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A QUEER RACE

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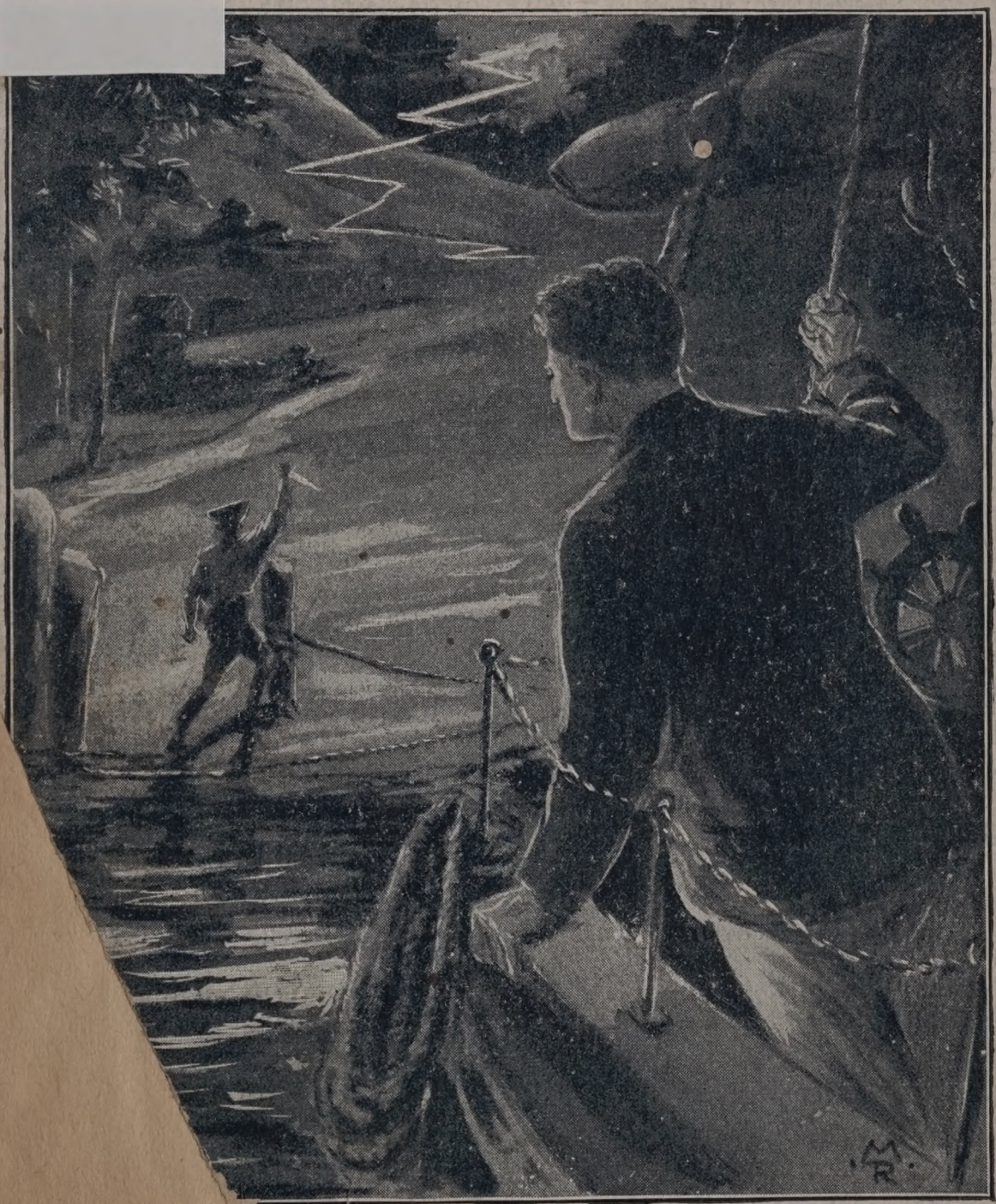
ALL ★ A STRANGE PEOPLE



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OF WAR AND ADVENTURE

A QUEER RACE

THE STORY OF A STRANGE PEOPLE

BY

WILLIAM WESTALL

NEW YORK
STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS
238 WILLIAM STREET

Entered according to act of Congress in the year 1900
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A QUEER RACE.

THE STORY OF A STRANGE PEOPLE

By WILLIAM WESTALL.

CHAPTER I.

FOUL PLAY.

THE heat and burden of the day were over, and I had withdrawn to my own room to write my private letters and think over a few matters which required more consideration than I had yet been able to give them. My nerves were beginning to recover from the shock they had sustained by the loss of the Niobe, and the cyclone at Colon; nevertheless, the outlook was still dark, the claims arising out of these two disasters being exceedingly heavy, and to meet them would tax our resources to the utmost. Another big loss and we should be "in Queer Street." The company would have to suspend payment and go into liquidation.

The worst of it was that, as touching the Niobe, I had rendered myself—in a moral sense—almost personally responsible. A brand-new ship, A1 at Lloyd's, owned by a firm of repute, commanded by a captain of character, and bound only to Havana—a mere summer trip—the risk seemed as light as well could be. I felt myself quite justified in granting a voyage policy of ten thousand pounds on the body of the ship, and covering her cargo for the same amount (without particular average). In fact, I thought that I had done an excellent stroke of business, and when one of the directors, an over-cautious old curmudgeon, with whom I had never been able to get

on, suggested the expediency of reinsuring to the extent of a third or a half, I was very much amused, and did not hesitate to tell him so.

Now the laugh was on the other side—the scolding, rather, for at the last Board meeting I had got an awful wigging. All the directors—wondrously wise after the event, as directors are wont to be—could see how imprudently I had acted, and the very men who had chaffed old Slocum for his timidity were now the loudest in blaming my rashness.

Even if the company weathered the storm, it was about even betting that I should lose my berth.

As for the Colon affair, I was in no way blameworthy. Nobody can foresee a cyclone, and both actually and relatively we had been less severely hit than any of our competitors—quite hard enough, however, for our limited capital.

But the Niobe! So far as I could learn, she had not encountered so much as a gale of wind all the way out; yet sprung a leak, and went down in a calm sea off the coast of Cuba; all hands saved, all the cargo lost, except the master's chronometer and sextant!

Queer—very queer! If the owners had been less honorable, and the captain less respectable, I should almost have suspected foul play. Yet even honorable people do strange things; while as for the captain, did not some great authority say that every man has his price? I had reason to believe, too, that both ship and cargo were heavily overinsured, and it was being whispered on 'Change that Barnes & Brandyman would make a deuced good thing by the loss of the Niobe. But what could I do? The Niobe was not the first ship which had foundered in fair weather; and to dispute the claim on grounds that might expose me to an action for slander, and lay the company under suspicion of seeking a pretext to evade payment, would be both foolish and fatal. Everything seemed to be in order; Barnes & Brandyman were an honorable firm, and that day week we must either "pay or burst."

Twenty thousand pounds!

A pleasant lookout! and a nice row there would be when I asked the Board to pass the check! As likely as not old Slocum would insist on suspending payment at

once; for we had contingent liabilities in the shape of unclosed risks which might exceed the whole of our uncalled capital.

I had arrived at this point of my musings, when there came a knock at the door, followed by Slocum junior, a cheeky young rascal who, on the strength of being a volunteer and the son of a director, took liberties and gave himself airs.

"Well?" I said, tartly; for he had bounced in without waiting for an invitation.

"There's a man in the office wants to see you, and he refuses either to give his name or state his business; only he says it is very pressing and particular—the business, I mean, not the name."

"What sort of man is he?"

"Seafaring; an Ancient Mariner sort of chap."

"A skipper?"

"Looks like an A. B., boatswain, cockswain, or cook, or something of that sort."

"Oh, I cannot be bothered with able-bodied seamen at this time of day. It is nearly five o'clock, and I have all my letters to write. He must state his business—or stay, he can see me to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

"All right, I'll tell him. But he's a stupid-looking old beggar; I don't think he will go away."

In two minutes Slocum junior was back again; came in this time without even so much as knocking.

"The Ancient Mariner resolutely and not very respectfully refuses either to state his business or call to-morrow," said the young fellow, jauntily. "Does not care so d——d much whether you see him or not, but it will be to your loss if you don't."

I felt very much disposed to send the Ancient Mariner to the deuce, but curiosity getting the better of dignity, I told Slocum to show him in.

"I thought that would fetch him!" muttered the young jackanapes, as he went out to execute my commission, which he did by going to the door and shouting, "Come in!"

The "Ancient Mariner sort of a chap" came in accordingly. Though evidently in the seafaring profession, there was very little of the conventional sailor about him. He had neither hair on his face nor a quid in his cheeks;

neither shivered his timbers nor hitched up his trousers. His manner was quiet and self-possessed, and his voice low (he had certainly not used the coarse expression attributed to him by Slocum); and albeit slightly grizzled, he did not look much above forty. The man had, moreover, a genial, good-humored countenance, the high color of which showed that he had lately voyaged in low latitudes, and his clear, wide-open blue eyes bespoke both honesty and courage.

Slocum junior lingered about the door as if he wanted to take part in the conversation.

"You may go, Mr. Slocum," I said, severely; and muttering something which I did not catch, he went.

"That is right," said the Ancient Mariner; "my business is very private, and"—glancing round—"I hope there's no possibility of anybody listening?"

"None. The door is thick, and fits close, and my desk is a long way from it. Besides, nobody could listen without being seen by all the clerks in the outer office. What can I do for you? Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you kindly. I don't know as you can do much for me; but may be I can do something for you. You are Mr. Sidney Erle, underwriter of the Oriental and Occidental Marine Insurance Company, aren't you?"

"I am. And you?"

"Thomas Bolsover, abled-bodied seaman, late a quarter-master aboard the Niobe."

"Ah!"

"You underwrote the Niobe, didn't you, for a biggish figure?"

"I am sorry to say we did."

"And I am very sorry. But this must not go any further, Mr. Erle. I am only a common seafaring man, late a quarter-master aboard the Niobe, and I don't want to get myself into no trouble."

"I understand, Mr. Bolsover; and you may be sure that I shall do nothing to compromise you. What passes here will go no further without your permission."

"Well, I was going to say as I am sorry to say that the Niobe did not get fair play."

"You mean that she got foul play?"

"I do."

"I feared as much. But is it merely a case of suspicion, or do you know something?"

"I know something. Leastways, if seeing is knowing, I do; but I cannot say as anybody told me anything."

"Seeing is better than hearing in a matter of this sort. What did you see?"

"Well, we had a fine run across, made good weather all the way out, and after touching at St. Thomas', the course was shaped for Cuba. Later on it blew three parts of a gale of wind, but nothing at all to hurt; everything was made snug, and it was over in a few hours. Well, the morning after, I was going below after my spell at the wheel in the second night-watch, when who should I see coming up out of the hold but the captain, with an auger in one hand and a lantern in the other. I said nothing, of course, and though when he saw as I'd seen him he looked a bit flustered, and slunk away to his cabin, I did not think much of it—just then. But when the bo'sun told me next day as we had sprung a leak, I began to put two and two together. Because the ship didn't ought to have sprung a leak; she had done nothing to make her spring a leak. But it was not for me to say anything, and I held my tongue."

"But you kept your weather eye open, I suppose?"

"I tried. Well, she sprung a leak—leastways, they said she did—and the leak gained on us. The carpenter, he could do no good; so the pumps was rigged, and we pumped and pumped for nigh on a week, but the more we pumped the more water she seemed to make, and at last she got so low down that the captain said that, having done our duty by the ship, we must now look to ourselves. So the boats was got out, and the captain, who was the last to leave the deck, came into the dingey and ordered the others to shove off. They were on the starboard side, we on the port. He had hardly given the order when she gave a list to starboard that nearly bared her keel, lay for a moment on her beam-ends, and then went bodily down. As she heeled over I saw a sight I shall never forget—four big holes in her hull, every one of 'em spouting water."

"Who was in the dingey besides yourself?"

"The captain, the carpenter, and another A. B."

"Did nobody else see the holes?"

"No. All the other boats was lying off on the starboard side of her."

"After that you went away?"

"Yes; we were not more than fifty miles from the coast of Cuba, and we made land before morning."

"Who do you suppose were the captain's confederates? I mean who, besides himself, do you think was concerned in this vile plot to sink the ship?"

"The carpenter and the first officer."

"And the other sailor who was in the dingey with you —what has become of him?"

"Alec Tobin? Where he is just now I cannot say; but he shipped at Cuba aboard a homeward-bound ship."

"Well, Mr. Bolsover, I am very much obliged for this information; it is very important. I said I would keep your secret, but I think I shall have to mention the matter to our directors. The information would be of no use to me else. However, that need not trouble you. You shall be protected, whatever comes."

"That is all I want, sir."

"And rewarded. In the meantime, take this"—offering him a sovereign.

"Not for me, thank you, sir. If I was to take money for my information it wouldn't look right. You have only my word for this 'ere, and a man shouldn't take pay for telling the truth."

"You are an honest fellow, Bolsover—as honest as you look. If you won't accept money, I must try to show my gratitude in some other way. It was very good of you to come to me. How did you happen to know my name, might I ask?"

"Oh, I have seen you afore, sir. You maybe remember breakfasting with Captain Peyton aboard the Diana one morning when she lay in the Huskisson Dock?"

"I remember it very well."

"Well, I was one of his crew, and heard him speak of you afterward, and say as you knew 'Lloyd's Register' off by heart; and I heard Captain Deep, of the Niobe, tell the first officer one day as the ship was insured in the Oriental and Occidental, so it seemed sort of natural as I should come to you."

"I am glad you did. Yes, I know Captain Peyton very well. A man of the right sort, he is."

"And a first-rate sailor. He knows his business, he does. You were saying just now as you would like to do something for me. Well, I should like nothing better than to sail with him again; and if you would speak to him, he'd maybe give me a berth as bo'sun or quartermaster. I know a bo'sun's duty as well as any man, sir."

"I'll do that with pleasure, Bolsover, as soon as Captain Peyton comes home; and that won't be long, I think. The Diana is sixty days out from Montevideo, and is pretty sure to be here by the end of the month. You had better leave me your address, and then I can communicate with you about that or the other matter."

I handed him a pen, and he put down his address in a sprawling but sufficiently legible hand. As he bent his arm, his coat-sleeve (which was none of the longest) ran up a little, and bared his wrist, showing a strange device in blue ink: a ship in full sail, above which was tattooed a name, "Santa Anna;" and below, a date, "1774."

I should have liked to ask what it all meant, but as time was going on, and my letters were still to write, I refrained, little thinking how much the device portended nor how strangely the mystery which lay behind it was destined to affect my fortunes.

Then we shook hands, and Bolsover went away and left me to my thoughts.

CHAPTER II.

MR. BRANDYMAN.

I WAS right, then; there had been foul play. Captain Deep had committed the crime of barratry, with the connivance, and doubtless at the instance, of the ship's owners, Messrs. Barnes & Brandyman. There are a good many respectable people who would do even worse if they could make twenty thousand pounds thereby, this being the amount which Messrs. Barnes & Brandyman's treachery was likely to bring them; for, as I have already observed, they had insured the Niobe and her cargo largely elsewhere; and, to give the firm their due, they did not do things by halves. They were not the sort of people

to commit a felony and run a serious risk for an old song.

But the question that most concerned me was my own course of action. What should I do? It was obvious that I could not bring a charge of barratry against so intensely respectable a firm as Barnes & Brandyman without the most convincing proofs. But the only proof I could adduce was Bolsover's statement, and as he was sure to be flatly contradicted by the captain, the mate, and the carpenter, that would not avail me much, even though I should find and produce Alec Tobin, the other sailor who had seen the holes in the Niobe's hull.

Moreover, no insurance company, above all a company so weak and young as ours, would venture, save on the very strongest grounds; openly to dispute a claim and fight so strong a firm as Barnes & Brandyman; for failure would not only involve discredit, but increase the original loss by the cost of an expensive lawsuit.

All the same, I was determined not to let these people reap the reward of their villainy if I could possibly help it, and after a long cogitation I decided on a plan of campaign which I proceeded to put into execution at the next Board meeting. When the Niobe claim came up for discussion, I quietly observed, to the great amazement of the directors, that I did not think Barnes & Brandyman would insist on its payment. Of course I was overwhelmed by an avalanche of questions, to which I answered that for the moment I must keep my own counsel, but that at the next meeting they should know everything, assuring them that in the meantime they might trust me to neither compromise the company's reputation nor involve it in any further liability. With this they were content, probably because they guessed that I had found something out, and were ready to grasp at any chance, however remote, of keeping the concern on its legs.

I am a pretty good draughtsman, and when I went home in the evening I drew a little sketch, which I made as graphic and as life-like as I could. It represented the hold of a ship, a man boring holes with a big auger, another man behind him holding a lantern; and, hovering above both, a grinning devil, in his hand a well-filled bag, on which was inscribed "£20,000." The first man

was Captain Deep, the second Mr. Brandyman, and both, I flatter myself, were rather striking portraits.

The next morning I called at Barnes & Brandyman's office and asked to see Mr. Brandyman; for though not the head of the firm, he was its guiding spirit and presiding genius. A pleasant-spoken, portly, fresh-complexioned, middle-aged gentleman, it seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should wear mutton-chop whiskers and a white waistcoat, sport a big bunch of seals, be an important man in the town, and a shining light at the Rodney Street Chapel (as I understood he was).

He gave me a cordial greeting, and after inquiring, with much seeming interest, as to my own health and that of my mother, he asked how the Oriental and Occidental was getting on."

"As well as can be expected for a new company," I answered, cautiously and vaguely.

"You find the Niobe papers all in order, I hope?"

"Oh, yes; the *papers*"—emphasis on "papers"—"appear to be quite in order."

"That is all right then. When shall we send round for our check? It is a large amount to be out of. Walkers settled yesterday, and the other companies will settle to-day, I believe. All the same, there is no hurry, and if it would be more convenient next week——"

"You can send round for the check whenever you like, Mr. Brandyman, but"—here I paused a moment—"I am by no means sure that you will get it."

"What for, I should like to know?" firing up.

"Look at this, and you will see what for.

And with that I whipped out the sketch and laid it before him.

He looked at it curiously, but when its meaning dawned on his mind (as it did very quickly) his countenance changed as if he had seen a Gorgon's head. His high color gave place to a death-like pallor, the paper dropped from his trembling hand, and there was a hoarse gurgle in his throat which made me fear that he was going to have a fit.

"You seem faint, Mr. Brandyman; drink this, and you will feel better," I said, filling a tumbler of water from a carafe that stood on the table.

"Thank you," he gasped. "'Tis a sudden faintness. It must be the heat of the room, I think. A—a curious sketch this! Where—where did you get it?"

"I drew it, Mr. Brandyman—*from information I received.*"

"Really!"—looking at it again; "I did not think you were so clever, Mr. Erle, and—and—what can I do for you, Mr. Erle?"

"Nothing at all. Only, with your permission, I should just like to give you a hint."

"Of course—certainly—I am sure—yes—what is it?" returned Mr. Brandyman, a little incoherently.

"Well, if I were you, I would not send round for that check. We are a young company, and don't want litigation; but——"

"I will think about it, Mr. Erle. I will speak to my partner, and think about it. And this sketch—you can, perhaps, leave it with me. I should not like—I mean I should like to keep it, if you will let me. It is so very curious."

"By all means. Keep it as a memento of our interview, Mr. Brandyman—and of the Niobe."

And then I bade him good-bye, and returned to the office in the full assurance that the twenty thousand pound check would never be sent for. True, I had no evidence of the barratry worth mentioning—from a legal point of view—but conscience makes cowards of us all. Mr. Brandyman gauged our knowledge of the facts by his own fears. He believed, too, though I had not said so, that we should resist payment of the claim; and as I could well see, he dreaded the scandal of a lawsuit, involving a criminal charge, as much as we dreaded litigation and heavy law expenses.

The Board fully approved of what I had done, and I received many compliments on my smartness. I had saved the Oriental and Occidental from serious danger, and given it a new chance of life; which is another way of saying that I had saved the directors a good deal of money, for as all were shareholders, the failure of the company would have brought them both loss and discredit.

A few days later Tom Bolsover called at the office to tell me (what I knew already) that the Dia-

had arrived in the Mersey, and to remind me of my promise.

This was quite a work of supererogation on his part. I was not likely to forget either his services or my promise, and I renewed my offer of a handsome reward; but he would accept nothing more valuable than a pound of cavendish tobacco and a box of Havana cigars.

Shortly afterward I saw Captain Peyton and asked him, as a favor to me, to grant Bolsover's request if he possibly could.

"Well," he said, smiling, "I'll do my best. Crazy Tom is a thorough seaman; and, yes—I dare say I can."

