

"I really can not help it," she said. "Do excuse me, but you look so woebegone. So many things have happened that I really am not at all afraid that we shan't get out of this as we have out of all our other troubles. Now I'll go and send Lacelle to see if she can find any opening."

It was clear to my mind that Cynthia knew nothing of her night's peril, and I thought that it was as well not to enlighten her.

She disappeared inside her sleeping chamber, and soon after I saw Lacelle issue from the archway and proceed up the slope. The rock ran back a very little way at this point—fifty feet, perhaps—and then the cliff shot upward again with the same irregular outward slope. I saw Cynthia moving about in her cave. She seemed to be picking up her things.

She looked out once, and nodded down the slope at me.

"I'm packing," she called, a smile on her lips. Poor soul! Packing, indeed! I saw that she had the mortuary bag in her hand, and that she was placing her few belongings within it. She was kneeling down, finishing this work or else trying to make more, when I saw her start. I heard a faint scream, and looked up to see Lacelle come flying down the hillside. Cynthia went to meet her. I could see that they were talking, as was their custom, by signs and a few words.

"She says there are enormous snakes up there," called Cynthia. Lacelle nodded her head

violently, and rounded her arms to an enormous circle.

"She says they are so big," said Cynthia, imitating Lacelle.

"I don't believe they are harmful, ma'm," said the Smith, joining me. "The Papalois use 'em, and they are not poisonous."

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"What are those, Mr. Smith?" called Cynthia. "Papalois, I mean."

I nudged the Smith.

"She knows nothing of those wretches," I said. "Why under heaven can't you keep your tongue between your teeth?"

"They are the books on snakes and such things, ma'm, which I have read about this da—this island."

"Oh!" said Cynthia. "I'll tell her." She turned to Lacelle and began to talk with lips and fingers, and then turned again to us.

"She says some are and some are not. I'm sure I hope these are not."

"If the snakes are poisonous, those ladies are on the wrong side of the fence," said the Smith.

The Bo's'n now came toward us. He had a small parcel in his hand. It consisted of some birds' eggs, which he had boiled hard and had kept in a cool place within the passage, and some fruit. He made motions as if to throw it toward Cynthia.

"Don't!" said she. "Let me send you my bag."

She stooped and picked from the ground a tough vine—behucca they call it in Santo Domingo; liano, in South America. She tied one end through the handles and prepared to swing the bag down and across the chasm.

"Hold fast to the other end!" shouted I, for an idea had struck me. So soon as I had received the end of the vine I asked:

"How much more have you of the vine?"

"Oh, yards and yards."

"Well, let me have all that you can spare without letting go of the end." Soon I had enough of the vine on my side of the chasm to more than reach back to Cynthia.

"Take your end round the tree," said I, "and then throw it to me." She did as I told her. At first the vine fell short of the terrace, but she bravely pulled it back to her and tried again, and finally I was rewarded by catching the end in my hand.

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"Now," said I, "if you can tie those ends securely together, we shall have a sort of endless chain." She did so, I holding the loop. Then I put some food in the bag and fastened it to the vine, and we sent it over by pulling on the loop and letting the knot go round the tree. Had I slipped the handles of the bag over the vine, it would only have slid down to us again.

"I can send you some water in the same way," said I, "if the vine is strong enough."

"There are plenty of vines," said the Smith.

"Go and collect all you can find, you and the Bo's'n," said I, for a new thought had struck me.

The Bo's'n and the Smith now went to the arch of rock which covered our sleeping place and tore down from above great handfuls of the trailing creepers. Some of them were so strongly rooted that we could not move them, but many came easily away from the earth, and soon the floor of the terrace was thickly strewn with them. I stooped over the precipice and tore up all that I could reach.

"Now," said I, "we will make a bridge." I told Cynthia at once what we intended doing, and she seated herself with Lacelle, and together they watched us at our work.

I told the Bo's'n and the Smith to lay many strands of the vine on the floor and weave other vines in and out.

"Why can't we do that up here?" asked Cynthia.

"I am afraid you would not make them strong enough," said I; "but if you think you could, you might try." I felt that it would amuse them perhaps, and would make the time pass more quickly.

We wove busily for an hour or two, and finally we had made eight or ten broad, closely filled mats. They were each about sixteen feet long. We wove them together two and two lengthwise, and then placed some on the top of others, thus making several layers. These we bound securely together, and when we had finished we found that we had woven a broad and strong platform, which I was sure would hold a much heavier weight than that of a slight young girl.

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"The most important thing now," said I, "is that you should secure it well on your side. See how we have fastened these strong vines to your end of the bridge. When we send it over you must tie these strands round those trees, two and two. Fasten them very securely."

"No slippery hitches," said the Smith, "if you please, miss."

"No granny knots, Mrs. Jones, ma'm," added the Bo's'n.

Cynthia flushed as she always did when the Bo's'n addressed her thus, and cast her eyes on the ground.

We fastened the bridge to the rope of vine, and together Cynthia and Lacelle pulled it across. They then began to secure it to the tree. We three stood a few feet back from the edge of the chasm, bracing ourselves and holding our end of the bridge level and firm. The proceeding took some time. There were mistakes on their part and much instruction on ours. Finally, however, the platform was ready. Then my heart began to thump as if it would burst through my body. I wondered now if, after all our care, the bridge would hold Cynthia. I suggested this doubt to the Smith.

"Lord, yes!" he said. "You can hang by a single vine of good size. There ain't any fear of that. If they'll only look ahead and not downward, they will be all right."

I need not re prolong my agony. It was wearing enough and anxious enough then. I could not bear to look as Cynthia put her foot on the bridge.

"Try it first," I cried anxiously.

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"I am not afraid," said she. "I am sure that you would make it strong enough."

Cynthia then turned to Lacelle, and asked her if she would like to go first, or if she, Cynthia, should do so.

Lacelle was ready to do either. Talk about bravery in men! I never saw anything to compare with those two women. For after all, though most people can usually stand a great and sudden shock, the test is, it seems to me, the bearing up under constant and wearing daily inconveniences, troubles, and anxieties.

"I think I had better come first," said Cynthia, "for if it holds me it will Lacelle. She is lighter than I am." She turned and kissed the Haitienne and then stepped confidently out on the bridge.

I shall never forget her as I saw her then. She had lost the pins with which she used to confine her hair, and it was constantly tumbling about her shoulders. She had no more than set her foot upon the ladder than down came that splendid golden veil. For a moment I was fearful that this would unnerve her, but, though the wind blew her fine hair about and across her eyes, she started boldly out on the narrow span.

"Hold out your hands," I shouted, "and balance yourself."

She did as I told her. With heightened colour and wide eyes, her hair making a cloak about her lithe figure, she stepped quickly out on the bridge. It seemed ages to me, but it was in reality but a moment from the time that she started until I held her in my arms. She disengaged herself and bound up her hair.

Then Lacelle started, and when she was safe I threw the bridge away. It dangled helplessly from the other side. I had no wish that Cynthia should try it at night in one of those strange somnambulistic moments of hers.

We made for Cynthia and Lacelle a sleeping place, laying down the vines which had remained after we had finished the bridge. After a long day, we ourselves retired within the passage, and all went to sleep early and soundly, thanking God that no greater dangers had come to us.

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Our troubles seemed to come upon us usually at night. But I lay down on that evening feeling that for one space of seven or eight hours at least we might hope for rest of mind, if not of body. How delusive are such hopes! I was awakened by a slight exclamation, and turned over to find several figures standing between me and the moonlight, which shone on the terrace. As well as I could see, they were dressed in the costume which we had observed upon the three black men whom we had met on our journey to the cave. I sprang to my feet and rushed out on to the terrace, calling to the Bo's'n and the Smith to awake. They heard the terror in my tones and arose at once, if a little more sleepily than I. I found five men standing on the terrace looking down on Cynthia and Lacelle, who were asleep in each other's arms. I drew my pistol, but only a flash in the pan rewarded me, and I rushed at the men single-handed. I threw my body at one of them who was nearest the edge of the terrace, hoping by this means to push him over the steep fall of rock. He only laughed, and in turn seized me by the wrists. The men were giants, and, though I was accounted an athletic young fellow enough, I soon found myself lying on the ground, bound ankle and wrist, like a trussed chicken. I felt extremely awkward, and dreaded the moment when Cynthia should awake and see me in this ridiculous position. It was an easy matter for the five men to overpower the sleepy Smith and the Bo's'n, and soon we were all lying on our backs, and Cynthia and Lacelle were at the mercy of the black wretches.

Perhaps you can imagine how I felt. I can not bear to think of it! The noise of our scuffling awoke Cynthia, and her moving in turn awoke Lacelle. I shall never forget the look of horror which my poor girl turned upon those five enormous creatures. They must have struck dread to her very soul with their black skins and glittering white teeth. They were armed with heavy bludgeons, such as I had seen in the hands of the three whom we had met on our way to the terrace that first night, and doubtless they were, some of them, the same.

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Cynthia sprang at once to her feet, and, pointing to where I lay, demanded that I be released at once. She turned to Lacelle and said:

"Tell them that this is my husband!" It was almost worth being pinioned there to hear that declaration, but Lacelle shook her head as if she had not understood. As Lacelle arose slowly, I heard her give an exclamation of surprise, and saw that she started as she looked toward the men. It seemed to me that a glance of recognition passed between one of them and the girl, but she quickly looked away again, and seemed to be as angry, though not as much terrified, as Cynthia. She stood boldly out in the moonlight and asked the strangers what they wished, and what right they had to subject us to such indignities.

One of them answered her in a rather long speech, in which I heard the name "Christophe" several times. From this I judged that Christophe had sent to capture us. I was quite right in my surmises, and I now found that Zalee was not infallible in his judgment. We had shown ourselves carelessly upon the rock, and, when we least thought it, they had been spying upon us. Orders had been given to search the passage thoroughly, and this was the result. It had always seemed strange to me that Zalee alone should have possessed this secret, but I argued with myself that Christophe was not a native of this country, rather of St. Kitts first and Santo Domingo later, and that many of the people about him were not native Haïtiens, but followers from other islands.

The griffes listened to Lacelle, showing their white teeth and smiling at her rage. Then the biggest and stoutest, evidently the leader, began to speak. He often pointed to us, who were lying on the rock floor of the terrace, and then up toward the mountain or the entrance of the passageway. Finally, Lacelle turned to Cynthia and began to translate. With the aid of the Bo's'n and the Smith, it was explained that some one had reported to King Henry, as he often chose to call himself, that there was a party of foreigners wandering about down by the coast. That the three had been sent out to intercept us on the night that we met them; but, failing of their errand, Christophe had sent them back again, and that now that they had found us, they had no intention of letting us go.

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"He told us not to harm the prisoners," said the spokesman. "The King likes to inflict most punishments himself."

This was a pleasant outlook for us.

I glanced at the Bo's'n. His face was swollen to twice its natural size. He was lying on the ground moaning as if in great agony. I saw that he would be of little use to aid our escape, and turned my attention to the others.

"He says that if you men will go quietly he will unbind your ankles, but not your hands. As for us, he knows that we can do nothing, so we are not to be bound at all," explained Cynthia.

Of course, we promised. What else could we do? And so started out through the passage which had been the entrance to our latest home. We found the slab of stone laid carefully on edge along the wall of the passage. It was proof of the quiet manner in which these men had worked that we had heard nothing until they chose that we should be awakened.

We started then, all five, with our five captors. The women stepped freely and at will, but we were told to walk steadily and not venture to turn round, or it would be the worse for us. We had nearly reached the passageway when Cynthia uttered a hurried exclamation and ran back to the terrace. I also turned to rush after her. I feared that her troubles had driven her mad, and that she would throw herself off the cliff; but I was seized and turned to the right about by two strong fellows, while two more ran after Cynthia. The fifth, the torch bearer, remained leaning unconcernedly against the wall. He it was who seemed to have known Lacelle, and I saw his lips move and his eyes roll, as if he had communicated something to her worth knowing.

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In a moment or two Cynthia came back, but the guards returned ahead of her. They were laughing, but looking behind them somewhat uneasily. When they came up to us, Cynthia explained.

"I only forgot my bag. I couldn't go without that, you know." She looked very determined, however, and I saw that if she carried her bag in one hand she held her little dagger in the other. The men could, I suppose, have disarmed her, but the little weapon was sharp and thin, and a man might get an ugly stab between the ribs before he had succeeded in subduing our young tigress. For I found that Cynthia seemed to be developing new traits every day, and I felt certain that if one of those creatures had laid a finger upon her he would have been made very uncomfortable for a time, if not killed.

"That's right," called I. "Stick it into the brute if he offers to touch you."

But this did not seem to be the intention of the men. They had been told to bring us to Christophe's palace unharmed, and they evidently intended to carry out their instructions to the letter.





***Sans Souci, the palace of King Christophe, near Millot, Haiti, as it appeared about 1820.***

We walked, it seemed to me, all that night; for many hours, at any rate, and by tortuous routes. Cynthia stepped bravely out at first, but, after an hour or so, she seemed to tire. At such times we sat and rested. Our first hour was passed in walking through the tunnel, as well as numerous wonderful rooms and caverns, which made me wonder why the natives of the island do not make these shelters their homes. Then we suddenly emerged upon the mountain side. Here our guides allowed us to take a rest. The slope had been gentle, and we had not the hill to contend with. We then struck steeply downward, and pursued a path which the torch bearer seemed to know perfectly. There was only the light of his torch now to guide us, for the moon had gone down behind a western spur of the mountain, and the stars were effaced by the smoky red flare of the torch. We now entered the side of a hill, through one of those natural tunnels so frequently met with. Here, after walking for a while, our guides stopped suddenly.

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"He says that we must have our eyes bound," said Cynthia, when Lacelle had communicated to us the order of the leader.

"What bosh!" said the Smith, turning rudely on the man.

Our captor paid no attention to the Smith's words, which he had not understood, but took from the waist-bands of the guards some cloths. These he proceeded to bind round our foreheads. We knew that resistance was useless, but I wondered if this was only a new form of torture, and if we were to be blindfolded as the pirates had blindfolded their victims, only to be led to some fearful chasm where we should step off into space and eternity. Each man now led one of us. At least I supposed so, for a hand was laid upon my arm and I was led along an uneven path.

"Where are you, Cynthia?" called I, and I pulled up my bandage to look. I caught a glimpse of a prisoner and a captive, four pairs in all. I noticed that Lacelle's guide was the torch bearer, and I took some comfort from this fact. I felt sure that she would be able to communicate with him in some secret way, and so give us all some aid. My bandage was rather roughly pulled down again, and we were halted. The leader made an address to us, which Lacelle translated to Cynthia and she to us. He said that if one of us again attempted to remove the cloth which bound our eyes that it would be much the worse for all of us. He then went round examining us, and tightened the other bandages, until I heard my poor girl cry out that she could not bear the pressure. You may imagine that I promised earnestly not to interfere with mine again.

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But before the guard had noticed that I was lifting the cloth I had caught a glimpse of that which no threats or brow beating could efface from my mind. Before us and a little below where we had halted lay a lovely valley. It was now early morn, and a subdued rose-coloured light shed its soft rays adown the smiling vale and lighted up with its marvellous glow a nearer object. I saw a broad terrace, under which arches of marble curved, as if in support. I saw carved pillars and columns and doorways with vistas beyond. I saw open window ways with suggestions of luxury within. I saw fretted balustrades and broad stairways, and graceful statues standing in gardens such as I had read of in tales of Babylonian days. In fact, I had taken in a comprehensive flash of beauty such as the imagination is powerless to conjure up. Far above me, high up on the left, I caught sight of a black and frowning fortress, whose guns, mounted at each bastion and embrasure, gave proof at the initial glance of its utter impregnability. Mine was but a momentary glimpse, and I was seized at once and my eyes bound to the verge of torture; but before them floated a vision of loveliness, with its contrast of grandeur and sublimity, and I knew that I had been gazing, if but for a fleeting moment, upon the palace and the citadel of the great Christophe, King of the gem of the northern Antilles.