"Crazy Tom!" I exclaimed, in surprise. "Why crazy? I never met a saner man in my life."

"Oh, he is sane enough except on one point, and what is more, he's honest. A good many folks call him 'Honest Tom.' It was only on my ship they called him crazy. I expect that is why he left me; and he maybe thinks that if I make him boatswain he will escape being chaffed."

"But why on earth did your people call the poor fellow crazy, and what did they chaff him about?"

"Well, he has a fad; tells a yarn about a lost galleon, with a lot of treasure on board, and not only swears it is true, but believes the galleon is still afloat, and that one day or another he'll find her."

"And why shouldn't she be still afloat?"

"Well, seeing that, from his account, it's more than a century since she disappeared, it is not very likely, I think! The idea is perfectly ridiculous and absurd—crazy, in fact," said Captain Peyton, who was a bluff, matter-of-fact north-countryman. "But all this is second-hand. Tom never spoke to me about it in his life, and he has been so unmercifully chaffed that I fancy he does not like to speak about it. I daresay, though, he would tell you the yarn if you have any curiosity on the subject."

"Well, I rather think I should like to hear the story of the lost galleon; for, if not true, it is pretty sure to be interesting, and that's the main point in a story, after all. Se non e vero, e ben trovato, you know."

However, I did not hear Tom's yarn just then, nor until several things had happened which I little expected. Captain Peyton got fresh sailing orders sooner than he anticipated, and made Bolsover happy by engaging him

as boatswain; and the latter was so much occupied that he had barely time to call and say "good-bye" the day before the Diana was towed out to sea. I did not see him again for several months, in circumstances which I shall presently relate.

CHAPTER III.

NIL DESPERANDUM.

And now I think it is time I told how it came to pass that, at an age when most young men of my years have only just left college or begun business, I was a professional underwriter, and virtually the manager of the Oriental and Occidental Insurance Company.

My father was a merchant, and for many years a partner in the house of Waterhouse, Watkins, Erle & Co., who traded principally with the West Indies and South America, though being very catholic in their commercial ideas, they would have shipped coals to Newcastle, or warming-pans to Madagascar, if they had been sure about their reimbursement, and could have seen a trifling profit on the venture.

My father, who was the traveling member of the firm, went about a good deal "drumming" for fresh business, and at one period of his life spent several years at Maracaibo, in Venezuela—a fact which accounts for my having been born there. Now, anybody who goes to Maracaibo as surely gets a touch of yellow fever as anybody who stays a winter in London gets a taste of yellow fog. It is a matter of course, and new-comers make their arrangements accordingly. My parents underwent the ordeal the year before I came into the world, which circumstance was supposed to confer on me a complete immunity from this terrible pest of the tropics. I was acclimatized by the mere fact of my birth.

I cannot say that I esteemed the privilege very highly, for I had not the most remote intention of returning to Maracaibo, which from all accounts is a pestiferous, mosquito-haunted pandemonium.

My poor father used to say that whatever else he might leave me, he should at least leave me free from all fear of Yellow Jack.

As it turned out, he left me little else. After his re-

turn from foreign climes he settled down in Liverpool, took a big house in Abercrombie Square, entertained largely, and lived expensively. When I was about sixteen, and a pupil at Uppingham School, my father (who had been a free liver) died suddenly of apoplexy, and an investigation of his affairs resulted in the painful discovery that, after payment of his liabilities, the residue of his estate would only provide my mother and myself with an income of something less than two hundred a year. So we had to give up our fine house in Abercrombie Square and go into lodgings, and I left Uppingham and began to earn my own living—literally, for after I was seventeen I did not cost my mother a penny.

The calling I took up was not of my own choosing. Had my father lived a little longer, or left us better off, I should have gone into the army. I did subsequently join the volunteers, and after serving for a while in the artillery, became first lieutenant and then captain in a rifle regiment. In the circumstances, however, I was glad to accept the offer of Mr. Combie, of the firm of Combie, Nelson & Co., ship and insurance brokers, to take me into his office and push me forward, "if I showed myself smart," as he was sure I would.

I justified his confidence, and he kept his word. Although I would much rather have been a soldier, I had sense enough to give my mind to the insurance business, and in a comparatively short time I became familiar with all the intricacies of general average and particular average, the draughting of policies, and the rest; and if I did not, as Captain Peyton had told Tom Bolsover, know 'Lloyd's Register' off by heart, there was not a sea-going ship belonging to the port of Liverpool whose age, classification, and character (which meant, in many instances, the character of her owners) I could not tell without referring to the book.

The partners often consulted me as to the premiums they ought to charge, and the risks which it was prudent for them to take; they gave me a salary which made my mother and myself very comfortable, and had I been patient and waited a few years, I should doubtless have become a member of the firm. But I was ambitious; and when the newly constituted Oriental and Occidental Marine Insurance Company invited me to become their

underwriter, I accepted the offer without either hesitation or misgiving.

But cautious Mr. Combie shook his head.

"It's a very fine thing," he said, "for a young man of two-and-twenty to get the writership of a company, and, though I say it that should not say it—to our firm. But you are taking a great responsibility on yourself, and you will need to be very prudent. Fifty thousand pounds is not too much capital for an insurance company, and this is a time of inflation, and the shareholders will expect you to earn them big dividends. Between you and me, I have no great confidence in these new concerns. They are going up like rockets, and some of them, I fear, will come down like sticks. But you are young, and if the Oriental and Occidental does not answer your expectations, you will still have the world before you, and I have always said that you are one of those chaps who will either make a spoon or spoil a horn."

The senior meant kindly, and I thanked him warmly; but I was too much elated by my advancement to give due attention to his warnings, although I had good reason to remember them afterward. My elation did not, however, arise solely, or even chiefly, from professional pride and gratified ambition. The fact is, I had lost my heart to Amy Mainwaring, a charming girl of eighteen, with peach-like cheeks, soft brown eyes, and golden hair; and being as impetuous in love as I was diligent in business, and Amy loving me as much as I loved her, I had made up my mind to marry at the earliest possible moment—that is to say, as soon as the father gave his consent and I could afford to keep a wife. I thought the salary which I was now beginning to earn would enable me to do this easily. But Mr. Mainwaring did not quite see the matter in the same light. He said we were both absurdly young, and however well off I might be, we should be all the better for waiting awhile. Moreover, like Mr. Combie, he had not absolute confidence in the stability of the Oriental and Occidental.

To my pressing entreaties he answered:

"Let us see what a couple of years bring forth. You will be quite young enough then, and the delay will give you a chance of laying something by for a rainy day."

Two years! To Amy and me this seemed an eternity;

but as neither of us wanted to defy her father, and he was quite deaf to reason, there was nothing for it but to sigh and submit, and wait with such patience as we might for the fruition of our hopes.

Time went on, and long before the period of probation expired I had to acknowledge that Mr. Mainwaring's caution had more warrant than my confidence. After doing a brilliant business during the first six months of our career, the tide turned, and in a very short time we lost nearly all we had made. For this result—though we had really very ill-luck—I fear that I was in part responsible. I was too keen and sanguine; I did not like to turn money away. I had not Mr. Combie and Mr. Nelson to consult with, and I underwrote risks that I ought to have refused. I had not always the choice, however; for our paid-up capital being small, first-class insurers fought shy of us, fine business went elsewhere, and I had to take my pick among the residue and remainder.

This was the state of things eighteen months after I joined the Oriental and Occidental; and had I not got over the difficulty about the Niobe, it is extremely probable that the company would have smashed or I should have been dismissed. In either event I should have lost my occupation, and in either event Mr. Mainwaring would, I felt sure, have insisted on the rupture of my engagement with his daughter.

Hence my prospects, whether business or matrimonial, were not of the brightest, and Amy and I were often in horribly low spirits. We had thought two years a terrible time, and now I began to fear that I might have to wait for her as long as Jacob had to wait for Rachel. I am bound to say, however, that our gloom was relieved by rather frequent gleams of gayety and happiness. One does not despair at three-and-twenty.

CHAPTER IV.

CRAZY TOM'S YARN.

AFTER my memorable interview with Mr. Brandyman, things took a more favorable turn with the Oriental and Occidental. We had better luck, and I took more care, preferring rather to do a small business than run great risks. Our spirits rose with the shares of the company—

mine and Amy's as well as the directors'—and we began to think we were on the highway to prosperity, when a misfortune befell which scattered our hopes to the winds. The Great Northern Bank (like our own, a limited liability concern of recent creation) suspended at a time when we had a heavy balance to credit, and the very day after we had paid away several large checks in settlement of claims. The checks, of course, came back to us, and as we had no means of taking them up, we too had to suspend.

I lost my place, of course—a defunct company has no need of an underwriter; and worse—I had taken a part of my salary in shares, and on these shares there was an unpaid liability which absorbed all my savings. The collapse of the company left me as poor as when I entered Combie & Nelson's office seven years before; and by way of filling up my cup of bitterness to the brim, Mr. Mainwaring informed me (in a letter otherwise very kind and sympathetic) that my engagement with Amy must be considered at an end. He did not forbid me to visit his house, but he said plainly that the seldomer I came the better he should be pleased.

I thought he was hard, but I felt he was right. What was the use of a man being engaged to be married who had no present means of keeping himself, much less a wife? All the same, Amy and I swore eternal constancy, and we vowed that, come weal, come woe, neither of us would ever marry anybody else; and I thought she really meant it—I am sure I did.

This conclusion, however satisfactory as far as it went, did not afford much help toward a solution of the pressing question of the moment: What should I do?—how avoid becoming a burden on my mother? I had asked Mr. Combie to take me back; but my place was filled up, and as a severe financial crisis had just set in there was little chance of my finding a place elsewhere. Firms and banks were falling like ninepins, and men of business looked and talked as if the world were coming to an end. A word to any of them about finding me a situation would have been regarded as an insult to his understanding.

While I was revolving these things in my mind, and wondering what on earth I should do, I received a call

from Captain Peyton, who had lately returned from one voyage and was about to start on another. He condoled with me over the failure, and inquired what I "thought of doing," whereupon, as he was an old friend, I told him of my difficulties, and asked his advice.

"What do I think you should do?" he exclaimed, cheerily. "Why, what can you do better than come with me to Montevideo? I mean, of course, as my guest. Make the round trip; you will be back in six months, and by that time business will be better, and you will get as many berths as you want. Young men of your capacity and energy are not too plentiful. What do you say?"

"Yes, with all my heart!" I answered, grasping his hand. "Thanks, a thousand times thanks, Captain Peyton! I have long wanted to make a deep-sea voyage, and after the turmoil and anxiety of the last few weeks the Diana will be a veritable haven of rest. When do you sail?"

"In a fortnight or so."

"All right; I shall be ready. I suppose Bolsover is still with you?"

"Yes, Crazy Tom is our boatswain; and a good one he makes. He will maybe tell you that yarn of his, if you take him when he is in the humor. I tried him one day, but it was no go. He would not bite. I expect he thought I wanted to chaff him."

"Yarn? yarn? Oh, I remember. Something about a galleon, isn't it?"

"Yes; a Spanish treasure-ship lost ages ago. The crazy beggar believes she is still afloat. He is sane on every other point, though. However, you get him to tell you all about it. It is a romantic sort of yarn, I fancy."

"When we get to sea."

"Yes; that will be the time. When we get into the northeast trades, all sails set aloft and alow, and there is not much going on—that is your time for spinning yarns."

Shortly after this I heard a piece of news which completed the tale of my misfortunes, and made me wretched beyond measure. I heard that Amy Mainwaring was engaged to young Kelson! If my mother had not seen it it in a letter written by Amy herself to a common friend, I couldn't have believed it; but incredulity was impossible. I was terribly cut up and extremely indignant,

and vowed that I would never have anything to do with a woman again—in the way of love.

Two days later we were at sea. The Diana was a fine, full-rigged merchantman, one thousand two hundred tons burden, with an auxiliary screw and a crew of thirty-nine men, miscellaneous cargo of Brummagem ware, Manchester cottons, and Bedford stuffs. She had half a dozen passengers, with all of whom (except, perhaps, a young fellow who was taking a sea voyage for the benefit of his health) time was more plentiful than money. For all that, or perhaps because of that, they were very nice fellows.

We had lots of books among us, and what with reading, talking, smoking, sauntering on deck, playing whist and chess, the days passed swiftly and pleasantly. Now and again we gave a sort of mixed entertainment in the saloon, at which the skipper and as many of the ship's company as could be spared from their duties on deck were present. Two of the passengers could sing comic songs, one fiddled, another recited; I played an accordion and performed a few conjuring tricks, and one way and another we amused our audiences immensely, and won great applause.

I naturally saw a good deal of Tom Bolsover, but in the early part of the voyage the weather was so variable and he so busy that he had little time for conversation, and we exchanged only an occasional word. But when we got into the region of the trades he had more leisure, and going forward one fine morning, I found him sitting on a coil of rope, apparently with nothing more important to do than smoke his pipe and stare at the sails.

"I was very sorry to hear of the busting up of that 'ere company," he said, after we had exchanged a few remarks about things in general.

"Yes, you saved us twenty thousand pounds, and I thought that would pull us through; but we lost twice as much by the suspension of our bankers, and then we were up a tree, and no mistake."

"I hope you did not lose much by it, sir?"

"Well, I lost my situation and all my money, and I had a very nice sum laid by."

"All your money! Dear, dear! I am very sorry. But you surely don't mean quite all?"

"Yes, I do. I have very little more left than I stand up in? But what of that? I am young, the world is before me, and when I get back I shall try again. I mean to make my fortune and be somebody yet, Bolsover, before I am very much older."

"Fortune! fortune! If we could only find the Santa Anna we should both make our fortunes right off. There is gold and silver enough on that ship for a hundred fortunes, and big 'uns at that."

"The Santa Anna! What is the Santa Anna, and where is she?"

"I wish I knew," said the old sailor, with a sigh; "I wish I knew. It is what I have been trying to find out these thirty years and more. "I'll tell you all about it" —lowering his voice to a confidential whisper—"only don't let the others know—they laugh at me, and say I am crazy. But never mind; let them laugh as wins. I shall find her yet. I don't think I could die without finding her. You won't say anything?"

"Not a word."

"Well," went on the boatswain, after a few pensive pulls at his pipe, "it came about in this way. My father, he was a seafaring man like myself; he has been dead thirty-three years. He'd have been nigh on ninety by this time if he had lived. Well, my father—he was a seafaring man, you'll remember—my father chanced to be at the Azores—a good many people see the Azores, leastways Pico, but not many lands there—but my father did, and stopped a month or two—I don't know what for —and being a matter of sixty years since, it does not much matter. Well, while he was there, he used to go about in a boat, all alone, fishing and looking round—my father was always a curiosish sort of man, and he had an eye like a hawk. Well, one day he was sailing round the island they calls Corvo, very close inshore, when he spies, in a crevice of a cliff—the coast is uncommon rugged—he spies something as didn't look quite like a stone—it was too round and regular like; so he lowers his sail, takes his sculls, and goes and gets it. What do you think it was?"

"I have no idea. A bottle of rum, perhaps."

"No, no, not that," said Tom, with a hurt look, as if I had been jesting with a sacred subject. "It was a tin

case. It had been there a matter of forty or fifty years, maybe, washed up by the sea, and never seen by a soul before it was spied by my father. Inside the case was a dokyment as told how, in 1744, a British man-of-war captured the Santa Anna, a Spanish galleon, with millions of money on board."

"Millions! Not millions of pounds?"

"Yes, millions of pounds. She was a big ship, carried forty guns, and must have been a matter of two thousand tons burden. Now, a ship of that size can hold a sight of gold and silver, Mr. Erle."

"Rather. Almost as much as there is in all England, I should say."

"Just so, Mr. Erle," said Bolsover, with glistening eyes. "Suppose she carried no more than one thousand five hundred tons dead weight, and half of it was gold and half silver, that would be a pile of money—make baskets and buckets full of sovereigns and crowns and shillings, to say nothing of six-pences and fourpenny-pieces, wouldn't it, sir?"

"Cartloads! Why, you might give away a few wheelbarrows full without missing them." As the poor fellow was evidently quite cracked on the subject, I thought it best to humor him. "But you surely don't mean to say that the galleon was full—bang up full of gold and silver?"

"Yes, I do; and why not? Doesn't the dokyment say as she was a richly laden treasure-ship? and doesn't it stand to reason that if she was richly laden—mark them words, sir, 'richly laden'—that she must ha' been full.

"Why, yes, it does look so, when you come to think about it," I said, gravely. "The man who finds the Santa Anna will have a grand haul; nothing so sure."

"Won't he!" returned the boatswain, gleefully, in his excitement chucking his pipe into the sea. "Now, look here, Mr. Erle; you said you was poor—as you had lost all the money as you had. Here's a chance for you to get it all back, and twenty thousand times more! Help me to find the Santa Anna, and we will go halves—share and share alike, you know."

"Thank you very much, Bolsover. It's a very handsome offer on your part, and I am awfully obliged; but as yet I must own to being just a little in the dark. Say ex-

actly what it is you want me to do. If it is a case of diving, I don't think I am the man for you; for, though a fair swimmer, I could never stay long under water, and I don't understand diving-bells."

"No, no, sir; the Santa Anna never foundered; she is on the sea, not under it. You surely don't think, sir, as God A'mighty would let all that money go to Davy Jones' locker? As far as I can make out, all the ship's company died of thirst. When that dokyment was written, they was dreadful short of water; and the ship became a derelict, and went on knocking about all by herself—is, may be, knocking about yet—she was teak-built and very stanch—or otherwise she has run aground on some out-of-the-way island, or drifted into a cove or inlet of the sea. Anyhow, she is worth looking after; and I have always thought as if some gentleman would give me a helpin' hand—somebody with more 'ead and edycation than I have myself—we should be sure to succeed in the end; nay, I am sure we should—I feel it; I know it. Will you help me, Mr. Erle? I cannot tell you how—I am only a common seafaring man; but you are a scholar, with a head like a book. They say as you knows 'Lloyd's Register' by heart, and a man as can learn 'Lloyd's Register' by heart can do anything."

"You are very complimentary, Bolsover, and I am extremely obliged for your good opinion. But you give me credit for a good deal more cleverness than I possess; for, tempting as is an offer of half a shipload of gold and silver, I really don't see what I can do. If I were a skipper and had a ship, or a rich man and owned a yacht, I might possibly help you; but you must see yourself that I cannot go about exploring every island, and inlet, and cove in the world, or keep sailing round it until I spot the derelict Santa Anna, particularly as you don't seem to have the least idea where she was when last heard of."

"There you are mistaken, Mr. Erle. I could a'most put my finger on the very spot. But will you read the dokyment? Then you will know all about it--more than I know myself, for a man as can learn 'Lloyd's Register'——"

"The document! The paper your father found! You surely don't mean to say you have it?" I exclaimed, in

surprise; for up to that moment I had thought the boatswain's story pure illusion, and himself as crazy on the point as Peyton said he was.

"Yes, I have it. My father, he gave it me just afore he died. 'Tom,' he says, 'I cannot leave you no money, but I gives you this dokyment. Take care of it, and look out for the Santa Anna, and you'll die a rich man.' Will you read it, Mr. Erle?"

"Certainly. I'll read it with pleasure."

Bolsover rose from the coil of ropes, slipped into the forecastle, and in a few minutes came back, with a smile of satisfaction on his face and a highly polished tin case in his hand.

"Here it is," he said; "you'll find it inside."

"But this is surely not the case your father found at the Azores?"

"No. That was all rusty and much battered. He had hard work to get the dokyment out without spoiling it. He got this case made a-purpose. Nobody has ever read it but him and me. Everybody as I mentioned it to always laughed, and that made me not like showing it. When you have read it, Mr. Erle, you'll tell me what you think. But keep the dokyment to yourself. What's least said is soonest mended, you know; and if you was to mention it to the others they'd only laugh. And now"—looking at his watch—"I must pipe up the second dog-watch."

Promising to observe the utmost discretion, I put the tin case in my pocket, went to the after-part of the ship, lighted a cigar, sat me down on a Southampton chair, and proceeded to carry out Tom's wish by reading the paper which had so much excited his imagination, and was now, in spite of myself, beginning to excite mine.

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCUMENT.

THE "dokyment," as poor Tom called it, though it seemed to have been carefully used (the leaves being neatly stitched together and protected by a canvas cover), had suffered much from wear and tear, the rust of the original tin case, and the frequent thumbings of its two readers. The ink was faded, the handwriting small and

crabbed; the lines were, moreover, so very close together that I found the perusal, or, more correctly, the study of the manuscript by no means easy. Parts of it, in fact, were quite illegible. I had often to infer the meaning of the writer from the context, and there were several passages which I could not make out at all.

No wonder the boatswain wanted a man of "'ead and edycation" to help him. The form of the document was that of a journal, or log; but it was hardly possible that it could be the work of any combatant officer of a warship on active service. The style was too literary and diffuse, and, so to speak, too womanish and devout. The writer, moreover, whose name, as I read on, I found to be "Hare," did not write in the least like a seaman. He could not well have been a passenger; and I had not read far before I found that he was a clergyman and naval chaplain.

The first entry in the diary was probably written at Spithead, and ran thus:

"H. M. S. Hecate, ——— 17th, 1743.

"Left our moorings this day, under sealed orders, so as yet no man on board knows whither we are bound or where we are to cruise. May God bless and prosper our voyage, and protect the dear ones we leave at home!

"19th.—Been very much indisposed the last two days; not very surprising, considering that this is my first voyage, and we have had bad weather. Wind now moderating, but still blowing half a gale.

"20th.—The captain has opened his orders. The Hecate is to sail with all speed across the Atlantic, cruise about the Gulf of Mexico, in the track of homeward-bound Spanish merchantmen, and keep a sharp lookout for treasure-ships. Officers and ship's company highly delighted with the prospect thus opened out of prize-money and hard fighting, these treasure-ships being always either heavily armed or under convoy, or both. To do the Hecate justice, I believe the prospect of hard knocks affords them more pleasure than the hope of reward; and though we carry only forty guns, there is not a sailor on board who is not confident that we are a match for any two Spanish frigates afloat. Our British tars are veritable bull-dogs, and albeit Captain Barnaby

does sometimes indulge in profane swearing, the royal navy possesses not a better man nor a braver officer."

"Next followed a series of unimportant entries, such as:

"Church parade and divine service."

"In the sick-bay, reading the Bible to Bill Thompson, A. B., who fell yesterday from one of the yard-arms, and lies a-dying, poor fellow."

"Dined with the captain, the second luff, and two of the young gentlemen."

"This day a flying-fish came through my port-hole. One of the ship's boys caught him, and the cook made an excellent dish of him for the gunroom mess. It seemed a shame to kill the creature who sought our hospitality and protection, for he was doubtless escaping from some enemy of the sea or the air."

And so on, and so on. All this did not occupy much space, yet, owing to the reverend gentleman's crabbed fist, the faded ink, and the thumb-marks of the two Bolsovers, it took long to read; and in order not to miss anything, I had made up my mind to read every word that it was possible to decipher.

At length my patience and perseverance received their reward. The diary became gradually less tedious and monotonous. There was a storm in which the Hecate suffered some damage, and the diarist (who does not seem to have been particularly courageous) underwent considerable anxiety and discomfort; and a man fell overboard, and, after an exciting attempt to rescue him, was drowned. Then the Hecate chases a vessel which Captain Barnaby suspects to be a French privateer; but remembering how imperative are his orders to make with all speed his cruising-ground, he resumes his course after following her a few hours. For the same reason he shows a clean pair of heels to a French frigate, greatly to the disgust of his crew, for though she is of superior size, they are quite sure they could have bested her. The chaplain, on the other hand, warmly commends the captain's prudence, observing that "discretion in a commander is to the full as essential as valor."

The region of the gulf reached, everybody is on the watch; there is always a lookout at the mast-head, the officers are continually sweeping the horizon with their

glasses, and the men are exercised daily at quarters; for Captain Barnaby, with all his prudence, appears to have been a strict disciplinarian. Being of opinion that he will the better attain his object by remaining outside the Gulf of Mexico than by going inside, he cruises several weeks in the neighborhood of the Bahamas. With little success, however; he captures only two or three vessels of light tonnage and small value, which he takes to Nassau, in New Providence.

Ill-satisfied with this poor result, Barnaby resolves to take a turn in the gulf, and, if he does no good there, to make a dash south, in the hope that he may perchance encounter some homeward-bound galleon from Chili or Peru. So passing through the Straits of Florida, he runs along the northern shores of Cuba, doubles Cape San Antonio, revictuals at Kingston, in Jamaica, and re-enters the South Atlantic between Trinidad and Tobago.

A fortunate move was this in one sense, though, so far as the poor chaplain and a considerable part of the ship's company were concerned, it resulted in dire misfortune.

Ten days after the Hecate left the Caribbean Sea, two ships were sighted, which the captain and everybody else on board believed to be the long-sought treasure-ships. But besides being treasure-ships, they had every appearance of being heavily armed galleons, and either of them, as touching weight of metal and strength of crew, was probably more than the frigate's match. All the same, the Hecate's crew were full of fight and eager for the fray, and the captain had not the remotest intention of balking their wishes. But he was prudent withal, and though quite ready, if needful, to tackle the two Spaniards together, he thought it as well—doubtless on the principle of not throwing a chance away—to fight them singly if he could, and took his measures accordingly.

What these measures were, I had some difficulty in making out. I am not a seaman, and Mr. Hare's account, besides being in part illegible, was by no means as clear as it might have been. I will, however, do my best to describe in plain, untechnical language, as any landsman would, the things that came to pass after the commander of the Hecate resolved to engage the galleons single-handed.

The chaplain never gave the frigate's reckoning; but I

concluded (in which opinion Bolsover, with whom I afterward discussed the point, concurred) that at this time she was probably a few degrees south of the equator, and not far from the coast of Brazil, sailing west-sou'-west; while the galleons, when first seen, were sailing nor'-east by north. One of them seems to have been a little in advance of the other, and Captain Barnaby's plan was to entice the first—and therefore presumably the faster sailer—to follow him, and so separate the two ships as widely as possible before engaging. To this end he spread all the canvas he could, but slowly and clumsily, in order to give the idea that he was short-handed, and then slipped a spar over the ship's stern as a drag to check her speed.

The bait took. The galleons, after exchanging signals, hoisted the Spanish flag, whereupon the leading vessel (which, as afterward appeared, was the Santa Anna, the other being the Ruy Blas) gave chase. She was by no means a bad sailer, and came on so fast that Captain Barnaby soon found it expedient to haul in the spar and go ahead. But when he had got her fairly away, the course of the Hecate was suddenly changed. Turning on her heel, so to speak, she passed the Santa Anna's bows, delivering a broadside that raked her from stem to stern; and before the Spaniards had time to recover from the confusion into which they were thrown by this unexpected salute, the frigate ran alongside and gave her a second broadside. As Captain Barnaby had given orders to fire high and take careful aim, the two broadsides wrought great havoc among the Santa Anna's rigging. A topmast and several other spars were shot away, the shrouds cut into ribbons, and altogether so much damage was done that she could by no possibility make a move for several hours.

Captain Barnaby next turned his attention to the Ruy Blas, which was gallantly bearing up to her consort's help. The Hecate, having got the weather gauge, was quite prepared, and the two ships were soon at close quarters. The Spaniards stood well to their guns, and a hot fight followed, which, according to Mr. Hare, lasted nearly an hour.

"The scene on deck," wrote the poor chaplain, "was past describing. The half-naked sailors, working the

guns, their bodies streaming with perspiration, their faces blackened with powder-smoke, themselves wild with excitement, cheering and yelling like fiends; the officers brandishing their swords and shouting their orders; the roar of artillery; the crash of the Spaniards' balls as they struck our hull; and, above all, the dreadful pools of blood at my feet, and the screams of the poor stricken ones as they fell at their posts or writhed in agony on the deck, thrilled my soul with horror, and, though I prayed fervently for the success of our arms, I feared that God would never bless a victory gained at so terrible a price.

"But the horror of the sights on deck was surpassed by the scene in the cockpit, where, during the engagement, I spent nearly all my time, helping the surgeon, and doing my utmost to solace and console the poor wounded. Their sufferings were heartrending; the sight of their mangled bodies was almost more than I could bear, and I had several times to turn away, or I should have swooned outright.

"Poor Myers, a tiny midshipman of fourteen, a fair-haired and sweet-tempered boy, whom I greatly loved, was brought down, shot through the lungs. The surgeon shook his head. 'He is beyond my skill,' he whispered. 'I must leave him to you.' The poor child looked at me with lack-luster eyes; the pallor of death was on his face; and as I tried to cheer him with hopes of a speedy release from his sufferings, and a happy hereafter, the tears streamed down my cheeks, and I could scarce speak for sobbing. But he seemed to be looking afar off, and gave no heed. 'Mother, mother,' he moaned, 'I am coming home;' and then he died.

"I was turning to the surgeon to tell him that all was over, when we were affrighted and almost thrown off our feet by a terrific explosion, which shook the ship from stem to stern, and made her heel over as if she had been struck by a heavy sea.

"Not knowing what had befallen, but fearing the worst, I ran up the hatchway. The firing had ceased, and consternation was written on every face. I had no need to ask the cause. The Ruy Blas had blown up, and parts of her, which had been projected to a prodigious height, were still falling into the water, where, amid a

tangled mass of floating wreckage that darkened the surface of the sea, were struggling a few human forms, sole survivors of the catastrophe.

"As humane as he was brave, Captain Barnaby ordered boats to be lowered. His commands were promptly obeyed, and the men succeeded in rescuing about a score of Spaniards, some of whom were dreadfully hurt. They were taken into the cockpit, and our surgeon had his hands full indeed; but the tale of wounded was now complete, for the captain of the Santa Anna, appalled by the disaster which had overtaken his consort, struck his flag at the first summons. As all had anticipated, she proved to be a rich treasure-ship, being—so ran the report on board the Hecate—laden with little else than gold and silver; and officers and men were soon engaged in computing how much prize-money they were likely to receive. In anticipation they are already rich, but the amount is a matter of conjecture; for a guard has been put over the treasure, and Captain Barnaby declares that he will not have it overhauled until we reach port.

"The Santa Anna's damages have been made good, and a prize crew put on board; and as we have two hundred Spanish prisoners (who might, were they left on the galleon, attempt to retake her), a hundred of them are to be transferred to the Hecate. The captain, who had at first some idea of calling at one of the West India Islands, or at Nassau, has finally decided to make straight for England, and our course has been shaped accordingly.

"Another terrible day, the events of which I can only briefly set down.

"Shortly after six this morning I was roused from a sound sleep by the wardroom steward. 'You had better get up, Mr. Hare,' he said. 'The ship is on fire.'

"Alas! it was only too true.

"After a fight, discipline is always more or less relaxed; the spirit-room had been inadvertently left open, and some unauthorized person, going in with a naked light, accidentally set fire to a can of rum, which, running over the floor, set everything in a blaze.

"The woodwork, desiccated by the heat of the trop-

ics, was as dry as tinder, and the conflagration spread with frightful rapidity. When I reached the deck, although only a few minutes had elapsed since the alarm was given, smoke was coming up the after-hatchway, and the crew, under the direction of the captain, were doing their utmost to put out the fire. Pumps were going; buckets were being passed from hand to hand; the decks were deluged with water, and tons of it poured into the hold.

"But all to little purpose; and after half an hour's strenuous exertion, I heard the captain give an order which showed that he despaired of saving the ship. It was to lower the boats and remove the wounded to the Santa Anna, under the charge of the surgeon and chaplain.

"It was a dreadful task, and caused some of the poor maimed creatures most exquisite pain; but sailors are wonderfully deft and handy, and the order was executed in a much shorter time than might be supposed.

"Yet, short as the time was, the fire had visibly gained ground, and we watched its progress from the deck of the Santa Anna with unspeakable anxiety. But not until the after-part of the ship was wrapped in flames, and her destruction imminent, did the captain give up the attempt to save her, and order the crew to take to the boats and come on board the Santa Anna, which was hove-to at about a cable's length away. He was the last to leave the deck, and ten minutes after he quitted it the Hecate was one mass of flame, a burning fiery furnace, the heat of which we could feel even on the galleon's deck.

"We watched the fire until it burned down to the water's edge and was extinguished by the sea, leaving nothing of the once gallant war-ship behind save a few charred fragments. Then, the wind being fair, orders were given to make sail, and we went on our course, not without hope, despite the omens, of a speedy and happy termination of our eventful cruise.

"Most of the officers and men have lost all their effects in the fire; but, thanks to the thoughtfulness and courage of the boy who waits on me, I have saved a good part of my wardrobe, some writing materials, and nearly all my books.

"The captain informed me this morning that he is very well pleased with the Santa Anna. She is one of the best built ships he ever saw, being constructed of a wood called teak, hard enough and stout enough to last a century. She is also a good sailer, and, with favorable weather and moderate luck, we may, he thinks, reach Portsmouth in about fifty days.

"I sincerely hope so, and pray God he may prove a true prophet; for I am sick of the sea, and so soon as we get home I shall resign my appointment, and seek a less exciting, if a more monotonous, sphere of duty ashore.

"A terrible discovery was made yesterday. We are short of water.

"According to the purser's calculations, made the day after the burning of the Hecate, the supply on board the Santa Anna was amply sufficient for the voyage to England; but it now turns out that several of the casks which he thought were full are quite empty, and we have not more than enough for ten days' consumption. We are already on short allowance, and Captain Barnaby has decided to make for the Bermudas.

"It is very unfortunate this discovery was not made sooner, for at the best we cannot reach New Providence in less than fifteen days, and if we have bad weather or contrary winds—but I will not anticipate evil. We are in the hands of Him whom the winds and waves obey.

"For two days it has blown a hurricane, and we have been driven hundreds of miles out of our course. The allowance of water is reduced to a quart a day for each man for all purposes, and as it is terribly hot, and as our diet consists chiefly of salt pork and hard biscuits, our sufferings are almost past bearing.

"Becalmed. Allowance reduced to a pint.

"Still becalmed. To-day a deputation from the crew waited on the captain, and requested that, in order to economize water, and, perchance, save their lives, the Spanish prisoners should be thrown overboard. This he refused to do, but he ordered the Spaniards' allowance to be reduced to half a pint.

"The Spaniards, maddened by thirst, have attempted to seize the ship. A number of them, who were allowed to walk on deck, secretly released their comrades, and attacked the watch—some with cutlasses obtained I know not how, others with marline-spikes, or whatever else came to hand. The Englishmen at first driven from the deck were speedily re-enforced, and then ensued a frightful struggle in the dark, the Spaniards, utterly reckless of their lives, fighting with the ferocity of despair. But in the end they were overcome, the wounded (and I fear many of the whole) thrown into the sea, and the survivors forced below and put in irons. The captain, himself sorely hurt, had great difficulty in protecting them from the fury of his men, who, if they might have had their way, would not have left a single Spaniard alive.

"Still becalmed. Oh, how gladly would we give this thrice accursed treasure for a few casks of water, or even a few hours' rain!

"I am sick—I fear, nay, I hope, unto death, for I suffer so horribly from thirst that death would be a happy release. Yesterday two seamen committed suicide, and my dear friend, Captain Barnaby, has died of his wounds and want of water, since, hurt though he was, he nobly refused to take more than his share.

"The command now devolves on Lieutenant Fane. He is a first-rate seaman, and a man of resolute and original character, but he has some strange ideas.

"I write this with difficulty. I am worse. To-morrow I may not be able to write, and as I have no hope of ever seeing England again, I know not what will become of the ship and her crew. I am about to inclose my diary (which contains a narrative of the principal events that have befallen us since the Hecate left England) in a water-tight case and commit it to the waves. It may peradventure be found after many days——

"I beseech any good soul into whose hands these pages may fall to forward them to [illegible] Surrey, England, or to the Secretary of the Admiralty, London.

"On board the galleon Santa Anna,
"February 7, 1744.

"ROBERT HARE."

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE SAME OPINION STILL.

"Poor fellow! I wonder what became of him and the others? But why on earth didn't they distill fresh water from sea water?" were the first thoughts that occurred to me after reading the chaplain's narrative.

And then I remembered that the events in question took place in a pre-scientific age; that there was certainly no distilling apparatus on board the Santa Anna, nor, probably, any means of making one large enough to provide for the requirements of two or three hundred, possibly three or four hundred men.

Again, why did not they take to their boats and try to reach land that way instead of waiting helplessly for a wind, with a certainty that if it did not come quickly they must all perish? But I knew not how far they were from the nearest land, for the chaplain never indicated the position of the ship, and seldom gave the date or even the days of the week, so that the length of time which elapsed between the different events set forth in the manuscript was a matter of pure conjecture. It was, moreover, quite possible that the Santa Anna's boats had been smashed by the Hecate's fire, and, in any case, they could not have held the crew and the prisoners and enough provisons and water for a long voyage. I could, however, see nothing to warrant the boatswain's belief that the galleon had become derelict or been cast away. Men can live a long time on a very short allowance of water; the chaplain would naturally be one of the first to succumb, and when the weak ones died off there would be more water for the survivors. Besides, who could say that a breeze had not sprung up, or a heavy shower of rain fallen, the very day after poor Mr. Hare committed his diary to the waves?

I found no opportunity for a few days of speaking to Bolsover again, except in the presence of others. But when the chance came, I returned him his "dokyment," which, in the meanwhile, I had carefully reperused.

"Well, sir," he asked, anxiously, "what do you think?"

Believing that I could do the poor fellow no greater kindness than to cure him of his hallucination, if that

were possible, I said that in my opinion there was about as much likelihood of finding the Santa Anna as of finding the lost Atlantis or the philosopher's stone.

"I don't know much about them there," answered Tom, who did not seem greatly impressed by the comparison; "but if you mean as to think there is no likelihood of finding that there galleon, I should be glad to know why you think so, if you would kindly tell me."

"Well, to begin with, there is no proof either that the people on board the Santa Anna died of thirst, as you suppose, or that she became derelict."

"Doesn't that gentleman as wrote the dokyment say as he lay a-dying, and that the men were so punished for want of water that they begun to jump overboard?"

"Two jumped overboard, which I suppose is what the chaplain meant when he said they had committed suicide. But don't you see that every death made a drinker the less? The weak would be the first to go; the strongest, seeing that they would have a fair supply of water, might live for weeks—months, even."

Bolsover's countenance fell; this was a view of the matter that had not occurred to him.

"And how do you know," I went on, "that the Santa Anna did not get to England—or somewhere else—after all? Even in the Doldrums calms don't last forever."

"Well, I think I do know that she didn't get to England," said Tom, quietly. "My father, he thought of that, and he went to a lawyer chap, and pretended as there was somebody on board the Hecate as belonged to him—a great-uncle by his mother's side—and that he wanted to find out what had become of him—a proof of his death—and he got the lawyer chap to write to the Admiralty."

"And did the lawyer chap get an answer?"

"Yes, after waiting a long time, and writing five or six letters—it cost my father a matter of two or three pounds, one way and another. Well, the answer was as the Hecate sailed from Portsmouth on such a date in 1743, revictualed at Nassau, and touched at Jamaica; but as after that nothing more had been heard of her, she must undoubtedly have perished with all on board. Now, doesn't it stand to reason that as nothing has been heard of the Hecate, none of the crew—and all of 'em went on board

the Santa Anna, you know—that none of her crew ever got to land?—because the first thing they'd naturally do would be to inform the Admiralty and claim their pay. As for the officers, they would, of course, report themselves, and tell how the Hecate was lost."

"Of course; and the fact that nothing has been heard of her or any of her crew shows, in my opinion, that the fate which the Admiralty think overtook the Hecate overtook the Santa Anna—she perished with all on board, perhaps in a cyclone; or she may have struck on a sunken rock or got burned. Your supposition, Bolsover, that every man-jack of her crew died of thirst, and that she is either afloat or aground with all her treasure on board is —excuse me for saying it—all bosh; and the sooner you get the idea out of your head, the better it will be for your peace of mind."

"I am sorry to hear you say so, Mr. Erle," answered the boatswain, with the air of a man who, though shaken in his opinion, refuses to be convinced. "I am sorry to hear you say so. I cannot argufy like a man of 'ead and edycation, and facts is, may be, against me. Well, I don't care a hang for the facts; and I am as cock-sure as if I saw her this minute as the galleon is a ship yet, or leastways the hull of one, and as I shall set eyes on her afore I die, and carry off as much of that there treasure as will make me as rich as a Jew. If you won't go shares with me, so much the worse for you—that is all as I can say."

Though I saw that it was useless to continue the discussion, I wanted to put one more question.

"Did your father say anything to the Admiralty about the chaplain's statement?" I asked.

"No, he didn't," answered Tom, almost savagely; "he wasn't such a darned fool. He had too much white in his eye, my father had, to put the Admiralty on the track of that there treasure-ship; and as it was nigh on a hundred years after she disappeared, it would have done no manner of good to anybody."

The subject then dropped, and it was not resumed until several rather strange things had come to pass, and Bolsover was in a more placable mood.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FEVER SHIP.

WE were now on the verge of the tropics; the weather was perfect, the wind fair, and the sea, covered with small, white-crested waves, chasing each other in wild revelry, superb; the days were delightful; the nights, lighted up by a great round moon, gloriously serene.