**CHAPTER XX.****I MEET WITH THE TERRIBLE BLACK KING, AND VOLUNTARILY  
ASSUME A TASK TO REGAIN MY LIBERTY.**

Our captors had spoken truthfully, and I now knew which way we were going. I was sorry that I could not reassure the others. I wanted to call out, but I feared what the result would be; so I walked wearily on, wondering if I was never to feast my eyes upon that lovely sight again, wondering when we should see the King, wondering how he would treat us, but wondering more than all when I should have speech of Cynthia.

I now felt that we were walking over a bare and more even flooring, and then that the sweet tropic breeze had been exchanged for the cool, damp air of one of those stone interiors to which I had become accustomed. My guide suddenly stopped. I heard the pushing back of a bolt. I listened for more sounds of the same kind. I heard none. Oh, joy! only one door was opened. Then I was not to be parted from Cynthia. My guard removed the bandage from my eyes. I looked up joyfully to welcome the sight of Cynthia once again. She was not there! There was no one with me but the guard himself. I had been separated from my friends, when, I knew not. Oh, misery! What was I to do? How could I bear this of all troubles the greatest? The passageway from which I entered from the outer air was a stone hall rudely made. Along the sides were rough doorways and battered-looking doors. One of these doors was opened, I was pushed inside, and the door was closed upon me. I turned and hammered upon it with my clenched fists.

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"Let me out!" I called. "Let me out! You can not mean to leave me here!" But there was no answer, except the retreating footsteps of him who had thrust me into this hateful prison. I pounded until I was weary, more because I was devoured with my rage than because I expected any response, and when I was exhausted with my futile efforts I threw myself on the floor, oblivious to everything but my sorrow.

As I lay there, alternately groaning and raging, I did not at first hear the faint sound which after a long time was made to attract my attention. Scratch, scratch, scratch, it went, but I did not heed it. It might be a rat, or some pestilent animal. I had not heard any footsteps in the corridor. I hoped that I should hear some more footfalls, but none came. All was as silent as the tomb.

Scratch, scratch, scratch, it came again. At last I awoke to the fact that this might be meant for me.

"Who is that?" I called.

"It's me," answered the Skipper's voice, grammarless, but, oh, how welcome!

"Good God!" I said; "it can't be you?"

"But it is me," shouted the Skipper, regardless of other ears, "darned if it ain't."

For a moment I was too amazed to speak.

"He's bagged the whole of us, hasn't he?" said the Skipper.

I looked to the back of the cell, the place where the sound seemed to come from. There I saw that the stone had sagged a little, and gave room for sound, if not for sight.

"God bless you, Captain!" said I. "How glad I am to see you again!"

"You must have better eyes than I have. Say, Mr. Jones, where is Cynthia?"

"She's somewhere near us," said I. And then in whispers, listening for every sound, I told the Skipper what had happened as well as I could.

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"My poor little Cynthia!" said the Skipper, with a half sob.

"How did they get you, Captain?" I inquired.

"They never would have had me if you had paid any attention to me. They gathered me up the very day after I waved to you, when you were up there on that cliff."

"Was that you?" I asked. "I never thought it. Cynthia did suggest it, too."

"God bless my girl!" said the Skipper, with a wet voice.

"How were we to know it was you?" said I. "You were as black as any of the blackest here."

"That's so!" said the Skipper in answer. "I forgot that."

"But that man hadn't any clothes on," argued I, as if I must prove that the Skipper had been somebody else.

"Neither had I," said the Skipper. "Naked as a new-born babe. That's proper to-day, I suppose, anyway. It's my birthday, sixty-sixth."

Poor old man!

"What did they want with your clothes?" I asked, for the memory that I carried with me of the

Skipper's ancient raiment, worn and soiled with salt water and earth stains, did not make them seem very valuable, even to a Haïtien.

"They didn't want anything with my clothes," answered the Skipper; "'twas me they wanted. But they stripped me to a gantlin' all the same. After that fight I tried to follow you, but three fellows seized me and took my clothes and threw them into the bush, and began to hurry me off to the first temple that we saw, where that little shaver was crying."

"Yes, I know," said I; "and then——"

"Well, the battle was going the other way. I wanted to run after you to the shore, but those men held me between them. In a little while we got near the temple, and I thought my last moment had come for sure, when who should pop out of the trees but some of these big black men, who Christophe has for his body guard."

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"Yes, yes," said I, hurrying him on.

"And when they saw me they waved their clubs round their heads, and those forlorn little Haïtiens ran away. Then I gave the black men the slip, but they caught me again."

"If they were so little——" suggested I.

"Yes, yes, I know what you would say, but they were three to one, and when they took away my clothes they took my pistol, my knife, and my machete. I did put a bullet through one fellow. He never kicked, but when I tried to reload they were upon me."

I reflected also that the Skipper was not so young as once he was, and that the night had been as tiresome and exciting to him as to the rest of us.

"My, these stones are cold!" The Skipper sneezed. "Have you got that ring yet, Jones?"

"I haven't thought of it from that day to this." I slapped my hand to my throat. "Yes, here it is."

I took the great circle from the cord which held it round my neck and turned it over and over in my hand. The enormous red eyes shot forth rays like streams of blood. I have never seen anything before or since which shed so strange a light or made one feel so eerie.

"You don't say anything," said the Skipper. "I s'pose you're looking at that devil's ring and feeling all-overish."

"Yes," said I, "that is just exactly what I am doing."

"My, these stones are hard!" The Skipper groaned and sneezed again. "I wonder if they'll let me see Cynthy. But here! Hold on! I can't see her without any clothes."

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"Perhaps they'll give you something before then," said I.

I now heard footsteps approaching, and held my peace and feigned sleep. The door was opened and a glass of water and a large piece of cassava bread were pushed into my cell as far as the man's arms could go. Then the door was closed and bolted on the outside. The Skipper's door was then opened, and I heard the same sounds which had heralded the arrival of my breakfast. I heard the Skipper mumbling some words, something between Manhattan-Dutch and Susquehanna-Indian, and he must have made some signs, for he told me that the man nodded his head as if he understood.

We kept up a desultory conversation, the Skipper and I, for an hour or more. I could not bear to hear him complain of the cold and hardness of the stones on which he sat. Northerners imagine, I believe, that one never feels cold in that tropic clime, but in that supposition they are quite mistaken. The heat and the constant exudations from the skin thin the blood, and when one is out of the sun and in the dark interior of the earth a sudden chill comes trembling over one, creeping, creeping, creeping, until the whole body is in an ague, which nothing but a little raiment and plenty of sunshine can relieve.

I judge that I had been in the cell for nearly an hour when I heard some hurried footsteps coming down the corridor. They stopped at my door. The bolt was withdrawn with a loud clatter, and two of the King's body guard stood in the doorway.

"Now I s'pose I'll never see you again," groaned the Skipper. Fearful that they would understand that we had been communicating and that we were friends, I made no reply, but looked round the cell, astonished at the sound of the voice. I addressed myself apparently to the guards in as fierce a tone as I could command. They thought me scolding at them, while my words were really addressed to the Skipper.

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"Be quiet, for Heaven's sake!" said I. "They must not know that we are friends." My tone was so sharp and dictatorial, and I looked so squarely in the guard's eyes, that he began in a rough way to answer me, bowing slightly and beckoning me to follow. Then I heard the Skipper's voice in wonder:

"Why, Mr. Jones, are you speaking to me?"

Again I looked above, overhead, and round the walls of my room as if I were daft, and then fiercely at the guard. Again I spoke to the Skipper in my roughest way through these men, who could not understand a word.

"Don't be foolish, Captain," I said, glaring at the guard and shaking my fists in their faces. "They think I am talking to them. I am shaking my fist almost against their black noses, but they don't know that I am talking to you. Be careful, and don't, for Heaven's sake, address me while they are here."

I howled these words and danced up close, and glared at the tallest guard. "They will find us out surely. I'll tell you all about it when I get back, if they ever bring me back."

"Can't you lend me a trouser leg?" groaned the Skipper. But I saw that an answer would be more than foolish, and so turned and followed my guides where they led.

When I emerged from the corridor I found that I was facing toward the north. Our captors had brought us a long way round, so that we should go to the buildings where the offices, prisons, and the like were situated. To go to the palace itself we must walk northward. I had heard of this palace of Sans Souci, but no words had been powerful enough to give me an adequate idea of its wonderful beauty and grandeur. It was situated at the head of its beautiful and fertile valley, surrounded at the back and sides by hills, which, from their immediate rise, seemed to attain to the dignity of great mountains. The grand roads which Christophe had built and was still building ran down into the beautiful valley on their way to Le Cap. At the back of the palace there were gardens filled with rare flowers. Fruits were here, sunny arbours, and shady groves. Cascades of foaming water dashed downward from the neighbouring cliffs, and, caught at the base, were turned into irrigating channels or carried to the palace to supply its various needs. As I walked onward with my guard, I recalled the many facts that I had heard about the delights of this famous garden of the gods, and I wondered what manner of man it could be who could devise all this beauty during one phase of his existence, and fling helpless mortals to birds of prey at another.

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At times these phases were not many minutes apart, so that it seemed that the man must have a dual nature, and that two occupants—one an angel and another a devil—must occupy his tenement at one and the same time.

I was thinking these thoughts as I passed onward with the guard. We walked along an open terrace, which would have seemed most grand to me, had not its beauties been effaced at every turn by something still more beautiful, and those in turn by something more wonderful still. We descended a broad flight of steps and came out upon another terrace. The air that blew about that terrace was heavenly. The blue overhead was deep and clear. Trade-wind clouds flecked the sky in every direction. They came like a host of white horses over from the east, sailing steadily along, and disappeared in the west, their places only vacated to be taken by the myriads of others which came moving rapidly after. The breeze was sweet with the scent of fruit and flower. It seemed that with each new breath that came to me, upon its wings was wafted a fresh and delicious odour. The near hills were clad with vernal beauty. The marble balustrades which railed the terrace were overgrown with viridescent plant and flowering vine. Birds sang in the branches of the camaito tree. Such Paradise a setting fit for the greatest and best monarch who ever lived and ruled on earth. It seemed as if some fair queen should inhabit this lovely place, as if even man, no matter how pure he might be, were not worthy of such exquisite surroundings.

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These thoughts came to me as I walked forward to the spot where the greatest tyrant of modern times sat awaiting me, in common with his other slaves; for I was a slave, if Christophe chose to consider me as such—the slave of a man whose brutality was the wonder of those who had read tales of the Borgias, of the Cæsars, of Nero himself. I had heard of his chaining human beings to his carriage wheels, I had heard of his throwing his unsuccessful labourers off the great cliff which skirted the citadel, and I had heard the revolting tale of a certain day when his dogs, being hungry, he ordered an arm cut from an unoffending prisoner and thrown to the ravenous beasts. Imagine, if you can, my feelings when I reflected that this was the wretch to whose mercy fate had consigned me, and not only me, but Cynthia. If I had fear for my own safety, imagine, if you can, the horror with which I thought of him as the jailer of Cynthia. If I could only get speech of Cynthia, I thought, I could manage to tell her something—to warn her in some way. But then, after all, what should I tell her other than she knew already? If I frightened her, it would be worse, perhaps, than to leave her some confidence in her captors. She was not in Christophe's presence now, at all events, for I had been told that the King was attending to the business of the day at that moment.

We passed many windows and openings, where I saw men in uniform, secretaries, cooks, coachmen, horses, carriages, and everything that the mind can conceive as necessary to the comfort and well being of a great ruler. We passed by some round towers, that I thought must be sentry boxes, and then the terrace widened out, and again we walked past some very grand and gorgeous apartments. I remember an impression of mirrors and gilding, and in the most spacious of the rooms I saw a throne of velvet and gold, a sceptre lying there, a crown, and everything more splendid than I had ever imagined a white king would have desired with which to adorn his greatness. I looked along the marble esplanade, and at the end of the vista which I was approaching I espied some forms. They were human beings, but they were kneeling upon the ground. The figure before whom they knelt was seated upon a high dais. Over his head spread the famous camaito tree, which gave its name to the terrace. The figure was peculiarly dressed, and on his head he had a strange sort of military hat with fine gold lace binding the brim. In its front, among a tuft of ostrich plumes, blazed a diamond as fine as the one that I had taken from the cave and had unknowingly buried. As we approached, there were curious looks from the more privileged ones, who still had the manhood not to bow the knee to this tyrant King. Perhaps they

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were favourites, but I noticed that many of those present hid their faces in their hands as if afraid to look upon the evidence of so much magnificence and power. As we approached the throne, the King waved a small gold sceptre which he held. I suppose that he said, "Stand aside!" for the crowd blew apart in two straight lines, as if they were puppets. Then my guard and I walked up between the rows, and I stood in the presence of the redoubtable Christophe himself.

The man was of gigantic stature, and as black as a coal. To see a man who had been nothing more than an African slave seated there, with all the pomp and power that the proudest nation of the earth could confer, caused me to gasp with astonishment.

The King thundered something at my guard, who went down at once upon his knees and tried to drag me down with him, but I made up my mind on the spot that as I behaved so would I be treated, and, to preserve my dignity and make Christophe feel, if possible, that I had a position of my own, I stood more erect than ever. My clothes were torn and ragged, my hair had grown long, my appearance was generally unkempt and wretched, but I stood as straight as would Christophe himself had our positions been reversed.

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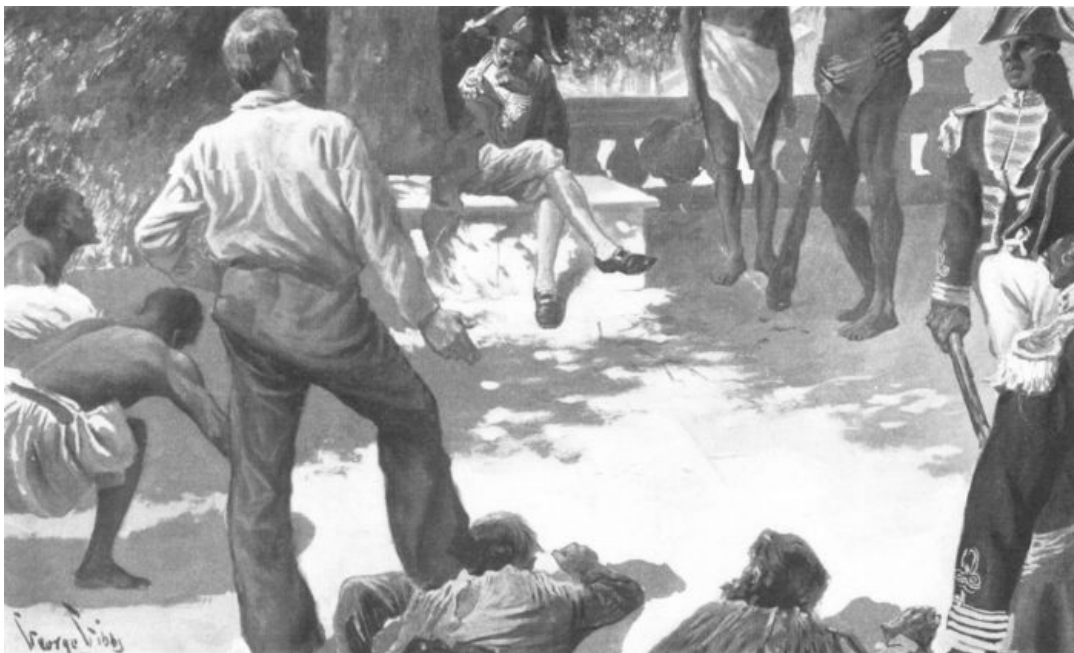
Again he thundered some words at me, and the guard endeavoured to pull me to the ground; but I straightened myself, folded my arms, and looked proudly at this modern and literal Black Prince.