The mere fact of living became a pleasure; the noonday's heat was tempered by a balmy breeze, and basking in the sun, and living continually in the open air (I slept on deck), health tingled to my fingers' ends.

It was a pleasure to feel the brave ship surging through the sea, and to watch her great sails as they bellied to the breeze. For days together no sailor had need to go aloft, and one day was so like another that time seemed to stand still. Yet in this very monotony there was an inexplicable charm; it acted as a spiritual anodyne, banishing care, and lulling the mind to sleep. I ceased to think about my future, and Liverpool and business were so remote that they might never have been. Even Amy receded into the far distance, and it was hard to realize that I had once dreamed of marriage and suffered from the pangs of disappointed love.

Why, I often asked myself, had I not been brought up as a soldier or sailor instead of an underwriter? And I wondered how people could dislike the sea. True, there were sometimes storms, and the weather was not always serene; but, after all, storms were few and far between, and I felt sure that the hardships and perils of a seaman's life were grossly exaggerated. Only just before I left Liverpool, I met a man who had crossed the Atlantic half a dozen times without so much as encountering a gale of wind; and it was a notorious fact that A1 hardwood ships, well commanded and manned, and not too deep in the water, seldom came to grief.

I one day talked in this strain to Captain Peyton. I said that I doubted whether a man was in greater danger on board a good ship than inside a good house, and that life on the ocean wave was far pleasanter than life ashore.

"I don't mean, of course, on board a war-ship in time

of war," I added, remembering the experience of poor Mr. Hare.

"You think so because we have had such a pleasant voyage and made such good weather, so far," returned the skipper, with a smile, "and I am bound to say that sailing in these latitudes is pleasant. You would think differently, though, if you had ever faced a stiff gale in the North Atlantic, or tried to double Cape Horn in a snow-storm. And I don't agree with you about there being no more danger at sea than ashore. A landsman may live a long life without being once exposed to serious peril. A seaman can hardly make one long voyage without running serious risks. Not to speak of storms and cyclones, sunken rocks and unlighted shores, never a night passes that does not bring the possibility of a collision. The unexpected plays a far more important part at sea than ashore; so much so, that a prosperous, pleasant voyage always makes me a bit uneasy——"

"Like this, for instance?"

"Exactly. Like this. I cannot help thinking it is too good to last, and that Fortune is preparing us some scurvy trick. Who can tell? We may be run down in the night, or have foul weather before morning. All the same, I like my calling. Its very uncertainty is an attraction; a true seaman likes it none the less for its element of danger; and I don't know that I dislike an occasional storm. There is real pleasure in commanding a stout, well-found, well-manned ship in a gale of wind."

"I can well believe it—for a born sailor like you. You are of an adventurous disposition, I think, Captain Peyton."

"I was once. But I am too old now to seek adventures; they must seek me."

"Well, I begin to think I should like a few adventures. My life has been desperately tame so far."

"Has not somebody said that adventures are to the adventurous? You will, maybe, have a bellyful before you get back to Liverpool. Who knows?"

"Ay, who knows? I hope they will be agreeable, though."

"I don't think I could undertake to guarantee that," said the skipper, with a laugh. "Adventures are like babies—you must take them as they come. Step into my

cabin and let us have a game of chess and a glass of grog. Everything is going on smoothly, and it is the first officer's watch."

I have already mentioned how we amused ourselves, and that as there was always something going on we never suffered from *ennui*. We had excitement, too, of a very mild sort, though often rather intense while it lasted; nothing more than exchanging numbers with passing ships, and so ascertaining their names—when they came near enough, which was not always. In point of fact, we had only exchanged numbers with four ships since we sailed; we had, however, passed a good many in the early part of our voyage, and when a vessel was sighted, it was always a matter of speculation and discussion whether she would come within signaling distance or not. The further we got, however, the rarer these meetings became, and for several days past we had not seen a single sail.

So, when, on the morning after my talk with Captain Peyton, one of the mates (a man with wonderfully good eyes), sweeping the horizon with his glass, announced that he could just see the topmast of some ship away to windward, there was quite a flutter of excitement. We passengers had our binoculars out in a moment, though, as our eyes were not quite so keen as those of the second mate, it was some time before we could make out, in the far distance, a couple of sticks that seemed to be emerging from the water, which Bucklow (the mate), a few minutes later, declared to be the masts of a brig.

We went on staring our hardest, and in the end were rewarded by seeing the hull of a large ship rise slowly from "the bosom of the deep."

"A brig under bare poles!" exclaimed Captain Peyton, who was one of the gazers. "No; she has her fore-course and fore-topmast-staysail set. But what on earth is she doing, and where steering?"

I had been asking myself the same questions, for the brig's movements were most eccentric; she wobbled about in every direction, as if she could not make up her mind toward which point of the compass she wanted to sail.

"Are the people aboard of her all asleep, I wonder?" asked the captain. "Run up our number, Mr. Chance" (the third mate). "We shall may be pass near enough to exchange signals."

"Halloo!" shouted Bucklow, the sharp-eyed. "There is something wrong yonder."

"What is it?" asked everybody else, pointing his glass in the same direction as that of the mate.

"The Union Jack upside down."

"A signal of distress! And she does not give her number," said the skipper. "Something very wrong, I should say. Alter the ship's course a point, Mr. Bucklow. We will run under her bows and hail her."

When we were near enough, the captain took his speaking trumpet and hailed. But there came no answer. We could see nobody on deck; there was not even a man at the wheel.

"Queer!" said Captain Peyton, after he had hailed a second and third time. "I must go aboard and see what is up. Clear away the lee-quarter boat, Mr. Chance. Will you go with me, Mr. Erle?" turning to me. "Who knows that this is not the beginning of an adventure?"

"It is an adventure," I answered! "Thanks for the offer. I will go with you gladly."

So the sails were backed, the ship brought to, and the boat being lowered, we slipped into her and were quickly alongside the brig. As another hail produced no effect, one of the four seamen who were with us climbed up the fore-chains and threw us a rope, up which Peyton, myself, and two of the seamen swarmed, one after the other, hand over hand.

"Anybody on board, Bill?" asked the captain, as he put his foot on the deck.

"Not as far as I can see," said the seaman who had thrown us the rope. "But there's some very queer smells knocking about."

"Let us take a turn round the deck, and then we will go below. It looks as if the crew had deserted her. Why, I wonder? She seems all right and tight; and if her rigging is all sixes and sevens, that's easily accounted—— Halloo! What's that in the lee-scuppers, abaft the mainmast, there?"

"It looks like a bundle of old clothes," said Bill.

"It's a man's body; turn it round, Bill."

Bill lifted the body up and propped it in a sitting posture against the bulwark.

All gave back exclamations of dismay. It was the most revolting sight I had ever set eyes upon; the face was putrid, swollen, and almost black. One eye was wide open; the other, together with a part of the cheek, had been eaten away. One of the poor wretch's arms having been stretched out as he fell, had stiffened as he died, and now pointed its yellow and almost fleshless fingers at Captain Peyton.

"God bless me!" he exclaimed, in an awe-struck voice. "I do believe it's a fever ship!"

"You surely don't mean that all the crew have died of fever?"

"I am afraid so; but we will soon see."

There were two houses on deck, one of them being evidently the master's quarters. Peyton opened the door and peered in fearfully. I looked over his shoulder. In the bunk lay a blackened corpse; a troop of hideous rats gnawing at the face. On the floor was another corpse and more rats.

The captain drew back with a shudder, and closed the door.

"Yes," he said, "they are all dead, sure enough. I wonder where she hails from and what her cargo is? If I could only get a look at the manifest, or the logbook! I dare say they are in the poor skipper's cabin, and I am not going there again. We will just have a peep at the hold, though. No harm in that."

As he spoke, he slipped down the hatchway, and in five minutes came back with the news that she was timber laden.

"Does anybody know her name?" he asked.

"Yes," says Bill; "it is on the binnacle and the wheel —Lady Jane."

"I know her," I said, drawing on my recollection of "Lloyd's Register." "She belongs to Hart & Coverdale, of Liverpool—master, Williamson; built in Nova Scotia about ten years ago, if I remember rightly. I think we once insured her for a voyage to Honduras and back."

"That's it; I thought so. She hails from Belize—that is where they got the fever, no doubt—and her cargo consists of mahogany and logwood. A valuable cargo that, Mr. Erle. What do you think she is worth, now—

ship, cargo, and everything; lock, stock, barrel, and clinker?"

"Speaking roughly, I should say from fifteen to twenty thousand pounds."

"And she's a derelict. Nearly all that money would go to the owners, with a thumping share to the officers and crew; and I am part owner."

"If you take her into port——"

"And that is what I mean to do. One way and another, it would bring me a few thousands—anyhow, enough, with what I have, to make me independent for life, and be a nice provision for the wife and children when I die. Yes; I will take the Lady Jane into port—if I can."

"But, surely, Captain Peyton, you will not put any of your crew on board? Why, she is a regular pest-house; and the sooner I am off her the better I shall be pleased."

"Only a couple of volunteers to take the wheel, turn and turn about. But once here they must stay here. There will be no communication whatever between the two ships, no more than if they were a hundred miles apart. The two men who volunteer shall bring their own water and provisions, so that the risk they run will be of the very slightest."

"Do you think anybody will volunteer?"

"You will see when we get back. Yes, I shall take the Lady Jane in tow, and if the weather holds good, I will have her at Nassau in ten days or less."

"And if the weather does not hold good?"

"Then we shall have to cast her off."

"And you really do not think that in all this there is any risk?"

"For the two men who come aboard there may be some slight risk of infection; but for us, none whatever. The fever cannot fly over the water or creep along the hawsers. Besides, I never knew one ship take yellow fever from another. It is a land disorder, and ships bring it with them from places where it is epidemic. They never get it at sea."

"You think it is yellow fever, then?"

"Of course; what else can it be? I saw it at once when Bill turned that poor devil over. He must have died on

deck and rolled into the scupper. And now, if you please, we will return to the Diana.

I said no more, yet I could not help feeling that Captain Peyton was making a mistake, which might cost us dear. He was letting greed obscure his usually clear judgment. The moment he had ascertained the Lady Jane's character, he should have got out of her way as quickly as possible. The idea of having a pest-ship trailing after us for ten days—more likely fourteen—was to me simply horrible. I did not forget that I was supposed to be proof against yellow fever; yet the fact, if fact it were, gave me no comfort, and I returned to the Diana full of uneasy thoughts and gloomy forebodings.

The unexpected was happening with a vengeance!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST VICTIM.

As soon as we were on board the Diana the captain gave every man who had been with him a glass of grog, and after taking one himself, sprinkled us all with carbolic acid and water, and ordered Bill Bailey (the quartermaster, who had handled the corpse) to change his clothes, and disinfect those he had worn by damping them with a similar mixture, and hanging them up in the sun until they were dry.

This done, Peyton called the crew together and made them a little speech. He said that the Lady Jane carried a very valuable cargo, and that if we towed her into port the salvage would produce something very handsome, of which every seaman on board would be entitled to a share. With proper precautions, he did not think there was any risk worth mentioning, and he reckoned that they could easily reach Nassau in ten days. There was, however, one difficulty. If the Lady Jane was taken in tow, somebody would have to go on board to steer her. Two hands would be enough. They could take the wheel turn and turn about. There was no denying that they would run a certain amount of risk; but if they took their own water and provisions, and slept on deck, he felt sure they would be quite safe. There was no antidote for infection like sea air. At the same time he would use neither compulsion nor persuasion. If any-

body chose to volunteer, that would be another matter; and the two men who did so should receive, over and above their share of the salvage, fifty pounds apiece. Were any of them disposed to volunteer on these conditions?

The question was answered by a shout, and at least two thirds of the crew volunteered on the spot.

"Didn't I tell you?" said Peyton, turning to me with a smile. "All right, lads! But I only want two; cannot spare more, and two will be quite enough. We must draw lots. Mr. Bucklow, write down the name of every man who is willing to undertake the job on a slip of paper, put the slips into a hat, and then Mr. Erle will, perhaps, oblige us by drawing two at random, and the names on them will be those of the two lucky ones."

Lucky ones, indeed!

The names were written. I drew two slips, and announced, amid the breathless attention of the crew, that the winners were Harry Smithers and Jack McKean. Both threw up their caps with delight; the others looked bitterly disappointed, and the curses they vented on their ill-luck were loud and deep.

After this a couple of hawsers were passed from the stern of the Diana to the bows of the Lady Jane; the forlorn hope (very forlorn, I feared), amply provided with water and provisions, went on board the derelict, and the fever ship was taken in tow.

I have already mentioned that the Diana had an auxiliary screw. It was, however, very small, and seldom used —only, in fact, when there was a dead calm or exceptionally bad weather. So far, it had not been used at all, and our coal supply being unusually low (owing to our carrying a full cargo of merchandise), Peyton would probably not have put the Diana under steam at all had we not fallen in with the fever ship. But as it is extremely difficult for a vessel under sail to tow another, he ordered the screw to be slipped and steam to be got up. It was, however, quite evident that our progress in any circumstances would be slow, and that if a gale of wind sprung up we should have to abandon our prize. Nobody knew this better than Peyton.

"What will you do with the Lady Jane when you get her to Nassau?" I asked him.

"Batten down the hatches and fumigate her with sulphur; then put a crew aboard, bend fresh sails to her, and send her home under charge of Mr. Bucklow. If there should be any fever-germs left—and I don't believe there will be—the cold will soon kill them."

Had I been unduly alarmed, after all? There was no communication between the two ships; it was hardly possible for the infection to fly across the streak of water that separated them; and yellow fever being generally confined to certain localities, the sea must necessarily be unfavorable to its development.

When two days passed and nobody seemed any the worse—not even Bill Bailey, who had handled the dead body—I began to think that I had been unduly alarmed; my spirits revived, and albeit none of us passengers (nor probably any of the crew) particularly liked the proximity of the fever ship, we soon ceased to trouble about her, and our lives went on as usual.

In the meanwhile the wind had fallen, and though every stitch of canvas was spread, we could not make more than four knots an hour, even with the help of our tiny screw, much to Peyton's annnoyance.

"At this rate," he said, "we shall not reach the Bermudas for two or three weeks. However, it might be worse. If it had come on to blow, we should have had to cast the Lady Jane off; and if we were quite becalmed we should soon be without coal. I wish Nassau was a few hundred miles nearer. It is a good stretch out of our way."

The responsibility he had incurred by deviating from his course was evidently preying on his mind. If all went on smoothly, if he got safely to Nassau and disposed of the Lady Jane to advantage, or sent her home, good and well—his co-owners would be more than satisfied, and praise his enterprise and pluck, and he would put money in their pockets and his own. But if, after prolonging his voyage two or three weeks, he had to abandon his prize, they would probably have something to say that he might not quite like.

So far as I was personally concerned, I had no objection in the world to make a call at the Bermudas. Not knowing when, if ever, I should be able to make another long voyage, I wanted to see all I could.

One of my greatest pleasures was an early walk round the Diana's deck. There being none of the fair sex on board, we had no need to study propriety; and I generally rose with the sun, slipped on a pair of pyjamas, and paddled about the deck with naked feet. As often as not I appeared even without the pyjamas, and jumping overboard at the bows, swam to the stern and climbed up the ship's side by a rope.

Rather a ticklish operation; for if you don't seize the rope at the right moment you may be left behind, and swimming after the ship under sail is by no means easy, and may be dangerous. Before she could be brought to and a boat lowered, you might easily be drowned or gobbled up by a shark.

Captain Peyton several times warned me of the risk I ran by this proceeding.

"You will be missing your tip one of these days," he said, "and then look out! If the ship has much way on her, it may be half an hour or more before you get help."

But as I never missed my tip, I thought I never should; and with practice the feat became so easy that I grew confident and careless, although I did not end, as Peyton said I should, by "missing my tip."

One morning, shortly after we had discovered the Lady Jane, I rose, if anything, a little earlier than usual, was on deck just as the sun began to rise, and diving over the bows as usual, struck out leisurely for the stern, which, as the ship and myself were moving in opposite directions, I reached in a few seconds. Raising my head, I prepared to make a dash at the rope.

"It was not there! I had forgotten to order one to be thrown out, and I was not sure that anybody had seen me go into the water. I shouted to the man at the wheel, but he did not hear, and the next moment the ship had forged ahead. There was nothing for it but to climb up the bows of the Lady Jane. Better risk taking the fever than be drowned.

She was rather low in the water, or I do not think I should have managed it, and I was greatly helped by the loose end of a bolt-rope which hung down from the bowsprit. As I struggled up, knocking myself about a good deal in the effort, I happened to cast an eye on the haw-

ser nearest to me, and fancied I saw something black moving along it toward the Diana.

"What on earth——" I could not spare a hand to rub my eyes, so I shut and opened them by way of squeezing out the water, and looked again.

There could be no mistake about it. The black thing was a rat, and it was followed by a lot more rats. They were running along the rope in regular procession—scores of them—and when I got over the bulwark I found ever so many more, waiting for their turns. When the hideous things saw me they ran away squeaking. I shuddered, for I knew what they had been feeding on; but my mind was just then too much occupied with my own concerns to take in the full significance of the incident. I felt rather foolish, standing stark naked in the bows of the Lady Jane, and did not want to add to the absurdity of my position by hailing the Diana and asking for a boat. Why should I not imitate the rats, and use one of the hawsers as a bridge?

No sooner thought than done. I am a pretty fair gymnast, and seizing the hawser with both hands, and letting myself down, I moved them alternately forward until I reached my destination. It was still gray dawn; nobody had seen me, and I crept unperceived over the taffrail. Bill Bailey was at the wheel, and Bucklow the second mate, and Tom Bolsover were near the binnacle, deep in conversation.

"Good-morning!" I said, in a hollow voice, for I was breathless from exertion.

"Lord help us! One of them chaps from the Lady Jane!" shouted Bailey, and without more ado left the wheel to itself, and ran forward as fast as if our ghostly foe had been at his heels. His exclamation and my appearance so scared Bolsover, that he jumped round, slipped on the wet deck (it had just been washed), and clutching at the mate in a frantic effort to save himself, both went down together, and the ship broaching-to at the same moment, they rolled, one over the other, into the scupper.

"It is only me—nothing to be alarmed about. Just come aboard," I said, bursting with laughter, as I ran below to dry and dress myself.

When I looked into my glass and surveyed my body, I

was not surprised at the scare I had caused. My hands and legs were covered with tar from the bows of the Lady Jane; some of the stuff had got on my face, and as my long and rather red hair was matted on my forehead and hung over my eyes, and my skin was very white, I looked decidedly queer and slightly diabolical, if not very ghost-like.

So soon as I had made myself presentable I went on deck. There had been a great to-do. When the ship broached to, the captain came out of his cabin in great wrath, and wanted to know what—the something or another—was up. Bucklow was excessively riled at being rolled into the scupper, and called the boatswain a darnation old woman, to Tom's great disgust; and Bill Bailey received a severe reprimand for deserting his post and letting the ship broach to.

"I thought it was one of them chaps from the Lady Jane come to life, or may be Yellow Jack himself," pleaded the quarter-master.

"And if it had been, that was no reason for letting the ship broach to," said the captain, severely; but when his momentary fit of anger was over, he laughed as heartily as the others; and for the rest of the day all were enjoying the joke, and talking about the apparition of Yellow Jack.

Ah, me! It was the last bit of fun we had on board the Diana.

In talking the affair over with Peyton, I mentioned the portentous sight I had just seen. He seemed much disquieted.

"Rats!" he exclaimed. "Rats running along the hawsers? Are you quite sure?"

"Quite; and the procession continued until I got on board and disturbed them."

"This may have been going on all night," he said, uneasily. "It must be stopped. I want nothing from the Lady Jane on board this ship, least of all rats."

No wonder he felt uneasy. The rats I saw had been living for days on the bodies—now thrown overboard—which we had seen on the Lady Jane's deck, and now they were among us, running round the ship, nibbling at our food, scampering over the water-casks. If it were possi-

ble to convey the infection, they would surely convey it—had, perhaps, conveyed it already.

The captain asked me to keep what I had seen to myself—he feared it might alarm the crew—and the carpenter received orders to fix on each of the hawsers a round board, studded with nails, to prevent an invasion of rats from the Lady Jane.

"I have heard of rats running along ropes before now," he said to the carpenter, "and it is just as well to be on the safe side."

I made no further remark, but I much feared that it would prove another case of shutting the stable door when the steed was stolen. My worst forebodings revived, and I turned in that night with a heavy heart. After lying awake several hours, I sunk into a dream-haunted sleep. My dreams were all about rats. I saw the procession over again; saw the little black demons crawl along the hawser and sweep in thousands over the deck; saw the watch fighting with them; and Peyton, coming out of his cabin to see what was the matter, the creatures fell upon him, and in a few minutes there was nothing left but a skeleton.