Then there was a cry for some one, and forty messengers went running. All the while I stood looking at the crowd and surveying the motley garments that they wore. There were prisoners from the South, dressed in rags that scarce covered their nakedness; there was that body guard of Christophe's, garbed as I have described; there were the officers of the King's army, gorgeous in all the buttons and straps and gold lace that could be crowded into the space which their bodies occupied. While I thus gazed, I was conscious that some one had joined me. I did not turn until I heard some words whispered in my ear.

"It's rather awkward for me," said the Bo's'n. "I haven't met many kings."

"Call that nigger a king?" asked the Smith's voice on the other side of me. Here there was a commotion from the throne.

Christophe had arisen and was pointing excitedly at us, waving his arms and foaming at the mouth. He motioned with his hands, and said something which I supposed was intended for "Down! down! kneel before the King! I am the King!"



### **I placed my foot on his neck.**

The Smith and the Bo's'n seemed to understand what he intended to convey. They immediately plumped themselves down upon the hard pavement, in the hot glare of the sun; but I looked at them contemptuously, and only moved myself a little nearer to the camaito tree, and within its shade.

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"If you are willing to appear as slaves," said I to the men at my feet, "you may do so. As for me, I am an American prince, and so I shall remain."

When the King saw that I stood while the others knelt, he began to look on me as something nearer equal with himself. The Smith, catching the situation, turned to me and began to prostrate himself before me. The Bo's'n, seeing the motions of the Smith, imitated him. I waved my hand grandly, and walked to the lower step of the dais and asked for a seat.

Meanwhile I placed my foot upon the necks of the Bo's'n and the Smith alternately, who edged along after me and knelt humbly before me.

Just then a man came hurrying into the King's presence and prostrated himself before

Christophe. Then he arose and looked inquiringly at the black monarch, as if to ask what was required of him, whether his head was to pay the forfeit for some transgression of which he was not conscious. It seemed that his tongue was the member required, and only that it should wag a little, for this was the court interpreter. The man turned to me and asked in fairly good English who I was and where I had come from.

"I represent," said I, "all there is of royal blood in my country. I am the son of our ruler." When this was repeated to Christophe, he spread his great lips in a hideous grin and asked what I supposed he cared for that.

"Tell the King," said I, "that I belong to a country a thousand times as large as this little Haïti and Santo Domingo put together. We have great battle ships; we have subdued that immense country, England. What do you suppose they will do with you if you dare to harm a hair of my head?"

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"For Heaven's sake, speak him fair!" groaned the Bo's'n.

"He may not harm a hair of your head," said the Smith, "but the bloodthirsty old wretch won't care a hang if he chops ours off in the next half hour."

I looked downward to where the two men knelt, their heads bent to the floor in abject terror. I could not but laugh to see them.

"You have placed yourself in that ridiculous position," said I. "Now you will have to bear the consequences."

The King now asked if there was anything I could do to prove the truth of my statement. The old devil had a cunning leer, and I wondered what this might mean. I answered that if hating the French and English was not enough (I felt the Smith wriggle under my foot as I said this), "I know of little else to recommend me unless it is my knowledge of magic."

"How that fellow's lying!" murmured the Smith. But, I added, that I was unaccustomed to being without clothes and a bath, and when those were supplied to me I could better collect my thoughts. The King looked astounded at this remarkable speech, and well he might. I doubt if any one had ever spoken with such frankness to Christophe since he was a little slave on the plantations of St. Kitts. He roared something to some guards standing near, and they approached me with much more respect than they had manifested at first, and motioned me with polite, if not servile bows along the terrace. I saw that the attitude which I had assumed had raised me at once in the estimation of the King, and I decided to preserve it. I left the Smith and the Bo's'n still kneeling, not knowing if they dare rise. I felt certain that I had all that I could do to take care of myself for the present, and that whatever I gained in respect from this black villain they would share as a part of my retinue.

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I was led from the terrace along a veranda toward the back of the palace. Here I came upon a lovely flower garden, where singing birds swung above my head, and lakes reflected the leafy branches and the splendid cups of colour which overshadowed them. The bath was situated some distance back in this garden, and here I disported myself with such luxurious joy as no one can imagine who has not been a wanderer in the heated tropics away from fresh water. When I had bathed, I found clean towels lying on a stool at the door of the little rancho. The water, I should have said, ran through a sort of stone trough. There was a roof overhead, with jealousies to screen one from the sun and from too curious eyes; but, as Nature's dress was at that time the most popular one to be found, it excited no interest. When I was ready to resume my clothes, I found a clean white costume awaiting me, and, robed in this, I felt once more that I was in my right mind, and the peer of any king that ever came out of Dahomey. I was now led back to the terrace where the King was still conducting business before he set out to ride among his sugar plantations, to see that his people toiled, constantly and sufficiently enough, to keep his revenues up to the proper figure. Upon my return I went close to the throne, regardless of the suggestion of my guard by nudges that I keep a little farther away from the august presence. The King turned upon me with almost a smile. I was certainly altered for the better. I assumed a very proud air, and looked around inquiringly for a chair. My guard, thinking that he knew my requirements, ran back into the crowd, and from the mass of hot and dishevelled prisoners he brought forth the Smith and the Bo's'n. He made them resume their humble attitudes at my feet. The Bo's'n was quaking with fear. The men both knelt before me and placed their necks submissively under my foot.

"Hot isn't no word for it," said the Smith.

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"I didn't ship for this," said the trembling Bo's'n.

"You may get a worse billet than this if you don't do as I tell you," said I hurriedly. "You must treat me as a great prince, and then perhaps I can help you. Heaven knows I don't care to rest my foot on your neck!—it's most uncomfortable." The men subsided without a murmur, and I took the open cane chair that was brought me, with a contemptuous look at its humble proportions.

Our asides had not been noticed, for just here some prisoners were brought to the King for judgment, and every one was turning to see them approach. Among them I discovered the Skipper. So soon as I caught sight of him I bounded from my chair and ran and embraced him most affectionately. The Skipper was very slightly clothed, and looked extremely uncomfortable.

"What are you doing, Jones?" he said. "Don't make me ridiculous."

"You'll feel much more ridiculous," said I, "if they take you out and shoot you, or if they copy the French method."

"What's that?" asked the Skipper, with a trembling voice, apparently oblivious that the court had stopped business and was gazing at us.

"Why, kneeling before a trench with fifty other fellows, and being shot with such good aim that they don't have to put you in your grave, only have to shovel the earth in. Now, you're my Uncle —"

"What bosh are you talking! I am in no way related—"

"Very well, then, take your own course. I wanted to do what I can—"

"I'll be anything if they'll take this infernal chain off my wrist; it blisters like hot coals."

I turned to the interpreter and told him that, with the King's permission, I should like the chains removed from my uncle's arms—that he was the brother of the ruler of our country, who was my father. "We are not very far from your little island," said I. "It will not take my father many days to come here in one of his powerful war ships to carry us home." My look and tone seemed to convey much more than my words, as I intended that they should. The interpreter translated my speech to the King. He looked at me curiously for a moment, and then ordered the chains removed from the Skipper's wrists.

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The Skipper, now that his worst trouble was removed, began to clamour for even greater comforts.

He looked about him critically, the condescension of his manner contrasting curiously with the scantiness of his apparel.

"If the old beggar has another throne handy," said he, "I'll take it."

These words were repeated to the King at my demand, with much halting and fear of consequences by the interpreter. I have always thought that Christophe had experienced so much of servility, which is the most tiresome thing in the world, from his sycophants, that he was glad to hear some straightforward talk. Possibly he felt that men who spoke so fearlessly and openly were even greater than they had declared themselves to be. Whatever his reasons, he spoke hurriedly to the interpreter, and he in turn to a servant. A chair was brought at once. I kicked the Smith and the Bo's'n out of the way with all the hauteur that I could express in my manner. They bowed low and withdrew with smiling faces, but I noticed a glitter in the eyes of the Bo's'n that was not to be lightly overlooked.

"We have disturbed the gracious King long enough," said I, with my politest bow. "We will not interrupt again." Wondering somewhat that we were not hurried to the citadel, or that our heads did not pay the forfeit at once, I saw the King settle down to the pursuance of his business matters.

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The next prisoner was a fine-looking young fellow, tall and straight, of much prouder appearance than any one there.

"Have you finished the crown that I gave you to make?" asked Christophe.

The prisoner, who had fallen upon his face, partly because he was pushed there by the guard, replied:

"I have not, my Lord King. The time given me was too short."

"Away with him to La Ferrière! Bind him upon the parapet until nightfall, and when the sun sets behind the citadel cut the cords and let him fall into the abyss. Thus he will have a day to think over his failure and what success might have done for him. Bring in the next prisoner!"

The condemned man fell upon his face on the ground as if lifeless, and was dragged away.

The next person to step forward was a woman of about forty years. She trembled in every limb, and threw herself upon the hard stone slabs, sobbing, crying, and praying for mercy. So it seemed to me, though I could judge only by her tears and her attitude of supplication.

"Have you finished the robe that I commanded for the Queen?" asked Christophe, in no gentle tones.

"A little time! A little time, I pray thee, most noble King!"

The interpreter was whispering the translation of these words in my ear.

"You have had a month! To the dungeons with her!" said the King.

The next prisoner who came forward was a middle-aged man. He shook as if with a palsy, but concealed his fear as well as possible. He knelt before the throne.

"Can you duplicate my ring?" asked Christophe.

"I think that I can with a little more time, great King," said the man. "I am working day and night. But if the King will not let me have the sacred symbol, how shall I duplicate it?"

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The words caused something to snap within my ear. I looked up anxiously. The King was glaring at the man with eyes of fire. He had thrust his hand into the very face of the prisoner, and on his great thumb I perceived for the first time a circle of grotesque make. It held a common likeness to the sacred symbol which Cynthia had found. The moment that I caught a glimpse of the twisted serpent body I felt that I was safe. It was the very duplicate of the serpent ring that I had in my possession.

Christophe held the circle up to the multitude.

"It is the ring that my favourite gave to me," he said, "my favourite Mauresco, before he disappeared forever."

"That Mauresco fellow seemed to be a fascinating sort of chap," said the Smith, who had edged near me, in an undertone. "I understand all he says, but I think it is better to keep that fact quiet."

"I have already given you time enough," said the King. "Remove the prisoner! Throw him at once off the Grand Boucan!"

I arose. "Stop!" said I, "if it please your Majesty. I come of a family who deal in magic. To make a ring like that is simple work. I will promise to make you one if you will in turn deign to pardon the prisoners who have offended you."

When the interpreter had repeated my speech to Christophe, he turned on me with an incredulous air.

"That offer has been often made," he said, "but no one has ever performed it. Mauresco, my prime minister, my counsellor, the Grand Papaloi of the North, had given me a ring, but I have lost it. The one that he wore he carried away. I am wearing a poor imitation. It was cunningly artficed by skilful hands. Can you reproduce it?"

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I felt the cold snake ring dangling against my bosom as I spoke. Christophe gazed at me with curiosity.

"Say to the King," said I, "that a bargain must be made. If I succeed in pleasing him with the symbol that I shall make, he in turn must promise to send me with my friends to the coast, where a ship will come for us to take us back to our good and great country."

The King thought a moment. He smiled his diabolical smile. He nodded his head several times and spoke to the interpreter.

"Tell him," he said, "that I am quite willing to make the promise. They have all failed me, but the Grand Boucan never fails me."

"I shall not fail," said I.

I asked leave to take the symbol in my hands. The King beckoned me to approach. When I was close to the dais he held out the ring to me, but he did not give it into my hand. I looked at it with much curiosity.

"May I take the circle in my hand?" I asked the interpreter. The interpreter in turn asked the King. Christophe hesitated; then he gave a reluctant nod. I took the great ring from the hand of the King. I examined it curiously, and shook my head with a contemptuous air. The workmanship was crude. It did not compare in any way with the circle that thumped against my bosom. I gave the King's ring back to him with a smile of superiority.

"How is it possible," asked I of the interpreter, "that a great monarch like King Henry the First is willing to wear a thing of such unskilled workmanship?"

A look of almost mortification overspread the face of the King as these words were translated to him.

"Explain!" said he to the interpreter.

"The King's favourite, Mauresco," said the interpreter, "presented the King with a ring. It was a wonderful circle of magic. Its properties were supernatural. Mauresco had brought it from the far East. Its design was that of the serpent and the goat's head, much as you see it here in the imitation. While Mauresco was here he wore a poor imitation of the symbol, something like the one which the King wears on his thumb to-day. The original ring was all-powerful. The King carried all before him. When he wore that sacred circle he was victorious in battle. The tribes of the island flocked to his standard, his generals were faithful. But one day Mauresco was missing and the sacred circle of magic had changed to what you see it."

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Finding that Christophe's fortunes were on the wane, he deserted him, thought I. Got tired of black royalty, and went to join the pirates. Took the original and left the poor copy to console the King. Ah! Mauresco, had I known that you were so clever a villain, perhaps I might have spared your life just for admiration of you! Perhaps I, too, would have come under your ban, and have been your willing servant like the rest of them. So you took the original, did you, Mr. Grand Papaloi Mauresco, and you dropped it on the seashore, and some one whom I know found it? And the symbol has supernatural or magic properties, has it? Very well, then! It is I who possess that original. Now we will see what this magic symbol will do for me and for her who found it. The King sat looking inquiringly at me.



"I can reproduce the ring," said I. "Not this parody on the original, but one so near the original that the King shall not know them apart." I returned to my seat without further explanation.

"Are there any more prisoners to come before me?" shouted Christophe.

But just here I heard feminine voices, and along the terrace I saw advancing three women. I saw that one was white, the other two of darker hue. They were all three dressed in flowing robes of white, and looked as cool as possible compared with the people surrounding the throne. At a little distance behind the three came several women who appeared like serving maids. I wondered who this white maiden could be. Her fair skin shone out in contrast to that of the dark women with whom she walked. The two girls had entwined their arms around the white girl, but it seemed to me that the latter shrank somewhat from their caresses. A few steps nearer they came, and all at once I discovered that the white girl was Cynthia. Somehow I had never thought of her in anything but that old blue dungaree dress. As they approached I saw that she was as well clad as the maidens with whom she walked, only that the two girls wore quantities of jewellery, but Cynthia wore only the fine flowing robe, cool and spotless. I looked for Lacelle, but I did not see her. Just here, as we were watching their approach, there came an interruption. I heard from overhead a strange but familiar voice. I arose at once and approached Cynthia. The voice had given me an idea. I bowed low before her, and as I did so I contrived to whisper:

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"Did you hear that voice? Turn it to use, I will give you the key." And then as I raised my head there came again the words, "There's no fool like an old fool." I glanced upward to the low roof, and there sat Solomon in all his glory. "Damn the Britishers!" said Solomon. I now took Cynthia by the hand and approached the throne.

"Your Majesty," said I, "let me present to you my sister, who has been through all the trials and troubles that have overtaken us. She is an adept in the sort of magic that we know in our northern home. She is a peculiar favourite with birds and animals." I might have added, "With the greatest brutes of all, men," but I desisted.

Christophe smiled, as much at his favourite daughter as at what I had said. The dusky maidens approached and seated themselves on the steps of the throne and drew Cynthia down beside them. I mumbled a few words so low that the interpreter could not distinguish them.

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"Thank God, you are safe!" said I. "Call the parrot, and pretend you never saw him before."

And then aloud:

"Let my sister try her power, your Majesty, on some animal here. A dog, perhaps, or a horse, or, oh!"—perceiving the parrot for the first time—"there is a strange bird. She may as well take him as an instance. Call the bird!" said I to Cynthia.

She readily comprehended me. She arose from the low seat and walked a little way out to the edge of the tree.

She held her fingers out to the bird and called in her peculiarly sweet cooing voice. Solomon looked at her for a moment with his head on one side, and then flew straight toward her: But that was not the worst of it. About six or eight other parrots flew down also from the roof, and not only Solomon but all of the number were calling and screaming raucously, "Damn the Britishers!" and "There's no fool like an old fool!" Solomon, who had flown straight to Cynthia, began to walk over her shoulder and climb up and down her dress, and, strange to say, the other birds, seeing the confidence with which Solomon accomplished his supposed introduction, followed suit, so that Cynthia had them billing and cooing in her ears, putting up their beaks to be kissed, calling, "Kiss me!" or declaring that there was no fool like an old fool, until the clamour was deafening. Cynthia was as much astonished as the rest of us, but she carried out my project with great cleverness. It is astonishing what Solomon had taught those birds while he had been among them. I laughed heartily to hear them say again and again, singly and in concert, "Damn the Britishers!" Even the King smiled.

"They are most kind to me," said Cynthia to me hurriedly; "only I'm sorry you said I was your sister."

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"Why?" said I.

"Oh, I fear complications. The other would have been better, I think."

The King now arose and motioned us all away. When the Bo's'n passed me I saw that he had one of those sudden attacks which were unpleasant, ludicrous, but far from dangerous. He did look absurd with his cheek sticking out like a hickory nut, in fact, like two or three, and I could not help laughing. The King was angry at my laughing in his presence, and, to calm him, I was forced to ask him through the interpreter to recall the Bo's'n. As soon as his eyes fell upon the man he laughed harder than I had done. To see Christophe laugh was something worth living for. His great features twisted into a thousand contortions, and I felt that not only did he enjoy the absurdity of the spectacle, but that it was a real pleasure to him to see the sufferings of a fellow-creature. I was sorry for my part in this performance, but what else could I do.

"No matter, Bo's'n," said I cheerfully, "you'll laugh at this yourself some day."

"You'll laugh the other side of your mouth, sir," mumbled the Bo's'n angrily, looking so comical that I laughed afresh. This seemed to put Christophe in a very good humour. To find me willing to

laugh at suffering seemed to argue well for me, and he regarded me with some faint expression of esteem.

"You ought to be satisfied if you are as well off as I can make you. There are a good many of us, but I intend that we shall share as much alike as your stupidity will allow," said I to the Bo's'n.

"You'll be sorry if you do," said the Bo's'n gloomily.

I found it difficult to understand him, he spoke so indistinctly, so I told him that I would send word to the King that I should like some remedy for my suffering servant. The Bo's'n gave a gloomy shake of the head.

"Very well, sir," he said threateningly, "you'll be sorry, Mr. Jones, sir. Now, I tell you, you'll be sorry! You've ruined one good plan, for Heaven's sake don't put your finger too deep into another pie, sir."

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But as I retired from the terrace, and told him that I thought the King was disposed to treat us kindly unless we offended him in some way, I added, "I will try to get a change of clothes for each of you."

"Thank you," answered the Smith; "I shall be glad of some."

"Won't have 'em, Mr. Jones, sir!" said the Bo's'n. "Won't have 'em, don't ask it of me! Not on no account."

"What nonsense!" said I. "Of course, you will have them."

"No, sir, don't ask me, please. You'll be sorry if you do, sir."

"You're a lunatic!" said I. "You must be made comfortable. I shall do what I think best," and I followed my guard. I found that I was not to return to the cells below the terrace. I was taken to a garden at the back of the palace and lodged in a room looking out upon the mountain. Cynthia, with a lingering glance at me, had disappeared with the two daughters of Christophe, I knew not where.

I found myself in a plain sort of room, which contained little more than the furniture needed for absolute use; but when I discerned among the articles upon the table a primitive sort of arrangement for heating, a blow pipe, some small tools, and some bits of darkish ore, which had been rudely twisted into some semblance of the ring, I recognised the fact that I was in the room of that unhappy workman who had left it that morning never to return, and that this was the workshop where I was to try my hand at fashioning a ring like the one that the black King wore upon his thumb.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

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### I OFFEND THE KING'S FOSTER BROTHER, AND AM FORCED TO TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES.

When the door was closed upon me the first thing that I did was to feel for my precious ring. It was safe. I took it out and looked at it long and curiously. It had never seemed so hideous, so wonderful, so fascinating, or so absorbing to me as it did at that moment. I apostrophised it. I almost worshipped it.

"You are some good, after all," said I. "There you lie in my hand, too big for anything but the thumb of a giant, looking at me with those great shining devil's eyes of yours, and hoping to get me into trouble; but I'll get you into trouble while you get me out of it, for I'll leave you with the greatest rapsallion of modern times."

The red and glowing pupils gleamed with a long-reaching ray of light, thrown right into the centre of my blinking eyes, and, was I mistaken, or did I see one of them wink at me? I put the ring back under the breast of my shirt and got up and tried the door. It was, as I supposed, fastened. There was a couch in the room, and in the space outside I saw a hammock. It swung from corner to corner of the short veranda.

"Ah!" you may say, "why didn't you just go out on that veranda, and if it was on the first floor step out into the garden and so escape?"

In the first place, if I could have escaped from this place, what had I to gain? I should leave Cynthia behind. In the second place, I was not on the ground floor, but two flights from the ground, which is an unusual thing in a tropic-built house. From the picture which I made of the palace as it looked in those days, you can see that above the terrace itself there were two other stories. This brought my room on the third floor. I suppose you think that I might have risked dropping down into the garden, but of what use? However, there was no question as to that. I could not get out if I would. The veranda was surrounded by a lattice work of iron. I was inclosed in a cage, and, though not as confining a one as that in which the pirates had placed me, it was a cage all the same.

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I entered the veranda from the long French window of the room and lay down in the hammock. I had nothing with which to while away my time, and I lay thinking what the upshot of all this business was to be. As I reclined I heard voices. They came from the garden below me. I peered downward as well as I could through my wire lattice, and there I saw Cynthia with the two dusky maidens hovering near. They overwhelmed her with their attentions, each one seeming to vie with the other in striving to show how much affection she could lavish on the white girl. As I watched them, they seemed to get angry with each other. I saw that it was jealousy, and I also saw that if Cynthia was clever she could do more for herself than I could do for her. So I called as if I were singing. I sang an old-fashioned tune which my mother used to play on the ancient spinnet in summer evenings at home when the farm work was done. I sang these words, or words to this effect:

"Be careful what you do, dear one. You can work on their feelings. Do not make one jealous of the other. Find out who is the King's favourite, and, if you must anger either, let it be the other. I am here just above you. Where are you lodged? Can you send Solomon with a line under his wing, or can you, in passing, tie a note to the thread which I shall lower close to the jasmine vine? Do not answer, but do what you can to tell me where you are lodged."

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I saw Cynthia start and look all around and above her at the rooms of the palace. The two princesses were quarrelling, and nearly coming to blows, so that Cynthia could raise her eyes to my place of detention without being observed. I repeated my words. I added to them. I went further. I told her how much I loved her, and assured her that nothing but the most insuperable difficulties should part us. I saw that she understood me. She waited until I had finished, and then she walked to where one of the black belles had pushed the other into a flowering bank, and, approaching them with gentle step, she held out a hand to each, speaking sweetly and softly, as I knew that Cynthia could do, though I had had little experience of it myself. Her manner and words seemed to subdue them, and finally they were reconciled with each other and with her. As I lounged in my hammock after they had left the garden, the door of my room softly opened, and I found that a boy had entered. He had in his hand a tray, and on it were some sweets and a glass of a pale-coloured decoction, also a glass of water. He looked strangely familiar to me, and when he raised his liquid eyes to me I recognised Lacelle. I found later that the torch bearer was an old friend of Lacelle's and Zalee's. That his mother was one of the women employed about the kitchens, and that he had taken the girl directly to her, and that she had disguised her in the clothes of one of the serving lads. Christophe cared nothing about making a prisoner of the Haïtienne; all that he wanted was the party of white people, whom he thought might be fomenting a revolution, or might be connected with the pirates who infested the Isle of Pines, and made those terrible dashes upon the unprotected coast. I often wonder what he would have thought had he known that his favourite Mauresco had deserted him for the buccaneers themselves. But it was not within my province to tell of this, or, in fact, to talk of Mauresco at all. So long as I was to reproduce the ring and thus get our freedom, it would be well for me to remain silent about Mauresco, whose ring would be recognised at once should I own that I had ever even seen him. For Christophe to know that Mauresco had been killed by any of our party, would insure instant death for every one of us.

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I sat looking at Lacelle while these thoughts ran through my mind. She was in no hurry to leave me, and seemed puzzling her brains as to how she should communicate with me. Finally she stretched her hand toward the glass of yellow liquid, and, pointing to her mouth, she shook her head. I stretched my hand toward the glass with the pretended intention of drinking the liquid, when she bounded to the table and, with a look of horror, seized the glass and carried it out to the veranda. I watched her as she poured it down the stem of the vine which grew from the ground below.

"A-ha!" I thought, "trying to poison or drug me. Now, what for, I wonder? If Lacelle can always bring my food, I shall feel safe," Lacelle now handed me the dulces and the glass of water, and bade me eat and drink. This I did gratefully. Then she pointed to the empty glass. There were two dead flies in the bottom of the glass and another one was just tumbling in, and several were strewn around upon the table. I nodded comprehendingly. She then, by signs, made me understand that I should eat nothing but what she brought me. I responded understandingly, and she took her tray and departed. After she had left the room, I found a piece of paper on the table. I opened it. A few lines from Cynthia were there, written hurriedly, as if she had snatched a moment in secret. They ran thus:

"Do meet me in the garden, under the mahogany tree, at ten this evening. I have some thing to tell you."

Truth to tell, I had never seen Cynthia's handwriting, but I was sure that it was a lady's hand, and that neither of my friends could form the letters so well or so delicately. Also I flattered myself that Cynthia really wanted to see me at last. I put the paper in my mouth and reduced it to pulp. Not a very romantic thing to do with one's first approach to a love letter, but all things are fair in love or war, and this was a combination of both, I feared.

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I now went out into the veranda and lay down in the hammock, preparatory to taking a short sleep. The breeze blew softly through the vines, and soon I became drowsy, but not so soon as my captors had imagined that I should. I was still quite wide awake, though in a few moments I should have succumbed to the soothing nature of my surroundings, when I heard a faint click. It was at my door; of that I was certain. I watched the door through my almost closed eyelids, but to no end. No one approached me from my room. I feigned sleep and began to breathe regularly,

and had almost begun to think my idea but fancy. Still, my eyes were opened a tiny crack, and they happened, from my position, to rest upon the wire screen which separated mine from the veranda beyond. And as I looked, the netting separated, a square of it the size of a small door was pushed toward me, and through the opening thus made a short person entered. I had thought that a solid wall of wire inclosed and shut me in.

It was a boy who approached the hammock where I lay. He was darker than Lacelle, and was clothed as boys of the palace dressed, except that the body was much more covered than I remember to have noticed in the dress of the pages. The feet of the boy were covered with some sort of light shoe; the legs and arms were hidden from view, and only the head and the very woolly hair were visible. I caught a glimpse of this as he was turning to close the door as softly as might be. When he turned again, I was breathing as regularly as a little child. My hands were crossed upon my breast. I was at peace apparently with the world. The boy came near me and stood still and listened. Nothing but my regular breathing broke the silence, except now and then the note of a mocking bird, than which no music on earth is sweeter, always excepting your mother's voice, Adoniah. For a moment all was quiet, and then the boy stooped toward me. He took one of my hands in his and, removing it from my breast, laid it by my side. I suffered the hand to hang listless in his. Then he took the other hand and as slowly and quietly laid that also by my side. He then laid his hand on my chest, feeling here and there. Then I felt the button which closed my loose garment pulled gently, as if to detach it from the buttonhole, and—quick as thought I was out of my hammock and upon him! I seized him in my arms, and together we rolled over and over upon the floor. He was no match for me, and in a moment I had him between my knees. As I sat astride his helpless young body, I gazed and gazed, and then I began to laugh. I laughed long and heartily, for the black was rubbed off in streaks, and there was enough of the original colour showing forth for me to recognise the Minion. As I tore the mat of wool from his head, the Minion's well-shaved poll stood out red and shining.

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"So it is you!" said I. "I thought you had been eaten cold long ago." The Minion grinned, but did not speak.

"I've a great mind to throttle you," said I. "On second thoughts, I will, unless you tell me the truth about how you came here and what you want of me." By way of emphasizing my words, I gave the Minion's thorax a vicious squeeze. He gagged and choked and struggled to get free.

"Not until you tell me how you came here and who sent you," said I threateningly. The Minion made me understand, in his laconic speech, that if I would allow him to rise he would explain his actions. I got up and stood, as a precautionary measure, against the door through which he had entered my part of the veranda. I did not trust the young villain in the very slightest degree, but he was helpless, and so I waited until he spoke. By urging and prodding and threatening to choke him, and partly succeeding, I discovered that he had escaped from the vaudoux sect on the night of the fight. That he, unlike the rest of us, had sought the court. That Christophe was so pleased with this that he took him into his service. That he had told Christophe's spies that he hated the Bo's'n and myself, and only wanted to get rid of us, and that he would aid our double taking off in any way most agreeable to the King. That he had always suspected the Bo's'n and myself of having some of his jewels about our persons, and that the King had told him that if he found that we had some of them he would believe his story of his discovery in the cave, and that he would send a platoon of soldiers down to the coast to find the jewels and restore them to him.

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"I suppose you think he would give them to you," said I. "But your jewels are gone." And then I told him how the Bo's'n had hidden them, and how the Skipper and I had buried them in the sea. "And you will never see them again," said I. "But what enrages me against you is that you were willing to try to come upon me unawares. Did the King order that drink for me?" The Minion, by short and jerky sentences, conveyed to me the idea that he did not know that I had had a drink of anything, but that a grand officer had taken him aside and told him he would find me in a sound sleep, and that he could get the jewels that I wore concealed about me if he came in at once. The Minion also told me that the liquor had probably been given to me that I might be taken to another place, away from all my friends, and that he had heard the King say that unless I completed the ring within four or five days I was to be thrown from the Grand Boucan, that my bones might bleach with those of the other unfortunates who lay by the thousands in that valley of horror. Then I took the Minion in my two hands and I shook him. I shook him until I thought that I should shake the teeth out of his head.

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"Do you feel that, and that, and that?" asked I, as I gave him an extra shake. "Now, the very first time that I catch you meddling with my affairs I shall not only shake the breath out of your lungs, but I'll beat the wind out of your spying little carcass. Now go!" I opened the wire door and kicked the Minion through into the next section of the veranda. He put up his black fists and began to cry, smearing the colouring matter all over his face until he looked so absurd that I could not refrain from laughing, angry as I was. While I stood there laughing at him, the farther door of the next compartment was opened and an arm in uniformed sleeve drew the lad in and closed the door and locked it. I returned to my own veranda, and soon I heard the wire door fasten with a click. I tried it, and found that I could not again open it. Then upon my ear broke the sound of wails. Sobs, groans, shrieks, and howls rent the air, and I laughed with fiendish glee.