When I awoke the sun was shining, and a huge rat sat on the side of my bunk. For a moment I thought that I still dreamed, but as I moved and stirred the bedclothes it jumped on the floor with a squeak and scurried out of my sight.

The first rat I had seen on board the Diana, and no doubt one of the horde from the fever ship. As likely as not, it had been playing about my bunk and running over my bed all night.

My fellow-passengers were all early risers, though not quite so early as myself, and I found them at breakfast, Peyton, as usual, at the head of the table.

"Halloo!" cried Bulnois, the young fellow who was voyaging in search of health. "I hope you are not out of sorts. I never knew you late for breakfast before. You are not an early bird this morning, and if you had been you would not have picked up a worm. No worms on board the Diana, only rats and apparitions of Yellow Jack—ha, ha!"

"Rats! rats! What do you mean, Bulnois?"

"You have not seen any, then! We have—lots—except the captain here; he has not."

I glanced at Peyton, and felt sure, from his uneasy, anxious look, that, despite his denial, he, too, had been visited by one or more of our unwelcome guests.

"I saw one as I turned in last night," went on Bulnois, "and there were two whoppers on the floor this morning; and Robinson found one in his shoe, did you not, Robinson?"

"Rather! And it gave me a scare, too. I was putting on my boot when I felt something soft; but it bit hard, I can tell you."

"Got hold, did it?" I said, with assumed carelessness.

"Rather! Stuck its sharp teeth into my big toe. But I had my revenge. I kicked the beggar off, and then knocked it on the head with my other boot. Where do they all come from, Captain Peyton? There did not use to be any on board; you said so yourself."

"I did not think there were; but rats are very unaccountable creatures. You can never tell. Two or three pairs may have come aboard at Liverpool, and been increasing and multiplying down in the hold. You have no idea how fast they breed.

"Gad! if two or three pairs have increased into two or three hundred since we left Liverpool, they do breed fast, and no mistake," returned Bulnois, dryly.

"Two or three hundred! Nonsense! I don't believe there or two or three dozens."

"Aren't there, though! Why, they are all over the ship; and if some are so bold as to come into our bunks and crawl into our boots, just think how many must there be down in the hold. I hope they won't eat through the sides and sink us, that's all."

At this point Peyton (whom the conversation evidently annoyed) remembered that his presence was required on deck, and left us to ourselves, on which we had a long talk and many stories about rats; but I made no mention of the strange sight I had seen on the occasion of my late involuntary visit to the Lady Jane."

The captain afterward told me "on the quiet" that (as I suspected) he had seen several rats in his cabin, only it would not do for him to admit the fact.

"We must make the best of it," he said; "no use

crying over spilt milk, you know. If we were to cast off the Lady Jane we could not get rid of the rats; and it may be a false alarm, after all. I really don't see what harm they can do."

But this was all make-believe—whistling to keep his courage up. I knew that in his heart Peyton thought just as I did, and feared the worst.

When I went on deck next morning I missed Bill Bailey, and asked Bucklow what had become of him.

"On the sick-list."

"What is the matter?"

"I don't know; but I believe he is very sick. The captain has seen him; he will tell you."

We had no surgeon on board, and the captain, in addition to his other functions, acted as doctor. When I saw him, I asked what was wrong with Bailey—if it was anything serious.

"Very serious,' was the answer.

"It surely is not——"

"I am sorry to say it is."

"But is it not possible you may be mistaken? Are you certain that your diagnosis is correct?"

"Do I know a case of yellow fever when I see it, you mean? I ought. When I was second officer of the Neva, one of the Royal Mail steamers, you know, we once had seventy deaths from yellow fever within a week of leaving St. Thomas'. Yes, Bailey has got it; and I fear it will go hard with him, poor fellow!"

It did go hard with him. Forty-eight hours later the quartermaster's body was stitched up in his hammock and committed to the deep, and at the captain's request I read the funeral service over the poor fellow's watery grave.

"The first victim," I thought. "Who will be the next?"

CHAPTER IX.

YELLOW JACK.

LIKE a good many other men, Peyton did not like to own, even to himself, that he had made a mistake; and as I could well see, he was continually casting about in his mind for reasons that might justify him for taking the Lady Jane in tow, in forgetfulness of the French say-

ing, *Qui s'excuse s'accuse.* His very anxiety to clear himself from charges which, as yet, nobody had made, showed that he was conscious of having committed a grevious error.

"I am very sorry about poor Bailey," he said. "Yet, after all, it is no more than was to be expected."

"I don't quite see——"

"Don't you remember him handling that body on the Lady Jane? It must have been then he caught the fever."

"But that is two days since. He was thoroughly disinfected; and if he had caught the fever then it would have shown itself much sooner. I have always understood that yellow fever is exceedingly rapid in its action."

"Generally; but there are exceptions. He *must* have caught it that time on the Lady Jane; and would have died just the same whether we had taken the ship in tow or not. How else could he have caught it?"

"The rats. Bolsover tells me that they actually swarm about the water-casks; and you know what that means."

"Curse the rats!" Peyton exclaimed, passionately. "It's rats, rats, all day long. I think you have all got rats on the brain. Are you quite sure, now, you did see them coming across the hawsers?"

"Quite. Besides, if they are not from the Lady Jane, how did they get on board?"

"Anyhow, it's not the rats that gave poor Bailey the fever; he got it in the Lady Jane, and nobody can blame me for that. Who could tell beforehand that she was a fever ship?"

To this query I made no answer. I knew what he was driving at. In the event of the fever spreading, he wanted to make out that it had been brought on board by Bailey; that the rats had nothing to do with it. I felt annoyed that he should thus try to wriggle out of the responsibility he had incurred by taking the Lady Jane in tow, and only the fact of my being his guest prevented me from saying so. If he had been less obstinate, he would have cast her off at once, for besides taking us out of our course, she was greatly impeding our progress; and with fever on board our own vessel, and a fever ship in

tow, no port in that part of the world would receive us; what he would do with the Lady Jane in such circumstances as these was a mystery.

Bailey's death naturally caused great alarm, both among the passengers and crew. The captain tried to persuade them that it was merely an isolated case, and that he had adopted such precautions as would prevent the pest from spreading. I don't think, though, that anybody believed him. I know I did not. The rats, I felt sure, would infect the whole ship, and it was quite possible that the fate of the Lady Jane's crew would be ours—and mine—for the more imminent grew the danger the less confident I felt in my supposed immunity.

We dined at half-past five on board the Diana. The party generally consisted of the seven passengers, the captain (who presided) and sometimes the first or second officer. The bell rang fifteen minutes before the time, and again at the half hour, when, as a rule, we were all in our places, except Bulnois, who was in the habit of unduly prolonging his afternoon nap, and about every other day had to be wakened up by a special messenger.

This happened on the day Bailey was buried, and the conversation with the captain which I have just described took place.

"Where is Mr. Bulnois?" asked Peyton, when we were all seated. "Asleep, as usual, I suppose. Steward, send a boy to rouse him up, and say that dinner is on the table."

Just as we were beginning with our soup, the boy came back to say that Mr. Bulnois was very ill—had a bad headache, was very sick, and could not come to dinner.

We all looked at each other. My companions turned pale, and I have no doubt I did; for the same thought passed through every mind—Bulnois had got yellow fever. It was like the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. The foe was inside the citadel, and each of us was mentally asking himself whose turn it would be next.

The captain was the first to break the silence.

"A trifling indisposition, I expect," he said, with an affected nonchalance which matched ill with his anxious face. "Bulnois is subject to headaches, I think. I will go and see him presently, and give him something that

will do him good. Very likely an attack of indigestion."

The captain looked round as if to invite an expression of opinion in accordance with his own, but nobody answered a word, and the dinner was finished hurriedly, and in deep, almost solemn silence. But when Peyton left us to see poor Bulnois, every tongue was loosened.

"He is among us now, and no mistake," said Robinson.

"Who?"

"Yellow Jack. You must have brought him when you went aboard the Lady Jane the other day, Erle."

"That is impossible. I was not there two minutes, and I came back as naked as I went. Besides, if I had brought it, I should have been the first victim."

"Well, how is it, then? I can understand that quarter-master getting it. But Bulnois never went near him, and at luncheon he seemed quite well, and eat with good appetite."

"I'll tell you what it is," put in Saunders, the bank clerk, a quiet, observant little fellow. "It's those rats."

"Rats! What the deuce have rats to do with it?"

"Everything. I can see it all now. There was not a rat on board before Tuesday. I have inquired among the men, and I cannot find anybody who saw a single specimen until Wednesday, and now they simply swarm; and was it not on Wednesday morning that the captain had those guards put on the hawsers to prevent rats running over them from the Lady Jane? Depend upon it, he knows, only it does not suit his purpose to say so. Have you not noticed how he fires up when anything is said about rats?"

"By Jove, I do believe you are right! And it all comes of taking that cursed fever ship in tow. Peyton deserves to be thrown overboard."

"No, no," I said; "Peyton is one of the best fellows in the world. He acted for the best, and took every precaution. Who could foresee that rats would come aboard by a hawser?"

"He had no business to run the risk—a risk that involved others as well as himself—of taking a fever ship in tow; and what makes it worse, he did it for his own profit. We have no interest in the salvage."

After this I thought it discreet to let the subject drop,

for in truth my friend's conduct was almost, if not altogether, indefensible.

"Never mind about the captain," interposed somebody. "What are we to do? that is the question."

"What can we do but grin and abide?" I answered. "There is no possibility of running away."

"But cannot we take something—brandy or quinine; or do something with carbolic acid?"

"Carbolic is merely a disinfectant; it is being used all over the ship already; brandy, I should think, is about the worst thing you could take, and quinine about the best. A manual of medicine I was looking at yesterday, in the captain's cabin, recommends strong doses of quinine as a prophylactic."

"Let us have some!" "Where can we get it?" "Has the captain any?" "How much should we take?" shouted the five passengers.

I said that I believed the captain had some; and when he returned from seeking Bulnois they asked him for quinine even before they inquired after their sick friend. He had some, though not very much, and gave each man a small dose forthwith.

Bulnois was very ill; Peyton could not deny that his symptoms were those of yellow fever; and if he had denied it I should have known that he was wrong, for I had been reading the subject up. I had seen Bailey, and the moment I saw poor Bulnois (none of the other fellows would go near him) I recognized all the signs of the dread disease in its incipient stage—the shivering, the hot skin, the suffused eyeballs, the drunken-like aspect of the eyes, and the flushed zone that encircled them.

Poor fellow! we could do nothing for him; I doubt whether the ablest physician in England could have done anything for him. He died delirious on the second day.

In the meantime three of the crew had fallen ill, and they, too, died; and after that there were several deaths every day; within a week of the outbreak of the fever, the forty-six souls whom the Diana had on board when she sailed from Liverpool were reduced to twenty-five. Yet the virulence of the plague did not abate. It seemed as if we should all perish, and I do not think there were more than two men aboard who believed they would escape.

These two were Bolsover and myself. I had gone so much among the sick, exposing myself continually to the risk of contagion without suffering the least ill effect, that I began to think my immunity was real, after all, and that I ran no more risk of taking the fever than a man who has been effectively vaccinated runs of taking small-pox.

The boatswain was like Bonaparte—he believed in his star.

"I am not afraid, Mr. Erle," he said to me one day, "my time has not come yet. I am bound to see that treasure-ship before I die."

It was about this time that Bucklow (now first officer, his senior being among the dead) took me to the stern, and pointing to the water, said, grimly:

"There they are, waiting for us. They have been following us these last three days.

"They" were five or six huge sharks, swimming in the wake of the ship. I looked at them for a while as if fascinated, and then with a shudder turned away. I never went near the taffrail that I did not look, and they were always close under the stern.

As for Peyton, I thought he was going mad. He attended to his duties as diligently as ever, looked after the sick as well as he could, and kept the survivors of his crew to their duties, took the day's reckoning, and recorded the day's run; but he hardly ever spoke, except to give necessary orders.

For hours together he would pace about the quarter-deck, muttering, "It's my doing! it's all my doing! We shall all die! we shall all die! but my time has not come yet."

Once, when I ventured to suggest that he should cast the Lady Jane off (at the instance of some of the men, who had got it into their heads that so long as we had the fever ship in tow the fever would never leave us) he turned on me almost fiercely.

"No!" he exclaimed, "I shall not cast her off. Why should I? What harm has she done? I am doomed—we are all doomed—and the salvage will be a provision for my wife and family. Don't you understand? a provision for my wife and family, that's why. But it's useless to

discuss the subject or give my reasons. I absolutely refuse to cast the ship off; let that suffice."

He was doomed, but not to die of yellow fever.

The very next morning, when I went on deck, Bucklow told me, with a significant look, that the captain had been taken ill in the night, and seemed in a very bad way.

I went to him at once. Bucklow spoke truly. The captain was, in truth, in a very bad way. He had all the symptoms which I now knew so well. Although the temperature of his cabin was nearly eighty, and his skin hot and dry, he shivered continually. He had a terrible headache, too, and, albeit still sensible, rambled at times in his talk, and I doubted not would soon become quite delirious.

"Yellow Jack has got hold of me now," he said, trying to smile. "I thought he would; but not so soon, not so soon. I was quite well last night. What think you now—is a man safer at sea or ashore? Are those adventures to your taste, Erle? You will have more, more, and pleasanter ones, I hope. Sorry I asked you to come with me. Turned out badly, hasn't it? If I had known what would happen, you may be sure I would have given that brig a wide berth. But now it is too late; and the salvage, you know, will be a provision for the wife and children. Poor wife! poor children! I shall never see them again, Erle—never again! Give them my love when you get home, and say I thought about them to the last. I knew your father; he was a very good friend; yes, a very good friend. I was second officer of the Orontes when he and your mother were passengers; you were a passenger too—a little chap about two years old. I remember you well; used to trot you about on my shoulder. How did they get to St. Thomas'? That is where they came on board. Oh, I remember—in a falucha from Maracaibo; yes, that was it, in a falucha from Maracaibo. I say, what do you think I saw in the night?" lowering his voice, and looking fearfully round. "Rats! hundreds! They ran all over the place, and played at leap-frog on my bed—they did—played at leap-frog on my bed. And I could neither touch them nor call out. My arms were fastened to my sides, and my tongue refused to move. And what do you think? But don't tell

anybody. A great yellow one—twice as big as any of the others—a great yellow one, with black whiskers, and white teeth, and fierce red eyes, came and sat on my chest and spat at me. It gave me the fever, curse it! Get dogs and cats; set traps; lay poison. Kill it! kill it! Kill that cursed yellow rat, or you will all die. A little more of that *eau-de-Cologne*, please; on my eyeballs this time. Thanks. And now I will drink again. This thirst is terrible. I am very ill, Erle."

I remained with him an hour or more, laving his head with *eau-de-Cologne* and giving him some drink, and then, leaving him with his boy for awhile, I went outside to get a breath of fresh air, the cabin being both close and hot.

Bucklow was still on deck.

"How long will he last, do you think?" he asked.

"Perhaps until to-morrow," I answered, gloomily. "They have all gone on the second day, or sooner, so far; and Peyton has it very badly. I am afraid he will be wildly delirious. Somebody should be with him continually."

"You have left the boy, I suppose?"

"Yes; and I shall go back in a few minutes."

"How long will this last, I wonder? It's hell! I'll tell you what, Erle. I have a great mind to cast that cursed brig off on my own authority. We have had no luck since we saw her. I am in command now. Do you think I might?"

"Certainly. Cast her off, by all means, and let us make all the haste we can for Montevideo, while there's somebody to navigate and sail the ship; and if——"

"Rats! Rats! Rats! There's that great yellow one with the red eyes! I'll catch him! I'll catch him, if I die for it! Ah! he is making for the Lady Jane, is he——!"

"My God! what is that?" exclaimed Bucklow, as we both turned from the taffrail, over which we had been leaning.

It was the captain running across the deck in his shirt, and at the same instant, and before either of us could raise a hand to stop him, he sprung on the bulwark and jumped into the sea.

The mate, with ready presence of mind, threw a buoy

after him, at the same time ordering the ship to be brought to and a boat to be lowered.

My first impulse was to follow Peyton and try to save him.

"Don't!" said Bucklow, laying his hand on my shoulder. "He can swim better than you can. And, see, it would be certain death."

The captain was swimming with powerful strokes toward the Lady Jane, in the very midst of a shoal of sharks. They were all round him, and even before he reached the brig one of the creatures turned on its back for the fatal bite. An agonized scream, a piteous look from a fever-stricken face, a swirl of the waters as the wild beasts of the sea fought with each other for their prey, and all was over.

It seemed too terrible to be real. My brain was in a whirl; I felt sick and giddy; and had not Bucklow put his arm around me, I should have fallen on the deck.

"Don't give way," he said, kindly. "Horrid sight as it was, it is perhaps better so. Poor Peyton has been spared a long agony. It was not three minutes from the time of his jumping overboard to his death. I'd rather die like that than as some of our poor fellows have died. Just one crunch, and it's over. Come! I am going to cast the brig off. I cannor bear the sight of her."

"Sink her, and so prevent the disasters that have befallen us from befalling others."

"We cannot. She is timber laden."

"Burn her, then."

"I did not think of that. Yes, we will burn her; and those cursed rats with her, if there are any left. Will you come with me? and we will set her on fire, and bring those two fellows off. How they have escaped, Heaven only knows."

"With all my heart."

The dingey was lowered at once, and taking with us matches, axes, and a carboy of turpentine, we went on board the Lady Jane.

After opening the ports and hatches to make a good draught, we gathered together all the combustible material we could find, and took it to the place where the ship's stores were kept—cordage, spare sails, tar, and what not—drenched them with turpentine and the con-

tents of a cask of rum (which we found on board), put a second cask in the middle of the pile, fired it in several places, and when it was fairly alight, got into the dingey and returned to the Diana with Smithers and McKean.

"She is as dry as a bone," said Bucklow, "and will burn like matchwood."

"Cast her off!" he cried, as soon as we were on board. "By Jove, look there!"

The hawsers were covered with rats trying to escape, and as they reached the guards and could get no further, those behind thrust the foremost into the sea. Even when the hawsers were loosed the rats continued their mad flight, and went on pushing each other to certain destruction.

In a few minutes smoke and flame were coming up the brig's hatchways; then the deck took fire; great tongues leaped up and twisted like fiery serpents round the masts, and the Lady Jane was all ablaze from stem to stern. The timber in the hold also took fire, and when the sea broke in and extinguished it, the loosened logs of wood were floated out of the hull; and as the fever ship disappeared, a loud cheer went up from the survivors of the Diana's crew.

CHAPTER X.

MUTINY.

THE destruction of the brig lightened every heart on board.

Sailors are proverbially superstitious, and the scenes they had witnessed and the anxiety they had endured had made a deep impression on the remnant of the Diana's crew, and wound them up to a high pitch of excitement. As our misfortunes had begun with the Lady Jane, the poor fellows thought they would end with her. Having, moreover, come to regard Captain Peyton as a Jonah, they looked on his tragic death as at once a judgment and an expiation, and made sure that now he was gone the luck would change.

Even Bucklow, educated man as he was, could not help sharing in this hallucination; and the alacrity with which he changed the ship's course, and the energetic

and almost cheery manner in which he gave his orders, showed how greatly his mind was relieved.

I, too, was glad we had got rid of the brig—like Bucklow, I hated the very sight of her—but I could neither share in the general confidence, nor believe that in getting rid of the fever ship we had got rid of the fever. I was too much depressed to be hopeful, and I had read in one of the medical books which formed part of Peyton's library that a high temperature favored the development of yellow fever; that the most certain cure for it is cold weather. But during the last day or two the temperature had risen and the wind fallen off, and as we were now making direct for the equator, there was every likelihood of our having it still warmer. The brig, moreover, had done her worst, so to speak; her contiguity ceased to be a danger, and the chief advantage of her disappearance was that it encouraged the men and enabled us to make better speed; although, as our coal was nearly done, Bucklow thought it better to stop the engine and unship the screw.

Great gains, so far as they went; but I could not believe that they were sufficient to stay the plague. Bucklow was more sanguine and superstitious.

"The omens are all good, Erle," he exclaimed, clapping me on the back. "There has not been a fresh case since yesterday, except poor Peyton's; the wind is freshing—we shall be doing six knots soon if this goes on—and look there! those white-bellied devils have left us."

So they had. Not a shark was to be seen.