"You see what a nice time you'll have between them and me," I called as loudly as I could. "Don't try it again, for there will be nothing to beat when I have got through with you."

And now I turned over in my hammock and went to sleep. I argued, that if they really intended to kill me I had better get some sleep when and how I could, to be ready for—I knew not what.

I awoke much refreshed. I saw from the long shadows in the garden below me that it must be later than I thought. I sprang from my hammock, determined to show some interest in the making of the ring, and thus deceive those who came to my chamber. I knew less than nothing about work such as this that I had offered to perform, but I decided to set about my fraudulent exhibit at once. I went to the door and tried to open it; as I had suspected, it was fastened on the outside. I then began to pound upon it. After making a tremendous noise, I heard the shuffling of feet, and an undersized negro turned the key and opened the door a crack. I jumped upon him and hurled him from the door, pushing it wide, whereupon I confronted three of Christophe's famed body guard. So this was the way that they proceeded! I saw that they simply wanted to discover if I was one of the docile kind. I proved the contrary very quickly. I began to storm and rage. I pointed to the table within my room, and asked how I could follow the commands of the King if I were not allowed fire to ignite the wick of my lamp. I said that I had been pounding on the door for hours. What was the matter with their ears that they could not hear me? The men looked at me with astonishment. Then they gave an order to the old negro, who quickly disappeared. While he was gone I worked myself into such a state of rage that my guard stood gazing open-mouthed. It was very exhausting, as when the person whom the old negro had been despatched to bring returned with him I was forced to repeat the entire performance, for this was the interpreter.

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After my rage was quite exhausted, and my arms ached painfully from my having thrashed them round my head like the arms of a windmill, the interpreter turned to the guard and told them what I desired. The old negro was sent for a light, and I closed my door with a bang in the face of the guard, and settled down to my work. I felt confident that I should be able to produce nothing, but I held the metal before the flame, put the pipe in my mouth, and began to blow. I did not dare take my ring from beneath my clothes, for I feared that in the corner of some adjacent room there was a spy set to watch me, and it was not part of my plan that Christophe should know that I carried a ready-made symbol about with me. I found that the metal melted easily under the pipe. I allowed it to get partly cool, and then began to fashion it with my pincers into somewhat near the size and shape of the ring. I was much pleased with myself, and, after about an hour's work, I came to the conclusion that I had done pretty well for a novice. However creditable it was, I knew that that was not the sort of work that Christophe wanted. He required the smooth polish, the delicate arabesque, the exquisite symmetry, the perfect setting of those wonderful eyes, the expression of the face half human, half grotesque, and with a beastliness of vision that I can not describe, but which seemed to permeate the whole. Remembering Lacelle's horror of the ring as a symbol, I covered it with my handkerchief, thinking that if she saw it when she came to serve me she would be so terrified that she might never come to my aid again. I wondered why Christophe should care so much for the original ring—whether it was that blind devotion which every one who had ever come in contact with Mauresco had shared for that hypnotic personality, or whether Christophe himself was tainted with the love of fetish worship. This latter idea, however, was contradicted by the fact of his having built within his palace an Anglican church. This much I surmised: The King evidently thought that the ring held some occult power, and I could account for his anxiety to possess one, the counterpart of Mauresco's own, only on the supposition that he felt assured of its supernatural qualities.

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My stay in this delightful spot would have been satisfactory enough had I not been anxious about our future, and had I been able to see Cynthia. Each day when my guard came into my room he cast a scrutinizing glance at the table where the lamp and the metal lay, but I had always the handkerchief thrown over them, so that his curiosity was never rewarded. Four days had now passed, and I had done little more than heat the metal and try to bend it into the shape of a circle, which bore no more resemblance to the original design than would any bit of carelessly twisted iron.

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This, as I have said, was the fourth day. I did not wish the task to seem too easily accomplished, as I might be suspected of producing a ring that I had stolen and not made. Each morning when the old servant came in to bring me my breakfast I arose from the table, hurriedly blew out the lamp, threw my handkerchief over the awkward attempt at ring making, and seated myself on the balcony to sip my coffee and eat my bread. On this last morning I had grown a little careless, and had lost myself in speculations as to what a pleasure it would be to return once more to God's country, when I heard a chuckle. I jumped to my feet, but it was too late. The old man had twitched the handkerchief from the materials which I was pretending to use toward gaining my liberty. He held the ring in his grimy paw, and examined it as if he had every right in the world to do so. I sprang upon him and kicked him all across the chamber, and out into the passage, down which he ran howling with pain. The interpreter came to see me later, and explained to me in low tones that he was sorry that I had used such harsh measures, for the old man was a favourite with Christophe—his half brother, in fact—and he feared for the result.

"Very well, then," said I. "Let the result be what it will. I do not intend to be spied upon any longer. It is quite easy to make such a ring as the King wants, and that I will show you to-morrow morning if I may be taken before him."

"If he lets you remain so long," said the good interpreter, sighing. In that sigh I thought that I read my doom.

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He looked with curiosity at my work, but shook his head.

"They have all of them got as far as that," he said. "Many much further. As an evidence, recall the ring which Christophe wears upon his thumb. There has never been so good a one made, and yet

it is as far from being the strange, mysterious thing that Mauresco gave the King, as sunlight is different from starlight. That symbol which Mauresco gave to the great Christophe contained eyes of jewels, the like of which I believe have never been seen in this world. The symbol is said to have come from the far East, and to possess the power of magic. I hear that the King can not understand its failure to protect him since his favourite Mauresco left him. I remember the day that Mauresco took it from his finger and gave it to the King. Mauresco's fingers were thin and bony. The ring was a mile too large. He wore it on his thumb, with a smaller and thicker ring to keep the symbol in place. He told the King that it would preserve him from all harm. That he would be successful so long as he should wear it or keep it near his person. Mauresco had free entrance to the King's chambers at all times. Sometimes he slept in the room adjoining that of the King. He often talked mysteriously of his being called hence at some near day, but he impressed Christophe with the fact of the power of protection, even if he was forced to leave him, which the ring would possess for him. And there is undoubtedly that power in the ring of Mauresco, wherever it may be at this day. After Mauresco presented the King with the ring his successes began to be phenomenal. He was the victor in every battle that he fought, but since he awoke one morning to find Mauresco gone, and to discover later, in looking at it closely, that his ring was not the symbol which Mauresco had given him, he has been less successful. Its effect upon his character has shown itself in a hundred different ways. He is more irritable. Where formerly he threw one or two men from the Grand Boucan in the week, now there is rarely a day when some life does not pay the penalty."

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"Irritable" I thought a rather modest word for the temper which induced this wholesale slaughter.

I wondered why the interpreter should talk so familiarly with me, but I argued that he was glad to speak his native tongue once more. I discovered that he had been born in America of African parents. That in going to sea with his master, an old sea captain, the ship had been set upon by one of Dessalines' vessels of war and sunk, the whites being drowned and killed. This one man swam ashore and had drifted into the army, and then, after various vicissitudes which it would require too long a time to recount, to Christophe's palace. Here he had been for ten years or more. His value as an interpreter was fully recognised, and he had been kept by Christophe for this purpose.

I had not seen anything of the Queen in the short time that I was honoured by the King's hospitality. She was away, I heard from the interpreter, at a place called the "Queen's Delight." The King had many beautiful places among his possessions. They were cotton plantations, sugar estates, and the like. Sometimes the black Queen longed to escape from the magnificence which must have overwhelmed her, not to mention the presence of certain ladies whose neighbourhood made her life uncomfortable, if not unendurable. At such times she would go to "The Victory," "The Glory," "The King's Beautiful View," "The Queen's Delight," or "The Conquest." These places were at some distance from Sans Souci, but they were all situated in the "Artibonite," one of the most beautiful and fertile valleys in the world. Here the poor woman, whose devotion to the famous, as well as infamous, King was phenomenal (I judge from what I saw later), could live in peace, and, if she were alone, her solitude was at least undisturbed by jealousies, friction, or the sounds of misery which the black King caused each day by imperative orders, whose right was never questioned.

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The interpreter told me that the people were growing restless, that already there had been some revolutions about "Le Cap," and there was news of uprisings to the south of us. I looked to this as a means of rescue, but then, I argued, we may fall into hands as bad as, if not worse than, Christophe's, and I dared not pray for a change.

"I wonder why they allow you to talk so freely with me!" said I. "I seem to be a prisoner, and I can not understand why they should let you come in and talk with me in a language which they do not speak themselves."

The interpreter shook his head.

"I do not know," said he, "unless they want you to feel secure, and that they are friendly to you."

It was growing dusk now, and the room and veranda were dark, but I could not help seeing that there was a slight movement on the porch outside. I found that it was a black servant who was engaged in raising the jalousies. His back was toward me, but I paid some attention to him.

"Do you think he intends to let me go," asked I, "or is the ring making only a pretense to kill me?"

"I think——"

But I had risen and had sprung out upon the balcony. Not because I cared what I said myself, but because I did not want this poor fellow to get into trouble through me. The attitude of the servant was that of a listener, and I was upon him before he could turn round.

"This place is like a box of surprises," said I, as I seized the listener. I dragged him into the room, and, striking a light, I found that I had the Minion again within my grasp.

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I lighted the lamp and held it under his chin for want of a better mode of torture.

"You young devil!" said I, "so it's you again, set to spy upon me, of course! They seem to have stained you for good this time. That dye will never rub off." At this the Minion lifted up his voice and howled.

"Tell me where the Captain is," said I, holding the lamp close under his snub nose.

"Dead!" roared the Minion, drawing suddenly away from the flame.

"Of course, I know you are lying," said I. "I suppose the Bo's'n and the Smith, too, are dead."

The Minion nodded his head and added, "Lady, too."

I gave his nose a final scorch and ran him through the open door, took him out, and dropped him off the veranda next to mine. I did not care if I killed him. Unfortunately for those whom the Minion lived to plague, I heard him catch among the vines as he descended, and, after a rather rough fall, get up and limp off.

"Tell your master," I called after him, with fury in my tones, "that if he comes here I will serve him in the same way. Do you think there is any truth in that young liar's words?" said I to the interpreter when I came back into the room.

"Oh, no," said he, "for I saw the rest of your party just before I came in here—I mean the m'sieus."

"Where were they?" I asked anxiously.

The interpreter shook his head.

"I hardly like to tell you," said he. "But you may as well know the truth first as last. They were tied on the backs of mules and were going up the mountain path."

"What do you mean?" I breathlessly asked.

"To the citadel," answered the interpreter, and added, "I wish, I do wish you had not said what you did just now."

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When the interpreter left me I was a prey to the saddest thoughts. Could it really be that this black brute had taken my dear old Skipper, the Bo's'n, and the Smith up to the citadel to dispose of them in his usual brutal way? I arose and walked to the veranda and looked out. The door opening into the next veranda was still flung wide, and I saw that I should have no trouble in climbing down where I had dropped the Minion, so I walked to the rail and vaulted it. There was no one to bar my progress, and I got to the bottom very comfortably. I could only surmise that the door had been intrusted to the Minion to open at will, and that he had been chosen to inform upon me as to my confidences with the interpreter. Probably those who sent him thought that he was still spying upon me, and that when he returned it would be with a large budget of news. I walked softly to the back of the garden. I had no idea where the large mahogany tree might be situated, but made straight for the largest trunk that I could find, and, going round behind it, I discovered Cynthia. She took my hand in hers and pressed it warmly, but she did not allow me to kiss her cheek, as I should like to have done.

"I have been here every evening since I sent you that note," said she. "Did you get it?"

"Yes," said I.

"Then why have you been so long in coming?" Her tone was one of reproach.

"You know that I would have come if it were possible," answered I. "Do not waste the time in reproaches, Cynthia. We may have but a moment. Are they kind to you?"

"Yes; no one could be more devoted than the two daughters of the King. But, Mr. Jones——" She cast down her head and whispered hurriedly: "What do you think? The King wants me to marry his nephew."

"Who, that black brute?"

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"Yes, the King."

"Thank God, he does not want you himself!" I blurted out. I was sorry and ashamed the moment that I said this, but to the Cynthias of this world all things are pure.

"Why, he couldn't marry me!" said Cynthia, raising those great innocent eyes to mine. "He has a wife already. That beautiful Queen, the mother of those girls you saw me with. I have not seen her; she is away just now at one of the other palaces, but I hear on all sides of her loveliness and dignity. They tell me that she is more beautiful than ever Cleopatra was, and that her colour is not much darker than that of the Oriental Queen. But I have very little time to speak with you. My friend is waiting for me over there beneath the acacia tree. She is keeping watch. She tells me that the King's plan is this: He wants a white princess here to show the world that he is the equal of any power. You know how the French have intermarried with these people, and Christophe can not understand, I suppose, why we of the North should not fall at once into his plans. His daughter, the youngest, is really in love with her cousin. She hardly knows what to counsel me to do. Christophe purposes to break up these family arrangements and marry me to the nephew and you to the daughter."

"Well," said I dejectedly, "you have the dagger, I suppose? But marry me to the daughter!" I shook with laughter. The whole thing seemed so perfectly ridiculous.

"I don't see anything so very amusing in that," said Cynthia in an offended tone.

Although I knew that Christophe had a very beautiful Queen, and also numerous attractive ladies about his court, I was very much afraid that he would take a fancy to Cynthia himself; but happily this danger seemed not to have been thought of.

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"The girls have been very kind to me. The youngest one came to me in tears, and with Lacelle's help—Do you know that Lacelle is here?" I nodded. "She told me this plan of her father's. She it was who brought me here this evening, and she says that she will do all in her power to aid me. She knows of a place where she can hide me, she says, but how to get me away later she does not know. She thinks that her cousin Geffroy will aid her. She says when things get to the worst that she will take me to this hiding place. I have given her Solomon for her kindness to me."

"Where is it?" I asked—"the hiding place that you speak of?"

"I do not know," said Cynthia mournfully.

I was furious at the idea of that old wretch having made these plans for Cynthia, but his plan for me struck me as most ludicrous, so that at one moment I was laughing convulsively and the next foaming at the mouth with rage.

"Dearest," I said, "whatever you do, keep friends with this girl, this daughter of Christophe's. She will help you, I am sure. Have you your dagger still?"

She drew it from the folds of her dress.

"If the worst comes to the worst," said I, "be sure and use it. Unless they kill me, you must know that I am always trying to devise some scheme to rescue you." I felt for her hand. "Do you wear our wedding ring, Cynthia?"

I heard a faint "Yes." I pressed her fingers in mine, and found the little band that I had taken from the pirates' cave still there. I drew nearer. For one delicious moment she allowed her head to rest upon my shoulder. I pressed a kiss upon her cheek, the first that I had been allowed to give my own wife, and I arose as strong as Hercules.

"I can do anything now," said I. "I must tell you my secret hurriedly. I have told the King that I can make a ring like the one he wears, only it will be a ring of much more power. The ring that I have—the one you found on the beach—is, I am certain, the one which was lost by Mauresco, his favourite, who gave it to Christophe, and then stole it away again."

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"What! that handsome pirate?" asked Cynthia.

"Yes, damn him!" said I, "and without apology, Cynthia. Now I am sure that you found that very ring—what they call the magic symbol. Sometimes I think that there is something in their superstition about it. Such eyes were never seen in human head! I thought of giving Christophe that ring, and pretending that I had made it. If he believes that I can do so much, he may think that I can do still more. He may even take a fancy to me and make me his favourite."

"Yes, and marry you to one of those girls. No, Hiram, I should not like that at all."

To say that these words delighted me is superfluous.

"Then what shall I do with it, Cynthia? Shall I give it to you?"

"N—n—no," said Cynthia hesitatingly. "I suppose your plan is best, after all. Where do you carry it?"

"Tied to a cord around my neck," said I.

"They may come at night while you are asleep and take it. I have a needle stuck in my dress now, with a needleful of thread. I stuck it there on purpose, thinking that you might want a little sewing done. I have brought it every evening. Do you know that I have been here every evening since I wrote to you? I took it out of Aunt Mary 'Zekel's bag before I came out—the needle and thread, I mean."

"Bless you, dear!" said I. "My clothes are new, and I have no pockets. They saw to that. Perhaps it would be as well to let you secure it somewhere, that I may not lose it, until the proper time comes to surprise the King."

"When will that be?" asked Cynthia.

"To-morrow, I think. I have had time enough. The time was up yesterday." As I spoke I took the ring from beneath my shirt front and, breaking the cord, handed it to Cynthia. It lay like a heavy weight in her hand, and, even though there was hardly a ray of light, the eyes shone with a glow almost luminous.

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"I can't think of any better place than the hem of your trouser leg," said she. "A very unromantic hiding place, but it is better to be safe than romantic."

"I wish we could be both," said I.

I agreed with Cynthia in her view of the case. I stood up and rested my foot on the seat at the back of the tree. She took her needle and thread, and, almost entirely by feeling, she sewed the barbaric symbol into the hem. I thanked her, and told her that she must return now, so that no one need know where she had been.



"Before you go, Cynthia, I must give you something of yours."

"Of mine?" asked Cynthia in apparent amazement, but I could detect a tremor in her voice.

"Yes, I found it in the cave the morning that we returned from our dove hunt, and saw that the house was burned. It was on the floor, just where you lost your handkerchief."

I took her palm in mine and slid the locket into it.

"Strange that I should have found it in the cave when I saw you throw it into the stream."

"Yes, it was strange," answered Cynthia, with perfect calmness of tone; "but very curious things happen in this island I have discovered."

Just here I heard a sort of warning cry. Cynthia arose hurriedly.

"They are calling me," she whispered. "I must go at once."

She pressed my hand affectionately, and I saw her glide away a little to where another figure joined her, and together they melted into the gloom. I sat down again to think over my last few moments with Cynthia. I will not weary you with a lover's rhapsodies, but from what I have seen in your courting days, son Adoniah, I know that you will understand how I felt, or something of it. No one can possibly understand exactly the feelings that come over a man placed as I was unless he has experienced a similar fate. Here was I, meeting my dear girl by stealth in the gardens of a cruel and bloodthirsty monarch, no less a monarch because he was a black monarch, who had soldiers and slaves at his command against whom our little strength was as but an insect's. Cynthia had left me to go I knew not where. She had told me in our short talk that the daughters of Christophe would have loaded her with ornaments had she been willing. He might show her mercy because of these black princesses, but what if they should change toward her? The blacks are capricious at times. What if he should insist upon this hated marriage, and either bind her to his nephew or, angry at her refusal, hand her over to a worse fate, if anything could be worse? I hoped that if such were the alternative he would throw her from the great wall, and thus end all our misery. I began to think it time to return to my room, and was wondering if I could regain it in the same way that I came, when a hand was laid upon my shoulder, a heavy hand. There was a flash of light, and I saw a great griffe standing there, looking at me curiously. This man had a red turban round his head. Around his loins he had another cloth of the same colour. The rest of his body was bare. I caught the flash of a weapon upraised to strike. I jerked myself away from the man, but he had me again in a moment. I struggled, I kicked, I vituperated. He did not strike with the weapon, and I judged at once that he had threatened me only to intimidate me. It was a rude awakening from the bliss of Cynthia's kiss to the rough grasp of a man set to trap me. When I saw several more surrounding me, I gave up the unequal struggle and sank down on the seat under the mahogany tree. But the griffe rudely jerked me to my feet again, and told me, I suppose, that I was to accompany him. He pointed along a lovely alley, which was just beginning to show in the light of the newly risen moon. It was a beautiful path, and I could not help wondering if murder and death lurked at the end of it. I walked amid my captors, thinking that my road lay toward a stronger, more secure chamber, where I was to finish my self-imposed task. Fool that I had been, to think that I could deceive such an astute savage as the great conqueror Christophe! The odours of the night were sweet. The flowers nodded and swayed on every side. The green boughs drooped overhead and shaded the seats about the tree trunks, fit refuge for lovers, and I walked in the midst of six tall savages, each watching me with a wary eye, and each with a great knife drawn to cut me down should I attempt to flee.

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At the end of the alley we came to a halt. Here were several mules ready bridled and saddled for mounting. Three of the men mounted. Then the three who remained standing on the ground placed me upon a fourth animal, and fastened me securely to the saddle. My hands, however, were left free.

"Wait a moment!" I cried, with desperate energy. "I have made the ring which the King ordered. I have it here. I can give it to his Majesty at once. Only let me see him. Let me see the King. I must see King Christophe! Let me see him for a moment, or bring the interpreter. Let me speak with the interpreter; he will tell the King." But I might as well have talked to the grim mountain above me. The men half laughed, half scowled, shook their heads, and prodded the beast on which I sat. The mule was started along a narrow causeway, where the slightest step to the right or left would have dashed us both into a dark and swiftly flowing stream. When we had crossed, I turned to look behind me. I found the three mounted men were following me. I tried to turn the mule, but I soon saw the utter futility of such an attempt. The path was extremely narrow, and I perceived that turning the mule about would be a most difficult manoeuvre, even were the animal willing, and my experience with the genus mule had led me to believe that he is never of his rider's mind. Then of what avail to turn! I might dash one, even two, of the men off the steep fall in my own company, but I could not see what recompense that would be to me, and then I remembered the old Skipper's words, "I've been in tighter places than this, my boy," and I resigned myself to the inevitable. Up, up, up, we went, now winding through narrow defiles, again coming out on the sheer side of the mountain. There is a way of approach to the mountain top which is not so dangerous as the one which we pursued, and I know that it was in existence at that time, but I was conducted along a path which would have caused my eyes to start in terror from my head had I not felt certain that there was much worse to come.

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We are going to the citadel, I thought—that citadel about which Cynthia and I jested one day not so long ago. I am to be thrown from the Boucan, and shall either die going through the air or lie a

mangled heap among those whitening bones. The vultures of the air will hover over me, they will swoop down upon me, they will try to peck out my eyes. I shall fight them as long as I can, if I am alive, if I have an arm that is not broken, and if I can draw my knife! I felt for my knife. It was gone! I knew not when I had lost it, whether when I had bathed and changed my clothes or whether it had fallen from its sheath since. I looked abroad on the wonderful night. No one was moving in that vast exterior but we four. It seemed as if I were alone, for I rode ahead of this singular cavalcade, and saw nothing but the wonderful panorama of the verdure-covered steeps, the wide-spreading ocean below, and the stars and moon above me. I trembled and shook so that I could hardly hold to my animal, for I discerned some few dark shapes still wheeling down below there whose cravings had not yet been satiated.

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"I shall be their next morsel," said I to myself. And as these thoughts passed through my brain I entered between two high walls, which spread as I advanced, and I found myself in an open courtyard. The gates had been flung wide at our approach, but as soon as we were within them they closed with a loud and ominous clang, and I was a prisoner within the frowning, stupendous walls of Christophe's citadel, the terrible La Ferrière.

I remember little that followed. I tumbled rather than slid from the mule. I could hardly walk upon my stiffened legs, but I found that they must be put to use. We crossed the courtyard and entered a heavy door, which clanged to behind us, captive and captors alike. We traversed long halls, we passed dark interiors. We came out into open spaces, where in the brilliant light of the moon I saw again the open ocean, on which I imagined that white sails flecked the open, free waters. Nearer were esplanades, where great cannon frowned and balls for their consumption were piled to the top of the different compartments. Then into the dark interior again, again emerging into light, mounting stairs, descending them, and so on until we came at last to a door. It was hastily unlocked and I was pushed inside, my guards, following. For a moment I could see nothing, and then, as my eyes gathered strength, I perceived that I was not alone. A figure was crouching in the corner of the room. It arose with a sort of growl and stood upon its feet. It recalled to me at the moment the snarl of a dog whose bone is to be taken away from him. Its back was to the little ray of moonlight that came through the open port. This being made a dash at us, all four, with an open knife. We started back. The guards laughed as they all three ran out, pulling the door to after them. I had seized upon the edge of the door, but it had slipped through my fingers. Its closing click was like the answer of fate. I flung my back against it and faced the figure who stood in the middle of the room with his hand upraised, and in that hand a knife.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

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### WE ENGAGE IN BATTLE, MURDER, SUDDEN DEATH, AND— FREEDOM.

You may be led to think, son Adoniah, that events followed each other in a succession more rapid than natural, and that my story is what might be called by people of moderation a very sensational one, but that would be a mild term to apply to the experiences of our stay in the island. Those were troublous times, and I can but give you a sketch of the crowded events of those terrible weeks. If ever any one whom you allow to peruse these memoirs, should pretend to doubt your father's word, take the book from him and close it, and let not his curiosity as to the "yarns" that I am spinning prevail upon you to deliver these pages again to his scrutiny. My sufferings and those of my companions were too great for me to tolerate for a moment that my word should be doubted.

The end of the last page left me in a cell of the citadel alone with a strange man, upon whom I had been unwillingly thrust. My situation was not a cheerful one, especially as I heard the stranger muttering to himself in unintelligible jargon. It sounded like an attempt at English, and rather familiar to me. The place was dark, except for a slight ray of reflected light that came from some angle where the moonlight struck, and then glanced in at the one small embrasure, making a narrow line across the floor of the cell. I could see, silhouetted against the opening, a human figure, and that was all. I watched it, spellbound. It stooped and began to crawl slowly toward me. Now I crouched and backed to a corner to elude it. It turned and came on again steadily toward my corner. As it reached the middle of the room, I saw the moonlight glance for a moment on the glittering blade. I shrank into myself with horror. The figure arose and stood as if to make a fresh start. There were more mutterings and the preparation for a dash at the intruder, but in the second that the head was raised to its natural height and the moonlight fell upon it I recognised a profile that I knew. It was the swollen cheek of the Bo's'n!

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I called to him: "Bo's'n! Bo's'n! don't strike! It is I, the Mate!"

The Bo's'n stood for a moment in astonishment, and then dropped upon his knees. He gave a gasp and a gurgle. I saw something roll, a ball of light, along the ray-swept floor. I was on my knees also before he could rise. I seized upon the brilliant thing. It was so large that my fingers would hardly close over it. It was wet and cold, and I turned my eyes toward the spot where the Bo's'n stood again in the revealing ray. I saw that his toothache had left him as suddenly as it always had arisen.

"So this is the swelling from which you have suffered so long and so continuously," said I, with, I

must confess, a sneer in my voice. I opened my fingers, and together we looked down upon the great diamond which he had found among the pirates' jewels, and which would have made two of the famous Koh-i-noor.

"You ridiculous old fool!" said I, "you might have killed me, do you know that?"

"You wouldn't have had my secret if I had, Mr. Jones, sir," snarled the Bo's'n.

"No, I shouldn't, and I suppose you think that you would have had an easy life of it. I should have haunted you as certainly as my name is Hiram Jones." The Bo's'n snatched the gem quickly from my hand and backed into the corner of the cell.

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"I don't mean that you shall have it, Mr. Jones, sir. It's me that's carried it through all our troubles, pretending to have toothache and all. Sometimes it was in my mouth and sometimes under my armpit, and do you think, sir, that I intends to share and share alike after all the trouble I have had, Mr. Jones, sir?"

I was convinced that the Bo's'n must be subdued again. The time had come. I raised my hands and began in an incantatory manner:

"There was a serpent god," I said, in a dreamy tone, "with gleaming eyes. He twined and wound himself around in a slow, slow moving circle. He thrust out his forked red tongue. The head which he held within his own was the head of a goat! *A goat without horns!* He half swallowed the goat. He squirmed and stretched and pressed his body round it, he squeezed its bones, crushed them—crushed them——" I gazed fixedly at the Bo's'n. He was already shaking with horror. His eyes were glued to the wall behind me, he stood paralyzed and stiff. The diamond rolled from his hand and bounded to the corner of the cell. He shook as if in an ague, the cold drops stood upon his forehead, and then he fell to the floor, and his knife dropped from his hand. I seized upon the knife and turned to search for the jewel, when, to my horror, I beheld a real serpent gliding up the wall behind me. It had appeared to aid me at this critical moment. Having been assured by the Smith that most of the serpents in the island were harmless, I made a dash for it, and soon despatched it. I threw the hateful pieces out of the embrasure. The Bo's'n still lay limp and white.

"It's only what you deserve," said I to his deaf ears, "but I will provide myself with something now which will insure me safety while I sleep at least." I took the knife, and, kneeling on the floor, I pressed the point to the hem of my nether garment. I would rip the hem and disclose the symbol, but fate had been there before me. For the second time the ring had played me false. Cynthia's sewing had not been of the surest, hampered as she was by the want of light. I felt sick at heart when I discovered my loss. My only chance of getting at Christophe had flown. I tried to think where I could have lost the ring. Remembering my struggles under the mahogany tree with the body guard, my frantic kicks and wild slashing at my foes, I could only imagine that I had dropped it there in my violent efforts to tear myself from the grasp of the black men.

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The Bo's'n still lay dazed and helpless on the floor. He had not spoken a word, and did not seem to see me. I went at once to the corner where the jewel had rolled. There seemed to be a small hole of about four inches in diameter close to the floor. It ran under the thick partition wall; I thought that it was meant for a drain in case that water should get into the cell, or if the floor should be washed, which, I am sure, is a thing which as yet had never happened. I took the knife and poked and pried within the hole. It seemed to be a long hole and far-reaching. It was close to the level of the floor, so that I could not get my eyes far enough down to see if the diamond were hidden there. I first drove the knife into the cavity very nervously, I realize now, and anxiously. I seemed to hear a faint click, and I thought that the point of the knife touched something; but the article, whatever it was, had retreated to a greater distance, and, as I tried again and again to secure the treasure, I pushed it only farther away. I finally relinquished the search in great despair. I looked up at the wall. I saw some slight cracks in the rough masonry. I felt sure when the Bo's'n came to he would not only demand the diamond, and accuse me of stealing it, but that he would again attack me with the knife. Being a much taller man than he, I jumped up against the wall and drove the knife into a crack as far as I could push it. When I landed again upon my feet, the Bo's'n was regarding me with glittering eye. I saw that the man was near losing his mind, and I feared that when he discovered that his jewel and his knife both were gone that I should find myself in a cell with a mad man. I retreated to a farthest corner of the room, and, with eyes that were dropping to with sleep, I sat myself down to watch the Bo's'n. After a long sigh he winked violently several times, and then opened his eyes in a natural manner. The faint morning light was finding its way in through the port or small window. It would grow lighter now with every succeeding moment.