I confess that at first this rather staggered me; one cannot help believing just a little in omens; and dumb creatures have very subtle instincts—still how on earth can sharks have any ideas about yellow fever? There must be some other cause. Ah! I think I have it.

"Yes, they are gone, sure enough," I said; "but I am afraid—— Don't you think the burning of the brig has something to do with it? I have heard that sharks are easily scared, and the blaze and the heat, and the fall of burning embers into the water, might easily frighten much bolder animals."

"What a croaker you are, Erle! Why cannot you let a fellow cherish a pleasing illusion?—if it be an illusion—and really, you know, I don't think it is. These creat-

ures' senses are very acute, and it is quite conceivable that their leaving us is a good sign."

"I should be glad to think so; but what do you call that?" I asked, pointing to the dorsal fin of a shark which just then appeared above the water.

"Heaven help us! they are coming back! And what a monster! Five-and-thirty feet, if it is an inch! And there is another. How will it all end, Erle?"

"That is more than I can say; but I am quite sure that it will end neither better nor worse because those sharks have come back. I suppose it is their nature to follow in a ship's wake."

But Bucklow shook his head; the incident had made a deep impression on him, and he evidently put more faith in omens than he was willing to admit.

For the next two days, however, things did go better with us; there was no fresh cases, and two sailors who had been taken ill before the captain died seemed as if they might recover. At any rate, it was past the third day, and they were still alive, which showed, I thought, that the malady was losing something of its virulence.

But the improvement was short-lived. The breeze did not take us very far, and when it fell off the heat became intense, the two patients died, and we had several fresh cases. In several instances men died without being laid up. There was a suppression of some of the secretions, intense pain in the limbs lasting for a few hours, and the sufferers were struck down on the deck. It was probably in this way that the poor creatures whose bodies we found on the Lady Jane came by their end.

The crew, now reduced to less than a score, were sorely discouraged by this change for the worse. Sick of disappointed hope, they became desperate and demoralized; the bonds of discipline were loosened, and Bucklow could hardly prevail on them to work the ship.

And no wonder. Let the reader imagine, if he can, what his own feelings would be if he were shut up in a house where a deadly and frightfully contagious disease was rife, where people were dying every day, and from which there was no possibility of escape.

"We shall have trouble," said Bucklow; "the men are in a very evil humor. I doubt if I shall ever get this

ship to Montevideo. However, I'll try my best, and more than that can no man do."

He kept the deck almost continually, and when he turned in for an hour's sleep, Bolsover (who now acted as mate) took the command. These two were the only officers left alive, and it was no longer possible to arrange the watches in the regular way. We had to do as well as we could, and I gave all the help in my power, which was not much, I fear, for I am no seaman. But I could keep them company, and now and then I took a turn at the wheel, for, short-handed as we were becoming, ability to steer might stand us in good stead.

I was getting up one morning rather past my usual time, for I had turned in late the night before, when Bucklow came to me in a state of suppressed excitement.

"I want you on deck," he said. "There is going to be a row. The men have got to the spirits, and are nearly all drunk and getting obstreperous—won't obey orders. The wind is freshening, too, and unless we take in sail we shall be in a mess."

I made haste with my dressing, and followed him on deck forthwith, first putting a revolver in my trousers pocket, by way of being ready for all emergencies.

Except the quarter-master at the wheel and a Swede, called Oscar, a decent, God-fearing man, all the hands were in the waist of the ship. They had broached a cask of rum, and were nearly all more or less drunk. Bucklow and Bolsover were remonstrating with them, and trying to persuade them to return to their duty and do as they were bid.

The answer was a laugh of defiance and a torrent of abuse.

"We'll work no more on this ship," shouted one fellow. "Let her go to the bottom, and be d——d to her."

"Come, come, men, be reasonable," remonstrated Bucklow. "It is very rough on you, I know; it is rough on all of us. But this sort of thing will do no good. The more you drink, the more likely you are to die."

"That's what we want. We want to die," hiccoughed a sailor, filling himself a glass of rum. "What's the use of living? Tell me that. What's the use of living on a

fever ship like this 'ere? Better die of drink than be killed by Yellow Jack. Here goes"—tossing off the glass. "I swear I'll never be sober again! I'll die drunk! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"I say, cap'n—you calls yourself cap'n, don't you?" said another, coming close up to Bucklow—"you just sheer off and leave us alone, or it'll be worse for you. We are the masters of this 'ere ship, and we mean to do what we d——d like!"

The words were hardly out of the fellow's mouth when Bucklow knocked him down, and then, with a gesture of anger and disgust, the mate turned on his heel, which he had no sooner done than one of the cowardly scoundrels, who had crept behind him unperceived, struck him a terrible blow on the head with a belaying-pin.

But he was quickly avenged.

As Bucklow reeled and fell, I drew my revolver and shot his assailant dead. Then, pointing the still smoking weapon at the others, I bade them throw the cask of rum overboard.

The death of their comrade had scared, if not sobered them, and I was obeyed on the instant.

"Is there any more, Bolsover?" I asked.

"Yes, sir; two casks."

"Fetch them here and throw them overboard."

This, too, was done.

In the meanwhile Oscar the Swede, and one or two of the men who were more sensible than the rest, had raised poor Bucklow up and carried him into the captain's cabin. He was badly hurt, and quite insensible. After doing all I could for him, bathing and plastering up the wound on his head, and leaving him in charge of our only surviving boy, I went on deck again, and found that those of the men who were not absolutely drunk and incapable were shortening sail under Bolsover's directions.

"You've frightened 'em, sir," said the boatswain. "The way you shot down that scoundrel Smithers was a caution."

"It was done on the impulse of the moment, Bolsover; my revolver seemed to go off by itself," I returned, for Smithers still lay where he fell, in a pool of blood. The

ghastly sight made me feel decidedly uncomfortable; I began to think that I had been too hasty.

"And a very good thing, too," said Bolsover. "Don't let that trouble you, sir. You served the fellow right; the men themselves think so. To strike down Mr. Bucklow was worse than murder—it was treason. If anything happens to him, there will be nobody to navigate the ship, and then what shall we do?"

"If anything happens to Mr. Bucklow! You surely don't think, Bolsover——"

"Well, that was a terrible crack on the head Smithers gave him; it's much if he ever speaks again, I think."

He never did. After remaining insensible for three days, the mate recovered consciousness, but not power of speech. He evidently wanted to say something, and made several vain yet desperate efforts to articulate; then with his eyes he bade me a pathetic farewell, pressed my hand, and quietly passed away.

Peace be to his ashes! I think Bucklow's death affected me more than any other which had yet occurred. It was not merely that it left us helpless and utterly incapable of taking the ship to her destination; I liked him personally. He was a courageous, open-hearted sailor, wise in council and prompt in action; and the loss of so many of our comrades had brought us into close companionship. I had come to entertain a warm affection for him, and he was the only one left with whom I could converse on terms of intellectual equality.

CHAPTER XI.

BECALMED.

AFTER poor Bucklow's death, the fever became more virulent than ever, and if fewer died it was merely because fewer were left to kill. The contagion spread with portentous rapidity, the interval between the first seizure and the fatal close being often frightfully short.

At the end of the following week two only were left—Bolsover and myself. Of the forty-seven who had sailed from Liverpool, little more than a month previously, we were the sole survivors. All the rest slept their long sleep in the fathomless depths of the wild Atlantic.

What my feelings were I can hardly remember, and do not care to recall. I was stunned, overwhelmed, and, as it seemed, almost paralyzed by the stupendous nature of the calamity which had overtaken me, and by bitter grief for those who were gone. But for Bolsover I think I must have gone mad. He too sorrowed, in his own fashion, for our lost comrades; yet his grief seemed to sit lightly on him, and in his manner there was at times something that looked very like exultation, the cause of which I was at first at a loss to divine. But a casual expression he let drop enlightened me. He regarded his escape and mine as proof that we were the destined discoverers of the Santa Anna.

Had I been less depressed, I should have been amused, probably have laughed at him. As it was, I thought it best not to answer him. You cannot argue with a monomaniac.

But on every other point, the boatswain, as usual, was evidently sane and practical.

"There is only you and me now," he said, "and we can neither handle the ship nor navigate her; but we can do our best. There is no more sail on her than will give her steering way in a light breeze, and if it comes on to blow we shall may be not take much harm. You can steer pretty well now, and we must take the wheel turn and turn about."

"That is all very fine; but where shall we make for?"

"Well, I don't think as we can do better than stick to the course we are on, and as Mr. Bucklow last laid down —sou'-west by south—as far as the wind will let us."

"Will that bring us to Montevideo?"

"I don't think it will, exactly; but there or thereabouts, perhaps."

"Have you any idea where we are?"

"Not within a degree or two; but, from the feel, we should not be far from the line."

"Rather vague; but it is hot enough for anything, if that is what you mean. However, about this steering. It can easily be arranged as you suggest. While one steers the other can cook, and sleep, and keep a lookout. Our best chance of rescue is to attract the attention of some passing vessel. Can we do anything more than reverse the Union Jack?"

"I don't know as we can; and keep our number always flying."

"There is still one thing we have not thought of. Suppose something happens—that some emergency arises that forces me to quit the wheel while you are asleep?"

"The only thing you can do in that case would be to lash the wheel amidships. I will show you how. But we must do our sleeping in the captain's cabin. We shall always be within hail of each other. You have only to whistle, and I will come."

"Aren't you afraid of sleeping in the captain's cabin?"

"Not a bit. I shall not take the fever. If I could, I should have done so long since."

"All the same, I would not throw away a chance, if I were you. There is no telling——"

"Old Tom," as the sailors had called him, smiled superciliously, as much as to say that I did not know what I was talking about.

"Very well," I said· "Go and turn in. You had no sleep last night, and I had. I will take the wheel."

"Thank you, sir. I do feel a bit sleepy. Wake me up when you feel tired. Keep her off and by—as she is; that's all you have to do."

And so I was left in sole charge of the Diana—a strange position for a landsman on his first voyage! A captain without a crew, a navigator innocent of navigation, steering generally for the equator, and with an uncertain hope of sooner or later reaching the coast of South America, somewhere betweeen the Amazon and Cape Horn, and the off chance of knocking against the continent of Africa, or being blown into the Pacific!

Not the sort of outlook to make a man merry, even though he has nothing particular on his mind; and on mine lay dark memories of the valley of the shadow of death through which I had just passed. But I was too busy to brood. I did not steer so well that I could do it automatically like an A. B. I had to give the wheel my closest attention and watch the ship continually, yet with all my pains I let her "fall off" several times, much to my annoyance. The wind, moreover, occasionally varied a point or two, thereby increasing the difficulty of my task. But I did not call Bolsover; I thought I would let

him sleep as long as he liked; and when he voluntarily came to relieve me, I had been at my post nearly five hours.

"Why didn't you call me?" he said, reproachfully. "You must be both tired and hungry. Go and get something to eat, and then turn in for an hour or two. I don't think we shall either of us get much sleep to-night."

"Why?"

"There is going to be a change of weather. The glass is going down fast, and clouds are gathering to windward. But we shall not get it just yet. When you have had your grub and your sleep, we must reef the foresail. Then we shall be safe, I think."

I acted promptly on old Tom's suggestion, for the air and the work had made me doth hungry and sleepy.

When I returned from my snooze, the wind had risen considerably, and blew in fitful gusts; the sun went down red, amid a mass of ominous-looking clouds, and, as Bolsover said, there was every likelihood of a dirty night. The time had come to reduce our spread of canvas, and the ship being under a patent foretopsail and jib, we lowered and reefed the former without difficulty. The boatswain then made all snug, battened down the hatches, and brought a suit of oilskin and a pair of sea-boots for himself, and another for me, put food, water, and grog within reach, and lighted the lanterns. When he had done all that was necessary, or, rather, all that he could, he joined me at the wheel, for, as he said, it would take two to steer, and all little enough.

And so it proved. The wind rose every moment, and though we had so little sail set, the ship went through the water like an Atlantic liner at full speed. Then it lulled a little, and the rain came down as it only can come down in the tropics, rattling on the deck like discharges of musketry, and tumbling out of the scuppers in cascades. From time to time, there came a tremendous clap of thunder; the sky was ablaze with lightning, which brought every spar and rope of the ship into vivid relief, and cast a lurid glow on an angry sea billowed with foam-crested waves. But we were by no means in the center of the storm, else it had gone ill with us; and the rain,

by keeping the sea down somewhat, probably prevented us from being pooped.

When morning broke the rain was still falling, and the wind blowing in strong gusts; the Diana was scudding before it, and we were still both at the wheel; and except for intervals of a few minutes, when one or other of us snatched a morsel of food or took a pull at the bottle of half-water grog which Tom had put under the binnacle, we remained at the wheel all that day and all the next night.

What distance we made in this time we had no means of exactly computing; but when the wind began to fall off, Tom tried our rate of sailing with the patent log, and found it to be eight knots; but our average speed during the thirty-six hours the gale lasted must have been much more, and we probably ran not less than four hundred miles. Where we were we could form only the very vaguest idea, for our course had been most erratic, the wind shifting continually.

When the storm abated, and there was promise of better weather, Bolsover suggested that I should turn in.

"I am more used to this sort of thing than you are," he said. "I can stand it awhile longer; but you are about used up, I think. Lie down for an hour or two; I will waken you up when I want you."

I required no second bidding. I was utterly silent, and only half conscious. Without undressing, I threw myself on the bunk in the captain's cabin, and almost before my head touched the pillow was fast asleep.

When I awoke, as it seemed to me an hour or so later, the sun was shining brightly, and the boatswain lay asleep on the floor.

"Halloo!" I thought. "Has old Tom deserted his post? Why didn't he waken me?"

But when I looked out I saw that the sea was perfectly calm—not a breath of air ruffled its glassy surface—and the Diana lay there, as still and motionless as "a painted ship upon a painted ocean."

Clearly no need for a man at the wheel, and Tom had done quite right to take his rest without interrupting mine.

After a wash and a walk round the ship, I went to the galley, kindled the fire, made lobscouse and pea soup,

and when all was ready returned to the cabin to look after Tom. He was just opening his eyes.

"Have you had a good sleep?" I asked.

"Very; and you?"

"Oh, pretty well. I must have had three or four hours, and if I had not been so hungry I should have gone on awhile longer."

"Three or four hours! Why, bless you, Mr. Erle, you have slept more like thirty hours!"

"Nonsense, Bolsover. I know better."

"Well, then, the sun is going wrong. It was a good deal past noon when I turned in, and"—glancing at the sun—"it cannot be much past eleven now. Yes, Mr. Erle, you have slept something like thirty hours, and me about twenty-four—and a good thing, too. We wanted it. When it fell calm I knew as the ship could take care of herself, so I just lashed the wheel amidships, laid myself down on the cabin floor just as I was, and let you go on with your sleep. And now let us have some grub, for I am most terribly sharp-set, and that lobscouse smells as sweet as a posy. We may take our ease a bit now, Mr. Erle. This is a calm as will last, this is."

"How long will it last, do you think?"

"The Lord only knows! May be a fortnight, may be three weeks. I have heard of calms in these latitudes—we must be somewhere about the doldrums—I've heard of 'em lasting six and seven weeks."

"A pleasant prospect! Why, we shall be nearly frizzled! I would rather have a storm or two."

"That's a sentiment as I should say amen to, if we had a rather more powerful crew, Mr. Erle; but with a ship's company of two, officers and passengers included, I would not pray for a gale, though I might whistle for a wind. With our small spread of canvas a light breeze would not do us much good, and it would not be safe to spread more, even if we could. But I'm in no hurry, Mr. Erle—I'm in no hurry. We've plenty of grub and water aboard, and I'm quite content to abide in these latitudes awhile longer; for it is hereabouts—or, if not hereabouts, a bit further south—that I expect to light on the Santa Anna."

"You old idiot!" I was going to say; but not wanting to hurt the foolish fellow's feelings or fall out with him,

I merely asked why on earth he expected to find the treasure-ship in that particular spot, especially as we did not know within a thousand miles where we were.

"We are in the doldrums," he answered, doggedly; "there can be no doubt about that; and I have always said as if the Santa Anna was not cast away—and I don't think she was cast away—I have always said she was somewhere in the doldrums; and I am sure I am right."

This was conclusive, and I could only say that I hoped we should sight the Santa Anna soon, and find her treasure aboard.

"Oh, we shall find the treasure, sure enough! What would be the use of sighting her if we didn't?"

CHAPTER XII.

BEFOGGED.

As may be supposed, life on the becalmed vessel was not particularly amusing. We had not much to talk about, and out of his own line old Tom was as ignorant as an infant. There were, fortunately, plenty of books on board—at least a hundred of them being fiction—and I spent much of my time in reading, and studying, as well as I could with the means at my disposal, the theory of navigation. Then I wrote up the log-book, or rather, made an entry in it every day, for there was very little to set down. Had I not done so I should have lost count of time, so like was one day to another. Now and then I went into the engine room, and by getting up steam, starting and stopping the engine, I familiarized myself with its working. After awhile, I became a fairly expert engineer, and had our coal bunkers not been so nearly empty, I should have shipped the screw and steamed in the direction whither I thought lay the nearest land.

Bolsover pottered about the ship, mended sails, spliced ropes, washed the decks, smoked, and slept; yet he got very weary, and one day proposed that, by way of diversion, we should make war on the rats. I asked how he would do it, seeing that we had neither cats, traps, dogs, nor ferrets.

"I will make the beggars drown themselves," he said.

And then he disclosed his plan. Rats, he explained,

cannot live without water, and this was the reason why there were so many of them about the water-tanks, where they slaked their thirst by licking up the drippings and droppings. But as there was so much less water drawn than formerly, there were fewer drippings, and the rats being for that reason extremely dry, water would make a splendid bait. All that was necessary would be to take buckets, put a few inches of water at the bottom—mixed with molasses to prevent them from jumping out—fix long strips of wood on the sides, so balanced that when the rats ran along them to get at the water they would fall into the buckets.

"Very well," I said; "try it. But in my opinion the less you have to do with the rats the better. If they have not got the fever—I wish they had—they can give it."

"Oh, I have no fear. I shall not take the fever. I never thought I should. Besides, that storm must have blown it all out of the ship."

So Tom arranged his buckets, put them down into the hold near the water-tanks, and awaited the result with great expectations.

An hour later he came up in great glee, bringing one of his buckets.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "And there's more in the others."

In the bottom of the bucket was a writhing mass of rats. The water had not been deep enough to drown all of them, and the survivors, entangled in the molasses, were fighting desperately over the bodies of their comrades.

"Poor wretches!" I said. "Put them out of their misery, Tom!"

"Poor wretches! Put them out of their misery! I would rather put them into a bit more. Isn't it them as did all the mishief? But here goes! I'll chuck them into the water, and let the sharks catch 'em—if they can. They'll be well met."

And with that Tom went to the taffrail and turned the bucket upside down, whereupon all the rats, dead and alive—all save one, a fierce-looking, gray-whiskered veteran, which contrived to cling to the side—fell pell-mell into the sea.

"Get out, you big devil!" said the boatswain, seizing it by the tail.

But instead of getting out, the rat twisted round and fixed its long, sharp teeth into its captor's thumb. Tom dropped the bucket like a hot potato, and catching the creature by the neck, choked it off and sent it spinning.

"By ——, it hurts!" he exclaimed, popping the wounded thumb into his mouth.

"You had better go and bathe it with hot water," I said. "Rat-bite are nasty things sometimes."

"I don't think it's worth while. I'll put a bit of pitch on it. It's the best plaster I know. I never thought a rat could bite so keen. That gray-whiskered beggar's teeth were like pins and needles."

This incident made the boatswain more inveterate against the rats than ever. He converted all the buckets in the ship into traps, and by sunset he had caught several dozens. He took care, however, before throwing them overboard, to see that they were properly drowned, and even then he handled the bucket in such a way as to prevent any possibility of a second bite.

But the rats, though they perished, had their revenge.

The next morning Bolsover was very ill. The thumb was inflamed and exceedingly painful, and he had all the appearance of sickening for yellow fever. I was seriously alarmed, for, despite his craze about the Santa Anna, old Tom was a thorough seaman and a very good fellow. You cannot be thrown much with a man (at any rate, I cannot) without getting to like him, unless he is absolutely repulsive, and I had got to like the boatswain. Besides, what should become of me if I should be left alone on board a big ship in mid-ocean, utterly ignorant of my whereabouts, only just able to steer, and hardly knowing one sail from another?"

If it were possible to keep old Tom alive, I meant to do it, although, judging by my recent experience, the odds against his recovery were hundreds to one. On the other hand, the very fact that he had remained so long invulnerable showed that he possessed great resisting power, and rendered it probable that he would make a tougher fight for his life than the others had done.

The first thing was to get my patient to keep his bed, which for a time he obstinately refused to do. To con-

fess that he was ill would not only have touched his pride and made his boastings look rather ridiculous, but would have gone far to falsify his predictions. So he pretended that his illness was a mere passing indisposition—"a bit of a headache"—made light of his swollen thumb, and insisted on getting up and helping to prepare breakfast.

But the strongest will cannot long bear up under severe local pain and the all-pervading agonies of fever, and it was not long before Bolsover confessed himself beaten, and took to his bed.

"I never thought I should be ill," he murmured, "but it won't be much. I shall be well in a day or two, I know I shall. You were right, Mr. Erle. I shouldn't have meddled with them rats, hang 'em! I don't care how soon we get out of this ship. There's a curse on her; that's what it is. There's a curse on her."

Tom must have been very bad to own himself in the wrong. It was an evil sign, and made me almost despair of his recovery.

I had lately read a second time, in some instances a third time, the medical books in the captain's cabin, and the knowledge thus acquired, and my own observation, had given me certain ideas as to the treatment of yellow fever, which I now proceeded to put into practice. Medicine having produced no effect in previous cases, I determined to try something else.

One of the most characteristic symptoms of the malady is intense heat, the patient's temperature being often as high as one hundred and seven degrees. I presumed, though I did not know for certain, that this was owing to an arrest of perspiration. The main point, therefore, was to make my patient sweat; so I rolled him in a wet sheet, then put a pile of blankets on the top of him, and make him drink about a gallon of hot water. I kept him in the pack for hours, and when I unpacked him, washed him all over with salt water. This operation I repeated several times in succession, and always when the fever got worse and his skin became hot and dry. I do not presume to say that I cured Bolsover, for the illness ran its course; but, at any rate, he recovered, and that is what none of the others did. The fever may, however, have been of a milder type than theirs, and it is of course quite

possible that he would have got better in any case, and did actually get better, not because of, but in spite of, my treatment. But my patient thought otherwise. He quite believed I had cured him, said that he owed me his life, and, in the fullness of his heart, protested that, whether I helped him to find the Santa Anna or not, he should give me half her cargo of gold and silver.

"Thank you, Tom," I said, laughing. "I'll take it, with all my heart; and it will be the biggest fee ever paid to a quack doctor since the world began, and that is saying a great deal."

"There is nothing to laugh at," answered the boatswain, who could never bear being chaffed about his craze. "There is nothing to laugh at, and I'll make a man of you yet, Mr. Erle, never fear! You will be the richest man in Liverpool one of these days."

But Tom did not get better either very soon or very easily. He lay in his hammock three weeks, and rose from it a yellow-skinned, lantern-jawed ghost, hardly able to put one leg before the other.

"I shall not be of much use when the change comes," he said, as I supported him to a Southampton chair, under an awning we had rigged up a short time before he fell ill.

"What change?"

"Change of weather, to be sure. And it is bound to come soon. How long have we been here?"

"We have been becalmed five weeks; but as to how long we have been here I would not venture to offer an opinion. I am not sure whether we are here!"

"You are getting beyond me now, Mr. Erle. Not sure whether we are here? Where else should we be?"

"I mean that we are moving. At any rate, I think so. I happened this morning to throw a cork overboard at the stern, and now it is at the bows."

"There must be a current, then."

"It looks so; and if the cork moves, so must the ship, though not so fast."

"You may soon find out whether she moves. Make a trial with the log."

"A happpy thought! It never occurred to me. I will do it at once."

And I did. The Diana was progressing through the water at the rate of a knot an hour.

"If we have been going at this speed all along for the last five weeks," I said, making a rapid mental calculation, "we have done eight hundred and forty miles."

"I don't think we have been going at this speed all along. When I fell ill it was as dead a calm as it could be, and as hot as blazes. And now it is cooler—I am sure it is cooler. Don't you think so?"

"I know it is. I look at the thermometer every day, and the average temperature is from seven to ten degrees lower than it was a fortnight since."

"If we have been doing a knot an hour these last three weeks, how much would that make?"

"Five hundred and four miles."

"Which means that much further south. Well, I shouldn't wonder. Have you looked at the chart lately?"

"I have pored over it till my head aches; and the more I look the more puzzled I become. I never in my life felt so ignorant and helpless. How I wish I had got poor Captain Peyton to give me a few lessons in navigation."

"I wish you had, Mr. Earle. It almost seems as we shall have to keep on as we are till something turns up, doesn't it?"

"Like a couple of Micawbers."

"Eh?"

"I mean it vexes me to be so utterly helpless, and I weary of having nothing to do."

"Don't worrit yourself, sir. We shall get somewhere sometime, if you will only be quiet; and when the weather changes you will have quite enough to do. And there is a feel in the air and a look about the sun as tells me that the change won't be long in coming. That signal with our number seems to be stirring a bit, doesn't it?"

"Yes; I think it is fluttering just a little."

"There must be a light breeze aloft, then; and if we could only set our topsails, and main and mizzen topgallant sails, we might get steering way on her, and make, maybe, two or three knots an hour."

"Two or three knots! I wish we could make twenty knots and get somewhere," I exclaimed, passionately.

"Storm, tempest, shipwreck, anything would be better than this intolerable calm."

"Hush! hush! Mr. Erle, don't you be a-tempting of Providence; we shall have a wind before long, you'll see. We don't want no storm, or tempests, or shipwrecks. Just a fair wind, and no more."

Weather-wise as old Tom undoubtedly was, his forecast —influenced probably by his wishes—remained a dead letter for a whole week. But as he repeated it every day, he proved himself a true prophet in the end. Contrary to my expectations—for I had read and heard that tropical calms are almost invariably succeeded by terrible storms—the change came gradually. First of all a breath of air, just sufficient to tauten the jibs and fill the foresail, without having any sensible effect on the progress of the ship; then a light wind, which gave us steering way, followed at a short interval by a spanking breeze that sent us along at the rate of four or five knots an hour, and made us wild to spread more canvas.

We carried this breeze with us several days, and with a lower temperature, bright sunshine, and a grand sea, we felt better and more hopeful than we had felt for a long time. Our voyage, we thought, must be coming to an end. We could surely not go much further without either sighting a sail or making land. But when our hopes were at the highest, the fine weather suddenly collapsed. Clouds gathered, the sun disappeared, and a fine rain fell, so thick and misty that we could not see more than a cable's length ahead. This went on for days; the wind changed, too, and not being able to tack, we were obliged to change with it, and almost reverse our course.

"This is worse than the calm," grumbled old Tom, "and if it goes on we shall either be ramming the ship ashore, or getting run down by a steamer."

It not only went on, but grew worse. The rain melted into a fog so dense that after sundown we were shrouded in a darkness so impenetrable that we could not see a hand's breadth before us, and had absolutely to grope our way about the ship. It was like solitary confinement in a black hole, with an extreme probability of sudden death. Our spirits sunk to zero, and my courage almost gave out. Even old Tom, confident as he had hitherto been, began to despair. To run aground or be

dashed against some iron-bound shore in that pitchy darkness would be death in its most frightful shape. Yet the certainty of death was easier to bear than the suspense we were compelled to endure, and the consciousness that every moment might be our last. Bolsover, being still weak, could give me little help, and except when I took an hour's rest, once or twice in the twenty-four, I was always at the helm. But every man's strength has its limits, and after awhile I became so used up that I could stand it no longer.

"We can only die once," I said to Bolsover; "and whether we live or die, I must sleep."

So I lashed the wheel amidships and turned in.

When I awoke there was a glimmering light, but whether of gloaming or dawn I could not determine, for I had lost all count of time, knew not the day of the week, and had forgotten to wind up both my own watch and the late captain's chronometer.

I went on deck, and found the helm still lashed amidships; but Bolsover was nowhere to be seen, and I looked into his bunk, and armed with a lantern, visited all his accustomed haunts without result.

"God bless me!" I thought. "He surely cannot have fallen overboard! That would be too awful!"

I returned to the poop, seriously alarmed, and began to unlash the helm (not seeing what more I could do until there was more light), when I heard a hail from the mast-head.

"Is that you, Tom?" I shouted. Rather a superfluous question, perhaps, for it could not well be anybody else. Yet it seemed hardly possible for a sick man to climb in the dark to the mast-head of a ship that was rolling like a log.

"Ay, ay, sir; it's me. I'll be down directly," was the answer.

Ten minutes later (by which time it was decidedly lighter) he came sliding down the shrouds.

"What were you thinking of, to go up to the mast-head in your present weak state?" I said, reproachfully. "Suppose you had fallen overboard?"

"And if I had! You know what you said before you turned in about two days since?"

"Two days since?"

"Nearly; though there's so little difference between day and night that I cannot be quite sure. You said a man can only die once. All the same, I don't think there's much risk in going to the mast-head—I am stronger than I was when you went asleep—and fogs is queer sorts of things; it often happens as they lies just on the top of the water, and all above is clear and bright—leastways, so I've heard say. So I thought as I would just go up and find out, if I could, whether this here fog is of that there nature."

"Is it?"

"Partly. Anyhow, it is a good deal clearer up there than down here, and a score yards or so higher up I dare say it is broad daylight. All the same, I saw the sun rise; and, what's more, I made out something as looks very like land."

"Land! Land at last! Thank God!" I gasped, almost speechless with surprise and joy. "But are you sure you are not mistaken? Where away?"

"On the port bow. No, I don't think I am mistaken. It looks like a big mountain, fifteen or twenty miles off, may be. Give me a glass, and I'll go up again and have another squint."

"I'll go with you, Tom. Wait half a minute."

As I spoke I whipped into the captain's cabin and fetched two binoculars. I slung one round my neck and handed the other to the boatswain.

"Don't you think as you had better take the helm, sir, and keep her up to the wind? She rolls so much as it will hardly be possible to make anything out. Then, when I come down, which it won't be many minutes, I can take the helm and you can go up."

There was so much sense in this suggestion that I was fain to comply with it, notwithstanding my eagerness "to take a squint" on my own account—and it was well I did. As I went to the wheel, the boatswain began to climb up the shrouds, slowly and painfully, being still rather short-winded and weak-kneed.

I had just steadied the ship, and he had got as far as the upper main-topsail yard, when there came out of the fog a hail so startling and unexpected that it almost made me jump out of my skin.

"Starboard! Hard a starboard! For God's sake starboard your helm!"

As I whirled round the wheel the fog rolled back and revealed a scene the like of which I had never before beheld, or even imagined, and old Tom came down on the deck with a run.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAINTED OR PIEBALD?

RIGHT before us rose sheer out of the water a tall, white rock, at least fifty feet high. Another moment and we would have crashed against it, "stem on." We were saved only by Tom's sharpness of vision, by the promptitude with which I obeyed his order, and the sudden lifting of the fog.

But are we saved? There are rocks to the right of us, rocks to the left of us, some white, others red, yet all of great height, with splintered, fantastic pinnacles and broken battlements like the keeps of so many ruined castles; some as naked as an Alpine peak above the snow-line, others mantled with a luxuriant growth of greenery and pendant wild flowers, while the waves leap up their sides and troops of sea-birds wheel round their summits. A veritable labyrinth of rocks; and as I look up after the first shock of surprise, I see inscribed on one of them, in old-fashioned and bold yet worn characters, these startling words:

"Here the Santa Anna ——"
"1744."

There seems to be another word, but being covered with a spray of ivy, I cannot make it out. Whether Bolsover sees the inscription I do not know. He is at the bows, conning the ship, and I am steering; the passage between the line of rocks being so narrow, and the current or tide so strong, that it requires most strenuous attention to avoid striking. More than once the yards scrape the brow of some beetling cliff, and only by Heaven's help and old Tom's skillful pilotage do we escape utter destruction.

At length the stress is over, and with an indescribable sense of thankfulness and relief we sail into open water. We can breathe freely. Danger and the dark sea are be-

hind, hope and a harbor of refuge before us. We are in a wide, crescent-shape bay, fringed with a shore of white sand, from which rises, in gentle slopes, a glorious mountain, on whose summit waves a cloud-banner, which at first sight I mistake for the smoke of a volcano.

Save for the white limestone crags with which it is crowned, the mountain is clad with verdure from top to bottom. Field alternates with forest; I can distinguish roads, too, and here and there is a quaint house of wood, not unlike the chalets that lend so great a charm to the valleys of Switzerland and the Tyrol.

All this, of course, through a binocular. We are still too far off to see much with the naked eye.

"Heaven only knows where we are," I said to Tom, who by this time had come aft. "But it seems a civilized sort of place. No danger of our being killed and eaten, I think."

"Not a bit. Cannibals don't build houses or make roads like them there. I wonder whether it's an island or a continent? Anyhow, it is well protected. That line of reefs stretches from one point of the bay to the other. It is a miracle how we got through. If the fog had not lifted just when it did—and it did not lift much—we should have gone to everlasting smash. We came out of it; that was it. Look there!"

It was true. Beyond the barrier rocks the mist still rested on the sea, looking in the distance like a chain of billowy mountains.

"The tide—or maybe it's a current—is running fast," said the boatswain, a few minutes later. "I wonder whether we are in soundings? I will heave the lead, and if we are, we must make ready to let go."

He had evidently not seen the inscription on the white rock; and it was quite as well He would have been able to think of nothing else.

"By all means," I answered. "It would never do to run aground, and there is not much chance of getting a pilot, I fear."

Whereupon Tom took the lead and went into the chains. When he came back he reported that the depth was nine fathoms, the bottom sandy, and the water rapidly shoaling. He thought that, to be on the safe side, we should

let go at once, though we were still three or four miles from the nearest part of the coast.

To this I of course agreed, for in matters of seamanship I always deferred to Bolsover's opinion; and five minutes afterward the Diana was riding at anchor, her stern toward the land, her stem toward the rocks.

"How about going ashore?" I asked. "Can we lower a boat?"

"I think so; and if it comes to that, we must. But wait a bit; there's no hurry. May be some on 'em—natives or what not—will be coming off to us."

"All right. I'll run below, put on a clean shirt, and make myself presentable."

"As you like, sir. But as for me, I shall take no such trouble. I shall do well enough as I am. I don't suppose the people of this country are of much account—niggers or greasers, or summat o' that sort. They don't wear no clothes—not they; and they are sure to speak some confounded outlandish lingo that nobody understands but themselves."

Though we had survived the dangers of a most perilous voyage, escaped death as by a miracle, and brought the Diana to a safe anchorage, poor old Tom was evidently in an unhappy frame of mind. It was easy to guess the reason. We had seen nothing of the treasure-ship, nor any sign of her, and for several reasons I did not think the time had yet come to make mention of the writing on the rock.

When I returned to the deck, feeling all the better for a good wash and fresh rig-out, Tom was peering hard through his glass.

"There's a boat putting off," he said; "a biggish boat with a lateen sail, and a crew of six or eight men—custom-house chaps, of course; for you may be cock-sure of one thing: if a country hasn't as much trade as would keep a colony of fleas, it is sure to have custom-houses—for, you see, if custom-houses isn't trade, they looks like it."

I took a glass and had a look on my own account. The boat was under way, and evidently making for the Diana; but owing to the lightness of the breeze and the flowing tide, the lateen sail did not seem to be of much use, and the crew were taking to their oars, which they

appeared to handle with great dexterity. But I gave less heed to the boat and her management than to the people she carried. I burned with curiosity to know where we were and what kind of people we had fallen among; and I thought that I might possibly gather some idea of their characters, perhaps even of their nationality, from the personal appearance of the boat's occupants.

At any rate, they were clothed; so far, so good. Houses, roads, boats, garments—all these were unmistakable signs of civilization.

"Blacks, by——!" sung out Tom, who, albeit older than I, had not dimmed his sight by bending over a desk.

"Nonsense! They are dark, perhaps; but certainly not black; and those two men in the stern are certainly white."

"It looks so; but we cannot surely have got to the West Indies, nor yet to the Brazils. And you are wrong; they are not white, and the others are not black."

"What on earth are they, then?"

"They are—— By the Lord Harry! they are spotted—every man-jack of 'em. Those chaps in the stern are white and red; and them as is rowing, red and black."

And Tom dropped his glass and gave me a look so comically expressive of fear, bewilderment, and surprise, that I laughed outright.

"What can they be?" I asked; for though my vision was less keen than his, I could see that the people in the boat had very queer complexions.

"Cannibals—savages in their war-paint. Nothing else. And they'll eat us, too, if they get a chance. But I'm not going to be eaten if I can help it, Mr. Erle. We'll sell our lives dearly—we will that. There's arms in the captain's cabin. Let us load them at once. And those old carronades" (two brass pieces we had for firing signals), "we'll load them, too. I know where the cartridges are."

"But we have no ball."

"Never mind; we'll charge them with old nails and bits of iron."

"Very well. Do so, then. We may as well be prepared. But, for my part, I cannot say that I have any great fear of these painted people. At any rate, it is better to speak them fair before we show fight."

"Speak 'em fair! What's the use of speaking fair—or foul either—for that matter—to a lot of savage devils as can't understand a word you say? As soon as they get within shooting distance they'll let fly a harrow at your head—unless you are beforehand with 'em. I've been among such-like in the Pacific, and I know. However, you stop here and watch 'em, Mr. Erle, and I'll get the arms ready."

The boat came on apace, and the nearer she drew, the more puzzled I became. The rowers being naked to the waist, I naturally saw a good deal of them; but whether they were red men dabbled with black, or black fellows dabbled with red, I was unable to determine, and as yet I could see little or nothing of their faces. Of the two men in the stern, however, I had a very fair view. Their faces were queer, very queer. The elder of them seemed to have a reddish eye and a white one; and the left cheek of the other differed in color from the right. As the elder turned his head, moreover, I perceived that he sported a pigtail. Their coats, of some dark material, were large and roomy, and adorned with brass or gold buttons; their nether garments were white; and, to crown all, they wore cocked hats, such as I had seen nowhere but in old-fashioned pictures and on the stage.

The pigtail suggested China, but it was impossible that we could have drifted as far as the Flowery Land—and the Celestials don't wear white breeches and cocked hats. Then it struck me that these were wild people, after all, who had obtained their strange costumes from the plunder of a ship, or by way of trade; for I knew that savages like nothing so well as to array themselves in grotesque finery. But, no! Those roads and houses! And the rowers boasted no finery whatever; and, somehow, notwithstanding their painted faces, the two men in the stern had not the air of savages.

I gave it up, and awaited the *denouement* with eager curiosity.

CHAPTER XIV.

"ENGLISH, BY JINGO!"

In the meantime Bolsover had brought a couple of rifles and a supply of cartridges, and was now charging the carronades.

"What is the use of that?" I said. "They are mounted on wooden carriages; you cannot depress them."

"Well, then, they'll frighten the beggars, and may be make 'em sheer off. They kick up a devil of a row, these carronades. By ——! they are not above a thousand yards away. I think I could pick the first fellow off—him as is rowing stroke"—taking up a rifle.

"Don't be a fool, Tom," I said, quietly. "It would be the height of folly to make any sort of hostile demonstration—to show fight, I mean—until and unless we are quite sure that these men mean mischief. For Heaven's sake, let us make friends of them if we can. If we make enemies of them we are done for. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, more ashore, and we might as well try to fly as to get the ship out of the bay."

"As you like, sir. I look on you as my superior officer, and Tom Bolsover always obeys orders. But keep your weather eye open, for as sure as any of them painted devils puts their feet on deck we are dead men."

I made no answer. All my attention was concentrated on the boat. When she came within hailing distance the man with the pigtail (who had been steering) gave the tiller to his companion and stood up. He was tall, and wore a sword—so far as I could see, the only weapon in the boat.

"Good!" I thought. "There intentions *must* be peaceful."

The man with the pigtail put his hand to his mouth.

"What ship is that?" he asked, in a loud, clear voice, and with faultless pronunciation.

"English, by Jingo!" muttered Bolsover. "Boy and man, I've been at sea two-and-thirty year, and so help me——"

"The Diana, bound from Liverpool to Montevideo," I answered. "What country is this?"

"We call it the Fair Island."

"And the inhabitants?"

"We call ourselves English."

By this time the boat is under the counter.

"Will you come on board?" I say. "But wait a minute, and we will lower you a ladder."

"Thank you, we don't need a ladder," says the younger man; and clutching a rope which hangs over the ship's side, he hauls himself up, and vaults over the bulwark with the agility of a professional acrobat. His companion follows suit, although a little more leisurely, doubtless owing to his greater age and somewhat heavier build.

Then they draw themselves up to their full height, doff their cocked hats with a graceful sweep, and make a low bow.

I return the salute in my best style, but the contrast between the manner of their coming on board, and their dignified bearing, their cocked hats, pigtails, white breeches, and mottled faces, is so exceedingly droll that I can hardly keep my countenance, while old Tom, almost exploding with suppressed laughter, bolts incontinently down the fore-hatchway, where he can give free vent to his mirth without any breach of politeness.