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"Come, now, Bo's'n," I said, "there is no use in our having any quarrel. I am as sorry for what has happened as you can be. I have managed to put myself out of danger from you." I pointed to where the knife stuck firmly between the two great stones. "I did not take your jewel. You dropped it yourself. It was when the serp——" I saw the Bo's'n begin to tremble again and his eyes to quiver. "I shall not revert to anything painful. The diamond rolled just in there." I pointed to the hole which I had unsuccessfully probed. "We may be able to get something later with which to secure it—the diamond, I mean. But just at present there is no hope at all of such a result. Now, wouldn't it be better for you and I to be friends? We are here alone together. We do not know where the Skipper and the Smith may be. I can not tell what will be the fate of——" I hesitated, and then boldly plumped out the words, "'my wife.' We are in about as doleful a plight as any two men in this world ever were, but I have often heard it said that 'while there's life

there's hope.' Now listen to me, Bo's'n. You and I may as well be friends, for I can't see that at present we have any one else to depend on. I had no intention of taking your diamond, but it belongs to me as much as to you."

"As to that, Mr. Jones, sir, it belongs to the Minion as much as to either of us."

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"Well, I don't know about that, but the Captain and the others have an interest in it equal with ours. Now, Bo's'n, we may save the lives of all the party if we can get at that gem and offer it to Christophe."

"I'd rather trust to keeping it in my cheek, sir," said the Bo's'n.

"Very well, that's your lookout, if you can get it."

So saying, I lay upon the floor and slept. When I awoke I saw the Bo's'n was sitting on the floor in the corner of the cell eating some coarse fare from a platter of metal which stood before him. I immediately demanded my share, and together we despatched all that the plate contained.

The day dragged slowly, oh, so slowly! The only thing in the cell beside the Bo's'n and myself was the knife. I had some slight thought of getting the knife down and playing a game by throwing the point at the cracks in the wall, but, after a scrutinizing look at the surly Bo's'n, I decided to let well enough alone. I was his superior as to strength, but, should he once succeed in obtaining that weapon, I was not at all sure what would follow. The prospect of wealth, or else the loss of it, had changed the Bo's'n's nature, and where once I had considered this man strange and queer, I had now come to the belief that he was really mad.

I raised my eyes to the small opening in the wall, and began to wonder how I could reach it. As it was, I could see only the deep blue, and the trade-wind clouds drifting, drifting, drifting across my vision. One sees that which he longs for in the clouds brought by the trade wind, and as I watched there passed before my eyes a long procession of ships, full-rigged ships, with swelling sails; ships, high up on whose stern and prow stood, marked against the background of blue, guns of enormous calibre. The bows of these vessels were all pointed toward the north. They meant life and freedom.

"Bo's'n," said I, "you will see that there is no furniture of any kind in this cell. I should like very much to look from that little window up there. I can reach it very well with my hands, but I can't see out. Would you mind letting me have the use of your back for a few minutes, Bo's'n?"

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"Certainly not, sir," said the Bo's'n with the greatest politeness.

Whereupon he crouched down upon the floor and I stood upon his back. From the open port I had a splendid and extensive view. It was quite large enough for me to put my head out and look all about me, but I found, with regret, that my shoulders would not go through the opening. Of course, my jailers knew this before I was placed in the casemate. I looked abroad, I looked to right, to left, and then I looked downward. I found that we were in a sort of square tower or bastion, and that we were, so to speak, in the second story. And as I gazed beneath me I saw a hand protrude from another port, perhaps, or some other opening. It was a woman's hand, and on the wedding finger I saw the ring that I had given to Cynthia. The hand grasped a handkerchief, which it waved as if to attract attention. The hand, I saw, was Cynthia's own. So she was incarcerated below me! I called softly, "Cynthia! Cynthia!" and then getting no response, I called louder. There was no one near. Indeed, there was no esplanade or terrace surrounding our side of the fortress; only a sheer wall, which fell away to the depth of a hundred feet or more, until it reached the slope of the mountain where its foundation had been built. The fortress had been begun by the French upon the mountain-top called the "Bishop's Hat," and for the erection of the citadel they had selected the very crown and apex of the summit, where the land slopes steeply away on every side.

"Cynthia!" again I called. "Do speak to me. It is I—Hiram."

Whereupon the hand was withdrawn and Cynthia's head emerged from the opening below. She turned her face to me as well as she could, and looked upward.

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"Oh, is that you? How glad I am!" she exclaimed. "How strange that we should be so near each other!"

"Are you alone?" I asked anxiously.

"Yes, and likely to be. It seems that we were overheard last evening, and when I went back to speak to you for a moment I was seized upon. I did not dream that you were here. I thought that I was alone. Your presence gives me hope, Hiram."

"Dearest," said I, "it all seems rather hopeless to me, but there must be some way out of this."

"Zalee has returned," said Cynthia. "Lacelle told me after I left you. An American ship has started for Manzanillo Bay. It seems that is the name of the place where we were shipwrecked. It will wait there as long as possible, perhaps until we can make our escape."

"Our escape!" I echoed, "our escape from such walls as these!"

"It seems that Christophe takes the ground that we have come to start a revolution," said Cynthia.

"He is full of those excuses," said I. "Start a revolution! Three men, a young girl, and a boy!" I had wondered how he had dared throw Americans, natives of so powerful a country as ours, into prison. I knew that he was very little informed with regard to our country, but I had thought that our representative at Le Cap would have rescued us in a very short time.

"Zalee found great disturbances down at the coast," said Cynthia. "Some of the mobs are shouting 'A bas Christophe!' Others are crying, 'Vi' Boyer!' General Boyer is in town, and they are flocking to his standard. Zalee tried to find the 'consite,' as he calls him, but he was at Port au Prince. But he saw an American bark in the harbour, and he swam off to her. Her captain—Bartlett is his name—seemed very kind and much interested in us. He told Zalee that we could come down from the plateau to the shore when we saw the sails coming into the harbour, and that he would train his guns on the beach to protect his long boat, which he would send in for us. He thinks we are down there at the plateau now. He does not dream that we are up here on this terrible height, imprisoned by Christophe. When Zalee returned and found us gone, he understood at once what had happened, and came up to the palace, trusting to the torch bearer and the kitchen maid to protect him. Zalee happened to know the cook on board the Jenny Bartlett. He is a Haïtien, and through him Zalee told the captain about our being secreted at the plateau. He is getting a cargo of sugar on board—the captain, I mean—and as soon as he is ready he will sail for the bay. He says that we must come as soon as we sight his vessel. He may be there in a day or two. O Hiram! do you suppose that we can get away, and that if we do that we can get to the coast in time?"

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"You have given me a new hope," said I. "There must be some way found."

"And, O Hiram! I have such a strange thing to tell you——"

Bump! I fell to the floor of my cell.

"You're getting pretty heavy, Mr. Jones, sir," said the Bo's'n; "besides which, I hear footsteps coming along the corridor." I heard them myself, and arose and stood straight against the wall as the door was rudely opened and a small parcel was flung into the room. I recognised my handkerchief, and felt, as I picked the parcel up from the floor, that the lamp, blowpipe, and materials for making the ring had been sent after me. The soldier who looked in at the door said something in his mongrel tongue which I did not comprehend. Then some food, consisting of cassava bread and coffee, was pushed in at the crack which was made by the opening, the door was closed, and we were alone again.

I can not tell you how the days passed. Suspense and misery were my portion. I wondered each day what the next would have in store for me, and each night what another night would bring. I feared, above all, for Cynthia, and dreaded that those brutal soldiers would force some insult upon her or cause her some injury. My only happiness was in talking with her, and, as often as I could persuade him to do so, I stood upon the Bo's'n's shoulders and conversed with her. I paid for this privilege by making over to the Bo's'n each time a small share of my part in the great diamond. And I paid also in many a bump and bruise, for just as Cynthia and I had come to the most interesting part of our conversation, and she had said to me, "O Hiram! I always forget to tell you——" the Bo's'n would let me fall, and would under no persuasion whatsoever allow me to remount his unwilling back. This, however, I took as a matter of course, and I would have gone through with much more than that to get speech, even once a day, with Cynthia. You can imagine what a welcome diversion it made in the monotonous hours which comprised the days of our wretched existence.

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After some days of imprisonment, I asked to be allowed to take a bath. To a man who has had his plunge in the lovely rivers of the North or the salt waves of the sea every day of his life, the close confinement, with but a teacupful of water to bathe in, becomes unendurable. My jailer looked at me with surprise when I asked this favour, and, as he could speak a little English, he informed me that he could not understand my wishing to put my whole body into water; that for him it made him ill! However, he went off to proffer my request to the proper authorities, and, to my great joy, I was allowed the privilege that I asked—probably because it was thought that such an unusual method of procedure would end my life, and that they might as well get rid of me in that way as any other. Imagine my joy when my guide informed me that I was to be allowed to bathe myself in the horse trough! He looked upon me as quite insane, but seemed to think that such mental failure was common to all English-speaking people, which I assured him was true. In his broken English he informed me that once an English admiral had come up from the coast to the palace to remain over night, and that he had brought his bath-tub with him. This was looked upon as a strange piece of infatuation. Imagine my delight and pleasure when the guide opened my cell door and conducted me to the stable yard! I can not describe the numberless passages, corridors, apartments, and barracks through and by which we passed. It seemed to me to be the journey of a half hour. It would have been most interesting had I not been brimming over all the time with my plans for escape and wondering how we could manage to get to the sea. How often I regretted the leaving of the cave. The American captain could have taken us off in a half hour's time, and now, perhaps, when we reached the shore, he would have gone away. I suppose that I was ten minutes walking through the different hallways, but at last we came out into a rough, uneven yard, where there were mules, horses, hay in abundance under cover and in the open, and in the centre of the inclosure was a great trough of water, where I saw that the horses were allowed to drink. The stable yard was some distance below the crest of the hill, and I recalled that we had descended several flights of steps. I threw off my slight clothing and plunged into the trough, the soldiers looking on with astonishment, as much, perhaps, at my white skin as at my

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evident enjoyment of the delicious bath. They were, for the most part, dirty and ill dressed in soiled white linen, and I recommended to them in choice English not only a bath for themselves, but for their clothes as well. I dried myself in the sun, and then dressed again. As we mounted a flight of steps in the wall, before entering the fortress—or perhaps, I should say, its inclosed portion—I turned for a moment to look once again down into the smiling valley which stretched between me and liberty. Below me, almost embowered in trees, lay the palace of Sans Souci, and winding along, with curves and turnings, ran the white and dusty road which led to Le Cap. As I stopped for a moment to breathe God's air, for perhaps the last time, I was surprised to see flames far below there in the fields, and now I found that the plains were ablaze, cotton as well as sugar fields. The cane sent up a thick smoke, and there came to us on a desultory breeze the rich, odourous smell of the burning sugar. I pointed this out to the guard who had brought me down to the stable yard. He nodded his head, and told me, as well as I could understand, that the fields had been burning for some days, that the rebels were encroaching from the coast, and that if they succeeded in reaching the citadel we should all be burned or shot. So this was the death reserved for us. Capture by rebels no better than Christophe himself! I took my last look at the melancholy but beautiful sight, and turned again toward what I now felt was to be my tomb. I had kept up my courage until that moment, but now, alas! it had flown in a breath. We walked again through many dark corridors, and I saw that we took this time a different turning. I was about to remonstrate with my guard as to this, when there was a sudden beating of a drum and a call to arms. He quickly opened a door and pushed me hurriedly into a room, the door slammed, and I looked up to find that I was confronting Cynthia. I met her with a most disheartening sentence.

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"We can at least die together," said I.

"Why should we die at all?" asked Cynthia, running to me with a little cry of joy.

"The rebels are attacking Christophe, and they will treat us even worse than he has."

"How do you know?" asked Cynthia.

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"I have just heard so from the guard who put me in here. Of course, my being here is a mistake. He has brought me a story too low, but it is all the same now. We can die together."

"I don't believe we shall die at all," said Cynthia. "I'm dreadfully sorry now that I sent that diamond to the King."

"What diamond?" asked I, almost knowing what she would say.

"Why, the morning that they brought me here I was kneeling there in the corner, praying that we might be saved if it was God's will. I had prayed long and earnestly, and was just rising from my knees, when I heard a curious little chick and rattle, and the most wonderful jewel that I ever imagined rolled out from that crack in the ceiling. It dropped almost into my hands. I have wanted to tell you every day, but you have always gone away so suddenly——"

"So the Bo's'n is doubly paid for his weak, unwilling back!" said I. Cynthia, of course, did not understand these words, but continued:

"I looked upon this as a special interposition of Providence in my behalf, and when the young Prince Geffroy came up here two days ago I sent the diamond to the King, hoping that he would save us in exchange for it."

I gasped in distress.

"I don't believe he would keep his written pledge," said I, "and certainly if he had not promised you he would not save your life on account of the jewel if he wished to take it. Why did Geffroy come up here?"

"He came to collect all the troops that could be spared. There has been an uprising——"

"Yes, yes, I know," said I. While I had been talking I heard distant sounds of firing, the sounds of shouts were borne upon the breeze, and then suddenly the boom of one of the guns of the citadel itself spoke out to remind those in the valley below, perhaps, that the stupendous fortress was still there, still faithful, still impregnable. I climbed up on the low seat which had been given Cynthia, and found that I could just look over the ledge of the port.

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"How did you get up so high as to put your head out of the window?" asked I.

"Turned the bench on one end, of course," said Cynthia. Woman's wit again! I set the bench on end and looked out with ease. The valley was all aflame now. I should not have thought that the fires would spread so rapidly. At that very moment, had I but known it, Christophe was seated under the great camaito tree, and as all the troops who remained faithful defiled before him he gave to each one a piece of money, and told them to go and fight the rebels for God and for King Henry of the North. We spent the day thus and the long watches of the night. I watched while Cynthia slept, and she watched while I took some rest.

It was early morning when our cell door was thrown open and we were told to come out at once. We ran along the black and dingy halls, and, following the faint light which showed itself, as well as the sound of voices, we at last found ourselves upon the great esplanade. Even though all was excitement and anxiety, I could not help taking in the wondrous beauty of the view. I seemed all at once to be perched in midair. I know now that I saw that grand body of water, Manzanillo Bay, stretching to the northward. To the right, in the dim distance, were La Grange and Monte Cristo

in their infancy; to the left, the stretch of land that led toward Le Cap. Below us the fires were raging, and beyond the gate I saw a body of men advancing, not by the perilous path over which I had come, but along a fine road, which led winding down through the woods to Sans Souci itself. These soldiers had just emerged from the forest. They were of the rebel party. They swarmed up the hill and began their attack on the great gates of the fortress. It seemed hopeless to me, but I had no time to surmise anything, for I was there to aid, and I asked for instructions at once. All was excitement on the terrace. All the great cannon which could be moved had been wheeled across the esplanade, and their muzzles turned downward upon the advancing enemy. I now understood why we had been released. Many of the soldiery had been called away to protect Sans Souci and the towns of the valley, so that every man in the fortress was needed to load and fire those eighteen- and twenty-four-pounders. They stood upon their mahogany carriages as firmly as if those carriages were made of iron. And here, among the defenders of the place, I came upon the Skipper, the Smith, and the Bo's'n. Cynthia rushed to her Uncle's arms, and for a moment the two could not speak. Then the old man said:

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"You must hide yourself, Cynthy, girl."

"No, Uncle," she answered, "I can bring fire, or do anything that a man can, and so save you the time of a soldier. Perhaps if we fight for Christophe he will let us go."

Poor girl! The cry of the captive since the days of Pharaoh, no greater tyrant than Christophe himself!

How shall I describe the confusion which reigned in the fortress? The wheeling of the guns into place, the belching forth of their loads of shot and shell, the shrieks of the wounded below the gate and under the walls, the hammering upon the masonry from the outside, the shouts of "They are here!" or, "They are attacking that sally port!" The rush of our handful of men to aid in the repulse, then the surging back as the attack came from another quarter. Can you imagine anything so strange as the sight of a young girl among those rough soldiers of all shades, running here and there, bringing water to the overheated gunners, carrying fire to light the powder at the vent, encouraging her friends by words of cheer, even jumping upon the parapet in sight of all on both sides, and calling in her clear voice, "They are making a rush toward the southern gate, Uncle!" or, "Hiram, they are falling back! Fire down the hill, and you will have them on this side!"

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All day long the sound of battle came to us. It rose from those plains of Paradise which were being turned from gardens into shambles. Gardens where in the past, the rose and the Sangre de Cristo lily had borrowed from the soil, watered with the blood of Christophe's enemies, a colour as vivid as that of the streams which ran again to-day in crimson rivers adown the plain.

Sometimes the shriek of the great cannon ball sounded near to us, then again farther away; sometimes the clouds of smoke arose so that we could not see the plain, and anon the sweet trade wind, made only to send the good ship flying on her course, or in its baby breeze to caress the cheek of a gentle maid, parted the columns of smoke, and we saw flames bursting through the roofs of the dwellings of the valley, and caught a glimpse of contending armies as they advanced or retreated, won victory or succumbed to defeat.

We fought there all the morning, but at last we found ourselves the victors, although with some loss on our side. Our victory was owing to the small numbers of the attacking force, as well as to the impregnability of the fortress. The Smith had been killed. He did not die at once, and Cynthia sat with his head in her lap and gave him water until his lips stiffened, so that he could speak no more. He gave her messages for "the misses," and you have heard, son Adoniah, how well she delivered them, going to England herself in '29, and to Cornwall, where she saw young Trevelyan again. But I am getting ahead of my story. The Bo's'n, too, was wounded, and Cynthia was bending toward him when suddenly he rolled over, helpless as he was, and away as far as he could get from his kind nurse.

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"Is the Bo's'n mad?" asked Cynthia of me. I had gone to get them both some water, and was returning along the esplanade when I saw this motion of the Bo's'n.

"Yes, on a certain subject," said I, and I laid my finger on the magic symbol, which I saw dangling from the opening at the throat of her dress. It was hanging upon the baby chain in company again with my portrait. But the eyes, those wondrous orbs of flame, were gone! It was upon that eyeless bit of mystery that you cut your teeth, Adoniah, and all of your children after you.

"I found it," said Cynthia, "when I went back to the mahogany tree that evening. It was lying in the gravel. My foot struck something, and I stooped to pick it up, and found that it was that serpent ring."

"That ring has had a strange history," said I. "Hide it now, or the Bo's'n will let you do nothing for him."

"We can escape now, Jones," said the Skipper. "At least the enemy are dying or running away, and our captors seem to have followed suit. Let us start at once."

"We can't leave this poor man, Uncle," said Cynthia, pointing to the Bo's'n. Of course, we could not leave him! The dear girl was, as ever, right.

I saw the disappointment of the Skipper's face.

"Staying may imperil all our lives," he said; "but I suppose it's human to stay."

"I think he'll be able to walk after a night's rest," said Cynthia.

"It's getting late now to make a start," said I. "The early morning will be better."

"I shall have to start quite early," said Cynthia. "I want to stop at the beach and get that palm for Aunt Mary 'Zekel."

We were almost alone on the esplanade. The soldiers had disappeared with their officers into the interior of the building. They seemed to have forgotten us, and we were left free to follow our own devices.

It seemed so strange to be free once again, for habits are quickly formed, and not so quickly broken. I could not get accustomed to the fact that I was free as God's air, and that there was none to molest or to make me afraid. [Pg 410]

Cynthia had not mentioned William Brown to me now for some time, and I felt quite sure that whether he was glued to the dock in anticipation of her coming, or whether he had given up all hope, that the latter course would be wisest and best for William himself.

"You mustn't forget the palm tree for Aunt Mary 'Zekel," said Cynthia. "There is the dearest little one down by the cave. I wonder if we shall go that way?"

"Whichever way we go, we must be cautious," said I. "I think that General Boyer would protect us if we could find him, but the opposing parties will fight to-morrow as they did to-day, and they are between us and him. Fortunately for us, the battle is waged at a distance back from the coast, and in front of Sans Souci."

"Mr. Jones, sir," said the Bo's'n, "Zalee says we'll have to slip down to the right, sir. All the natives have rushed up to the different palaces for their share of the plunder, and the coast line is left almost deserted."

"Then I can certainly get the palm," said Cynthia, sticking persistently to her point, as women will.

"Well, well, Cynthy, girl," said the Skipper impatiently, "if you want to try it, I'll see what we can do for you, but I reely can't see how you can bear to look at anything from this damn black kingdom ever again. If Mary 'Zekel so much as carries a palm-leaf fan to church along with her bunch of fennel, darn me if I don't throw it into the aisle!"

As we were thus talking, some of the soldiers came hurrying from the interior of the fortress. Their arms were heaped with loads of treasure. So greedy had they been that gold, silver, jewels, and glittering napoleons spilled from their clutches as they ran.

Following them came officers, themselves laden with booty. They fired upon the soldiers as they ran in front of them, calling to them to drop these treasures of Christophe's, which they themselves were taking only to restore to the King. Some of the plunderers dropped dead at our very feet. Some turned and fired on their officers, saying that the game was over, and that they might as well have the spoil as Boyer's men. They ran to the stable yard, and, mounting mules and horses, rode away, many of them with hands and sashes full of treasure. The officers returned again and again, each one carrying all that he could hold in his arms. They made bundles of the stuff and piled it upon the mules in the courtyard. They seemed to have forgotten us, and when they had seized all that they could find by breaking in, they, too, rode away down the mountain side, leaving us the sole inhabitants of that impregnable fortress, which, properly invested with men and munitions of war, would have withstood siege for a lifetime. [Pg 411]

We moved the Bo's'n into the shade, and searched the place for food and drink. This we found in plenty. We washed our faces and hands clean from the grime of battle, and retreated to a far corner of the esplanade, which overlooked the palace, but where we were out of sight of the dreadful results of the carnage. There we rested in the cool, sweet air of evening. Far, far away I could see a little fleck of white on the waters of the bay, which I thought might be the American ship waiting to take us back to Belleville. But we could not go to-night. We could only watch and wait. The sun was sinking fast in the west, the night coming on apace.

And now a strange and distant sound like the wail of the mourner broke the stillness of this peaceful evening hour. What new event this betokened I could not forecast. So much had come and gone that nothing out of heaven or hell would have caused me surprise. The moaning continued, and I went to the edge of the parapet to see what more there was of the unexpected. Cynthia trembled and begged me not to go. The poor girl, so brave when courage was needed, was now nervous and anxious, and said many times, "Oh, if we were only at the coast!" [Pg 412]

I stood at the edge of the parapet and looked downward. There came, winding along up through the forest, a funeral procession. So I could not help but judge, for four persons were carrying a hammock containing a heavy load between them, and several others walked behind. Of those who followed, four were women and one was a man. There was an incongruousness about the procession, for behind the mourners lounged a small figure, who apparently was not at all interested in the sad group which preceded him. He halted and looked upward at the trees, and threw stones at the birds. I could but smile. It was total depravity exemplified in the person of the Minion. I could not but feel a disappointment that he had not been captured, or slaughtered, or left behind in some way, but here he was, and we must make the best of him, which, indeed, was very little.



The Skipper had joined me, and was gazing curiously at the small procession as it wound upward toward the summit.

"You might know it," said the Skipper, looking wearily at the ubiquitous Minion. "As usual, in everybody's mess and nobody's watch."

As the mourners approached the great gates, which had been left open by the retreating soldiery, the wailing became louder, the women moaned and beat their bodies, raised their hands to Heaven, as if calling maledictions down upon an enemy, and then again beat their breasts and wailed in long and solemn cadence, as if for a loved one gone. The procession entered the courtyard at a slow pace. The bearers rested their load, as if they must have a breathing spell; but almost at once, at an imperious signal from the foremost figure of the group, they again lifted their burden and walked upward until they came out upon the open esplanade. I saw now that Zalee was among the carriers, and I also perceived that the burden which he aided in carrying was a very ponderous one. When the bearers had reached the centre of the esplanade, she who led, one of tall stature and graceful mien, ordered them with a gesture that was regal in its command, to rest their burden upon the ground. When this was done, and the bearers had withdrawn to a little distance, the four mourners surrounded the giant form and, bending low above it, wailed in despairing monotony. So he had come to this! That great King! For it was our enemy Christophe himself thus come to an end of all his power! I saw Lacelle among the few faithful who surrounded the family of the King, and as they withdrew at a respectful distance she and Zalee caught sight of us. They came eagerly forward to greet us. They told us how Christophe, finding that his enemies were upon him, had retired to his chamber, and almost within sight of the valley of dry bones, where thirty thousand of his victims lay, he had had the courage to take his own life, as ruthlessly as he had taken the lives of thousands.

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The interpreter was there, as well as Lacelle's relatives—a poor little remnant of those who had served Christophe while he was all-powerful. Lacelle ran to Cynthia and begged her not to leave her here; if she were going away, to take her with her. Zalee pointed to the distant bay, and told us, through the interpreter, that the ship would be there, he thought, on the morrow; that the Captain dared not tarry long for fear of a dash at his vessel by some of the pirates who infested the Isle of Pines.

It was growing quite dark now. I had been conscious for some time that a figure was lingering in one of the angles of the wall looking our way. I spoke to Cynthia.

"I think that is your friend," said I. I motioned toward the shadow. Cynthia uttered an exclamation and started toward the place. The girl stepped forth to meet her, and I recognised at once the young daughter of the King.

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"I wanted to see you once more," she whispered. "Our lives are finished, but I wanted to say good-bye. Oh, if I could but live in a country such as yours, where you are a princess, where there is no killing, no bloodshed! I remember nothing else in all my life!" And now the other sister approached. She opened her hand, and disclosed to Cynthia's astonished eyes the diamond which she had sent as a gift to Christophe but a few days before.

"His last gift to my dear mother," she said. "He was a King, a great, great King, a powerful warrior, but his last thought was of her."

Cynthia closed the girl's fingers over the glittering gem.

"It was God-given, after all," she said to me, "since it will be the fortune of those who would have saved us."

The Bo's'n, overhearing part of our conversation, expressed it as his opinion that we should at once demand the jewel from the daughter of the dead King.

"O Bo's'n!" said Cynthia, "don't talk about money! That has brought much of this trouble upon us. Let us once get home, and I care not if I live on a crust a day. Let us get home, to free, God-fearing America!"

"I'll see how I feel to-morrow, Mrs. Jones, ma'm," said the Bo's'n stubbornly.

The citadel was ours! The grand, great fortress, with its multitude of apartments and secret interiors, was as absolutely given over to us as if we had fought for its possession with the army who held it, and had vanquished its occupants.

After the last one of the guard had disappeared, with all the booty that he could carry, we left the little band of mourners upon the terrace and went with the Skipper in search of a comfortable shelter for Cynthia. I found one apartment well secluded from the others, which seemed as if provided to withstand a siege—something which Christophe had always apprehended. These rooms were designated as "the Queen's chambers," and here we brought Cynthia and Lacelle, and for the first time in many long weeks the two were together in absolute comfort and safety, wrapped, I hoped, in dreamless sleep. The Skipper ensconced himself in the sacred bed of the King, and the others of our party found lodgment both commodious and magnificent. As for me, the excitement of the day had told upon me. I felt smothered inside the walls, and could not forget so soon the hurried march of events. Nor could I prevent myself from dwelling on the thought that we at last were free to go as we listed. It had all come about in a moment, as it were, by means which no man could have foreseen, and I mused upon this fact, and the evolving of what I had considered my wise and wily plans, and their defeat and overthrow by that

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Providence who had but to say, "Go! thou art bound no more." I sat myself down outside upon the terrace and leaned against the great stone wall, where from an angle I could overlook the palace of Sans Souci and the little town of Millot, now black and smoke-stained, or charred and burned by fire. My eyes endeavoured to penetrate the cloud of war that overhung that valley, which smiled but yesterday, but beyond an occasional flame which shot upward from a still burning sugar house or the villa of some one of Christophe's court, all was still. There was no clash of arms. The opposing warriors were resting from their days of slaughter, to begin afresh on the morrow.

To me, as I sat, came Zalee, and with many halting words, broken speech, and explanatory signs, he conveyed to me an astounding piece of news.

If you will go back with me to the night of the burial of the skeletons, you will recall that the Skipper had said to me, as we were carrying our grewsome burdens down the hillside, that there was a tall figure walking between us. I had felt unpleasantly over his words, but I found from what Zalee told me that the Skipper's eyesight had not been so uncertain as at the time I hoped it was. There had been a third person present with us, and that person was Zalee himself. From a coign of vantage in the cavern, of which we were ignorant, he had observed the secreting of the jewels by the Bo's'n. And surmising from the Skipper's actions what his intentions were, he had joined us in the dark to render us another of those remarkable and generous services of which he had ever been so prodigal. As we left each poor bundle of bones upon the shore to return after another, Zalee had busied himself in extricating the parcels of jewels from the interiors of the skeletons. Three of these he rifled. The fourth naturally, as it was the last, and we did not return to the cavern, he could not secure. But, after all, there was a large part of the treasure—three quarters, at the very least—intact, and in some place of safe keeping, of which Zalee knew. But to say that I scarce listened, is to tell the exact and unvarnished truth. Our troubles and sorrows had been so great, our fears so overwhelming, that the one great possession of freedom was the only thing for which I cared. We were going home, safe as when we started, all but the poor Smith, who, though not of our kith, kin, or people, had shared our hardships and had aided us with his knowledge and advice.

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I shook my head sadly, but with a well spring of hope rising in my breast.

"Let us talk no more of riches, or wealth, or gems, or jewels," I said. "All that we desire now is to get away from this savage land, to tread once more the deck of an American ship, to breathe the air of our free country, and see Belleville once again."

I lay all night out under the stars, scarce sleeping, scarce waking, in that strange, glad state which the sudden certainty of relief from anxiety brings. The morning was yet dark when I called the others. They came out one by one, with strange, dazed faces, but looking refreshed from their long hours' sleep. As we sat there waiting for day, we talked of home and the prospect of our soon seeing Aunt Mary 'Zekel and Belleville.

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Zalee had said that he would guide us by a near way; he had begged that he and Lacelle might accompany us to our country. They had found us better than their own country folk; he hoped to find our native land the same, and make it his. You know how they did accompany us, Adoniah, and what faithful creatures they have proved themselves to us and to our children and our children's children.

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## THE END.

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The grey was in the east when we arose and started for the coast. As we came out upon the esplanade, one was there before us—one whose devoted watch had not ceased the long night through. Her tall and regal figure was draped in sombre weeds. Her face was covered, her hands were clasped upon her breast, her whole attitude an embodiment of uttermost despair. Our faces, set toward home and happiness and love and life, were turned for one backward pitying glance, then faced our joy again. As we descended those shining slopes of verdure, which owned her Queen but yesterday, we left her in the grandeur of that solitary mountain top to mourn over him who, in erecting his citadel, had, all-unknowing, builded for himself, tyrant though he was, a splendid and a lasting sepulchre.

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#### TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES:

Punctuation has been corrected without note.

Archaic and alternate spellings have been retained with the exception of those noted below:

page 50: "way" changed to "away" (to steal away his brains).

page 120: "wobbed" changed to "wobbled" (A head wobbled languidly here).

page 209: "millenium" changed to "millennium" (until the millennium).

page 280: "Skipper's" changed to "Skipper's" (the monotonous remark of the Skipper's).

page 357: "plantatations" changed to "plantations" (to ride among his sugar plantations)

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