What especially tickled him (it certainly tickled me) is probably the fact that our affable and agile guests are not merely painted; they are actually piebald. Their variegated hue is as much a part of themselves as their pigtails and their noses.

Judging by the way they stare at me (after recovering their perpendicular), I excite their curiosity as much as they excite mine—which is, pehaps, quite as well, for their inspection gives me time to compose my countenance and recover my presence of mind.

"Your most obedient servant," says the elder of my visitors, bowing again.

"Yours truly," I answer, bowing in return.

Then another pause.

"Welcome on board the Diana, gentlemen," I add, for they look as if they expect me to say something more. "It affords me infinite pleasure to make your acquaintance."

(Not, perhaps, the very best thing to say in the circumstances, but the best I can think of on the spur of the moment.)

"Your pleasure, sir, cannot be greater than ours," returns the senior piebald. "Never before has anybody from the old home favored the Fair Island with a visit. Our people, sir, will give you a warm welcome. Might I make so bold as to inquire to whom I have the honor of speaking?"

"My name is Sidney Erle."

"Mine is Waterlow Field. Allow me to introduce to you my friend and kinsman, Mr. Amyas Fane."

I bow again; so does Mr. Fane.

"I presume you are the captain?" asks Mr. Field.

"No; I am only a passenger."

"Ah, the captain is below, I suppose?"

"Very much so. He is dead, and his body lies at the bottom of the sea."

"Poor fellow! And the mate?"

"He also is dead. In fact, the boatswain and myself are the sole survivors of the Diana's passengers and crew; all the rest are dead."

"God bless me! What did they die of?"

"Yellow fever."

"And you and the boatswain only are left! How terrible! That was the boatswain who went to the fore part of the ship just now, I suppose?"

"Yes. Old Tom; and a right good fellow he is."

"I am glad to hear it. He seems also to be a merry fellow."

"Merry! Not particularly. Rather the reverse, in fact. Why do you think he is merry?"

"Because I hear him laughing."

"Hear him laughing! Impossible! Why, he is down in the fo'castle, and we are on the poop."

"Oh, yes; I hear him quite distinctly. Do not you, Amyas?"

"Distinctly. He is talking to himself, too. What is it he says?"—listening attentively. "'By the Lord Harry! Boy and man, I've been at sea two-and-thirty year!' Now he laughs again; what at, I wonder?"

There was no humbug about it. They really could hear a man talking in the forecastle, or perhaps they were clairvoyants!

"Your sense of hearing is much more acute than mine; I cannot hear a word," I said. And then, fearing that

cur visitors might hear something to their disadvantage, I blew a call on my whistle, as I generally did when I wanted Tom and he was out of ear-shot.

"You informed us just now that the Diana was bound from Liverpool to Montevideo. How, then, may I ask, did you find your way thither?" asked Mr. Field.

"We did not find our way at all. The ship found it for us. We came by chance."

"And you actually made the passage of the Painted Rocks in safety! That was indeed an extraordinary chance. No sea-going ship ever did the like. But you shall tell us your story on another occasion. We are come, my dear sir, to ask you to accompany us to Fairhaven, the modest capital of the Fair Island, there to make the acquaintance of our people and be presented to our queen."

"You do me too much honor, gentlemen; I shall only be too delighted. You will go with me, of course, Tom?" (He had just come aft.)

"Where you goes, I go, Mr. Erle. I am ready. But, I say"—*sotto voce*—"did you ever? Boy and man, I've been at sea two-and-thirty year——"

This would not do at all. People who could hear a laugh as far off as the forecastle could hear a whisper six feet away; so, in order to avoid any cause of offense, I turned from Bolsover, and, asking our piebald friends if they smoked, offered each of them a cigar, which, after saying they were extremely "obleeged" to me, they accepted.

"Have you a light, Tom?" I asked. "I am afraid I left my box below."

"Of course I have," answered the boatswain. And taking a match from his waistcoat pocket, he lifted up his leg and struck it on his trousers.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" exclaimed Mr. Field, turning pale and starting backward, while his companion made a still more rapid retreat, clapping his hand on the bulwark as if he were preparing to jump into the sea. "Magic! Mr. Bolsover must be a wizard. Does he always carry fire in—in—that particular part of his person?"

"Oh, dear, no!" I answered, laughing. "He only struck a match. A little splinter of wood, you see. The

substance at the end is a mixture of phosphorous and some other chemical substances, which ignites when slightly rubbed. Do it again, Tom."

Tom did it again.

"Marvelous!" exclaimed the senior, examining a match. "A recent invention, I presume. The progress of enlightenment! Ah! ah! Would you kindly let me try?"

I said yes, of course, and sent Tom for more matches, as well as vestas and fusees, and showed how they were struck on the boxes; but both Mr. Field and his friend preferred the boatswain's method, and proceeded to practice it forthwith. They had, however, a slight difficulty to contend with in the extreme smoothness of their nether garments, which rendered necessary in the act of striking a rapid movement of the right hand. At the outset they failed somewhat ignominiously. The elder gentleman raised his leg rather too high, and, striking at the same time, lost his balance, and falling against Mr. Fane (who had also his leg in the air), both rolled on the deck together, rather to the discomfiture of the senior; but the younger man laughed heartily, and they were up again before you could have said "Jack Robinson," springing to their feet without using their hands.

After this I gave each of them a box, which they accepted with unaffected delight. Then I produced a revolver, and fired several shots in rapid succession; but, though the weapon both surprised and delighted them, and they remarked how useful it would be in warfare, they were evidently less impressed with it than they had been by the striking of the match on old Tom's trousers.

"Have you any other arms on board?" asked Field—as I thought, rather anxiously.

"Not many rifles and revolvers—perhaps a dozen of each. They belonged to the captain and passengers. But I think there are a few cases of muskets in the hold.

"And ammunition?"

"Well, we have a very miscellaneous cargo, and I believe I heard the captain say there was gunpowder in it. I don't know how much; but I can easily find out by looking at the manifest."

With that I went into the cabin, and returned with the document in question.

"Yes," I said, looking at it. "There are ten barrels in the magazine.

"We will buy it from you," he returned, eagerly. "Indeed, I think we should be disposed to buy from you the whole cargo—possibly the ship itself."

"They are not mine to sell," I answered, rather taken aback by this suggestion. "All the same, the ship is here without any possibility, so far as I can see, of getting away. I have a right to do the best I can for the owners and underwriters, and you may have anything the ship contains, or all she contains."

This was making a virtue of necessity; for if the piebald people thought fit to appropriate every article on board, it was evident that old Tom and I could do nothing to hinder them.

"Whatever we take we shall give you full value for, either in gold or pearls," said Mr. Field.

This was satisfactory, so far as it went; and it was interesting to know that the piebalds possessed gold and pearls; but how I could turn them to account in that outlandish place, or how I should get back to Liverpool, did not seem quite clear. Nevertheless, I thanked Mr. Field warmly for his obliging assurance, and added that I should leave the matter entirely in his hands (again making a virtue of necessity).

"It is not in my hands," he observed, gravely; "I speak only as an individual member of the council; yet I have no doubt that my colleagues and Queen Mab will gladly profit by the opportunity which you so kindly placed at their disposal. And now, my dear sir, if it be quite agreeable to you, we will get into the boat and shape our course for Fairhaven."

Desiring nothing better, I answered promptly in the affirmative. My appetite was whetted with what I had seen and heard, and I was eager to know more of the queer race to whose remote home I had drifted.

CHAPTER XV.

FAIR ISLAND.

Tom and I went down the side by a rope ladder, taking with us, at Mr. Field's request, a rifle and a revolver;

Fane and he went down as they had come up. The strength and activity displayed by the younger man were really marvelous. Without apparent effort, he swung himself over the bulwark by one hand, seized a rope with the other, and dropped into the boat as lightly as a monkey. He was about the finest, perhaps the very finest, specimen of the genus *homo* I had yet seen. Though I stand six feet in my stockings, he overtopped me by three inches; his chest development was quite phenomenal, and his long arms were as muscular as a horse's leg. His features, too, were good, and but for the queerness of his complexion I should have considered him handsome; afterward, when piebald skins ceased to be a novelty, I did consider him handsome. He had a broad, though rather low forehead, short black hair, large dark eyes, the whites being singularly clear, an aquiline nose, small mouth, and square, resolute jaws. His head, albeit hardly large enough for his broad shoulders and lofty stature, was shapely, and "well set on;" he carried himself magnificently, and his movements were as lithe, as graceful, and as unconstrained as those of any of the great *felinæ*.

The contrast between him and the crew of the boat was both startling and painful. The six rowers were the most hideous creatures I had even seen, ever in a nightmare. Their predominating color was deep black, dabbed with red and yellow patches in a singularly arbitrary and irregular fashion. Thus, one man had a red nose in the middle of an otherwise jet-black face. Another had a red mouth; another, again—and I think he was the most horrible-looking of the lot—had red eyelids and a red upper lip, all the rest of his visor being of the deepest ebony. Add that the pupils of their eyes were indistinguishable from the iris, and the whites large and streaked with blood, their noses huge and flat, their mouths wide, with blubber, negro-like lips, their foreheads narrow and tattooed, and that they wore bone rings in pendulous ears, and you may form some idea of the appearance of these Calibans (the name, as I afterward heard, actually bestowed on them by the islanders). In stature they were rather short, yet less so than might seem, owing to the great width of their shoulders and the muscularity of their frames. Every man of them was a squat Hercules;

and their biceps, as they rowed, swelled out to the size of cocoa-nuts.

These beauties evidently occupied a very inferior position. I observed that Field and Fane never spoke to them except to give them orders, and always in a tone of harshness that jarred painfully on my feelings, for, ugly and degraded as the men seemed, they were at least human.

With six oars and the lateen sail (for the wind now served), we went swiftly through the water; but instead of making for the nearest part of the coast, as I expected he would, Fane (who took the helm) steered the boat up the middle of the bay, and in the direction of a headland some four or five miles north of the Diana. The coast was thickly wooded, and the character of the vegetation —the palms, magnolias, and vines, the height and verdure of the trees, and the brilliancy of the flowers— showed that the Fair Island possessed a mild and equable climate, that it was far enough from the pole to escape severe winters, yet near enough to the tropics to enjoy long summers and plenty of sunshine.

I fancied we were about thirty to forty degrees south of the equator; but this was pure conjecture, and neither Field nor Fane seemed disposed to give me much information on the subject.

"What was the Diana's position when you took your last observation?" asked Field, in reply to a question I put as to our whereabouts.

"That is weeks—months since," I said. "The last observation was taken by poor Bucklow. Neither Bolsover nor I understand navigation."

"So much the better—I mean, it is probably no great loss in the circumstances. You will, perhaps, learn more of the geography of the Fair Island later on. We shall see. However, I may tell you this much—you are south of the equator."

"Thank you," I said, laughing. "I guessed as much."

But I failed to guess why he was so reticent on the point. What objection he could have to telling me where we were, I was unable to conceive. He was equally reserved about everything that concerned the history of the island and its inhabitants. To my questions on the subject he returned evasive answers, and at last shut me up

by saying that if I stayed long enough I should doubtless get to know all about them, and that it was a very long story, which at present it was quite impossible for him to tell.

About the island and its productions he was, however, more communicative. It contaimed some four hundred thousand acres—that is to say, it was about four times the size of the Isle of Wight. The population might be twenty or thirty thousand, though, as it was a long time since there had been a count, he could not be quite sure. The soil was very fertile, as I could see; and thanks to the mountain (mountain *par excellence*, there being no other), which enabled the inhabitants to vary their climate at pleasure, they had a great variety both of cereals and of fruit. The valleys and plains near the sea produced maize, yams, cotton, sugar cane, oranges, grapevines, peaches, and pomegranates; higher up grew wheat, potatoes, apples, and cherries.

Mr. Field further informed me that, with the exception of a narrow gap on the western side, the Painted Rocks extended all round the island, and that the mist through which we had sailed was a permanent institution.

"We think it is caused by a meeting of currents, one hot and the other cold," he said. "Anyhow, it is always there, and the mist and the rocks safeguard our island home far more effectually than a line of forts."

"Yes," I said, "you may bombard a fort, but you would have to shoot a long time at that fog before you made any impression on it; and those rocks would defy all the ironclads in Europe. By the bye, what does that inscription, something about the Santa Anna and 1744, mean?"

"Ah! you saw that, did you? It is merely the name of a vessel that was wrecked there. Some day we will have a cruise among the Painted Rocks, and you will find other records of the same sort. Several vessels have left their bones thereabouts. As I told you, the Diana is the only ship that ever got safely through, for which you may thank your stars; and though, as I was saying, there is a gap on that side, pointing westward, a wide stretch of sand-banks, shoals, and hidden coral reefs render nav-

igation, except for very light craft, piloted by men who know the coast, almost impossible."

"So, one way and another, you are pretty secure from intrusion?"

"So much so, that you and Mr. Bolsover will be the first strangers our people of this generation have seen."

By this time we had rounded the headland. It divided the large bay from the smaller one, which seemed to run a long way inland, and terminate in a river or creek. Its sides were lofty and picturesque, with lateral openings into romantic little valleys; and here and there a silvery stream, overarched with trees, shot arrow-like into the sea.

"There! That is Fairhaven!" exclaimed Mr. Field, when we were about half-way up the inlet, at the same time pointing to a commanding eminence on the north-west side of the mountain.

Looking through my binocular, I could make out a number of buildings scattered over a wide expanse of ground, and rising one above the other, much after the fashion of a Swiss Alpine village.

"Mab is back, Field," said Fane, gazing in the same direction.

"The flag is flying, is it? Ah, your eyes are younger than mine, Amyas."

I glanced at them inquiringly.

"Look at the large house which stands a little way from the others, near a grove of acacia-trees, and surrounded by a garden," said Fane.

"Yes; I have found it."

"Well, the flag you see flying above the veranda signifies that Queen Mab is at home."

"But I don't see any flag," I said, straining my eyes, and altering the focus of my binocular.

"Is it possible that I can see better with the naked eye than you with your spy-glass? May I? Thank you."

"It would seem so," I said, handing him the binocular, and showing him how to adjust the focus.

After trifling with it a few minutes, he gave it back.

"It certainly brings things a little nearer," he said. "All the same, I can see quite as well without it as with it. I fear I should find a spy-glass rather a useless incumbrance."

This incident set me wondering whether my conductors' keenness of vision, acuteness of hearing, strength of limb, and monkey-like agility were peculiar to themselves, or common to all the inhabitants of the island.

After a while I squinted through my binocular again, albeit I felt that the act was a somewhat painful confession of physical inferiority.

Mr. Fane was quite right. I could now, being a mile or so nearer, plainly distinguish a flag flying from the roof of the house in which, as I presumed, dwelt the island queen.

But how we were to reach the place did not seem quite clear, for shortly afterward the creek began to trend in the opposite direction. When I asked Field, he smiled, and said:

"Wait a few minutes, and you will see."

The few minutes brought us to a point where the stream divided into two branches, one of which forked off to the right, the other to the left. We followed the latter, which, after running for a mile or more between high banks, widened into a beautiful lagoon, or, rather, fairy lakelet. In shape it was oval, and at its widest part about five miles across. Its shelving shores were laid out in orange groves and flower gardens; richly plumed birds skimmed its waters, as clear as crystal and as blue as the heavens; gayly painted boats rode lazily at anchor, while others, trimming their wing-like sails, floated leisurely toward a channel which seemed to wind round the base of the mountain.

It had been rightly called Fairhaven. Except in Italy and Switzerland, I had seen nothing with which it could be compared. It was as gracious as Como, as romantic as the Lake of the Four Cantons; and though the landscape may have lacked the grandeur of the Alps, the richness of the flora, the proximity of the ocean, and the rugged crest of the mountain, emerging from a mass of verdure and diademed with a silvery cloud, gave this part of the Fair Island a beauty all its own.

CHAPTER XVI.

QUEEN MAB.

We landed in a little cove, from which a steep zigzag path, winding among great cedars and towering palm-trees, led to the town—so steep, that being out of condition with our long life at sea, Tom and I found some difficulty in keeping up with our companions, who could hardly have walked faster if we had been competing for a prize. We two were continually lagging behind, and more than once Fane gave us a look which expressed both pity and contempt, as if he thought us very poor creatures indeed. This riled me exceedingly, and I did my utmost to overtake him; but he was in splendid fettle; the more I strove the faster he went, and when after a fifteen minutes' spurt we reached the town, I was completely blown and bathed with perspiration, while he was not even flushed, and breathed as quietly as an infant. I began to dislike Mr. Amyas Fane.

As for poor old Tom, we had left him half a mile behind, dead-beat, sitting on a stone, and mopping his face with an ancient bandana pocket-handkerchief.

The town—village, rather, though it was the capital of the island and the seat of royalty—consisted of two or three hundred wooden houses. Some of them were rude in the extreme, being little more than log huts; others were larger and more pretentious, built of boards, with verandas and external galleries, and brightly painted. All were thatched, and being more or less mantled with greenery and begirt with gardens, the general effect was gay and picturesque.

In the center of the village was a large square, on one side of which stood the church, distinguished by a wooden tower, and on the other a still larger building, known as Government House, used for meetings, public offices, and the like.

All the people we met were more or less piebald. Some bore a general resemblance to my companions, others were of the same type as the boatmen whom I have already described.

At last we reached the house where the flag was flying. It was the largest I had yet seen. Thatched, like all

the rest, it had several high-pitched gables, and a wide porch with overhanging eaves. An open gallery ran round the building at the level of the upper story. Beneath the gallery was a veranda, supported by wooden pillars and festooned with vines.

A narrow path, winding between dwarf palm-trees and rhododendrons in full bearing, led up to the porch.

Two or three young women, with mottled complexions, were sitting in the veranda. One was reading, another knitting, a third seemed to be spinning something with a distaff; but as I had never seen anybody spin with a distaff, I could not be quite sure. These young women were all tall, well formed, and extremely graceful in their movements, for which their somewhat airy and easy-fitting garments offered every facility, and their sandaled feet were innocent of hose.

After greeting them gravely and courteously (an example that Tom and I were careful to follow), Mr. Field inquired if "she" was in.

On receiving an answer in the affirmative from the maiden who seemed to be most in authority, he requested her to announce him and his companions, and asked whether it would please the queen to receive us. The maiden bowed compliance, entered the house by the porch, and in two minutes came back to say that her mistress had been waiting for us all the afternoon with the greatest impatience, and that we were to go in at once; whereupon our conductors, beckoning Tom and me to follow them, went in without further ceremony.

The porch opened into a wide vestibule, at the end of which was a door. We crossed the vestibule together, and on reaching the door Mr. Field gave a sharp knock with his knuckles.

"Come in!" answered a low and musical, yet, as I thought, a somewhat peremptory voice.

"After you," said Field to me, opening the door.

I obeyed him without hesitation, though not without trepidation, for my education in the etiquette of courts having been somewhat neglected, I had not the least idea what was the right thing to do in the circumstances—whether I should enter on bended knee, kiss the queen's hand, speak first, or wait until I was spoken to. I had, moreover, an idea (one does get strange ideas sometimes)

that her majesty was likely to be a crabbed old woman with a fat body and a sharp tongue. However, I went in—walked into the middle of the room (rather a large one) with as much composure as I could muster—and then stopped short in mute surprise.

At an open casement, which commanded a view of the mountain, the lake, and the sea, sat a young woman reading a book with an ancient binding much the worse for wear. At her feet crouched an animal which at first sight I took for a huge mastiff; but when the creature rose to its feet, showed a row of fierce-looking teeth, and wagged a tail about a yard long, I saw that it was a wild beast, and, if not a lion or a lioness, uncommonly like one.

"Don't be alarmed," said Queen Mab, pleasantly; "it is only my pet puma; he is not used to strangers. Down, Cato!"

Whereupon Cato resumed his recumbent position, greatly to my relief.

"Mr. Erle, a passenger by the Diana, the ship that anchored in the bay this morning," announced Mr. Field.

"Welcome to Fair Island!" said the queen, rising from her chair and offering me her hand.

I took the hand and kissed it—a proceeding which nobody appeared to expect, for Mr. Field made a gesture of surprise and Mr. Amyas Fane scowled. The queen, however, seemed in no way displeased. She smiled, bowed graciously, and then regarded me earnestly and curiously. I returned the look with interest; I could not help it. I should have done the same had she been ten royal personages rolled into one.

Never was woman better worth looking at than Queen Mab. She was within two inches of my own height, beautifully proportioned and faultlessly shaped. A tight-fitting dress of some dark glossy material set off her form to the best advantage. Round her waist was a pearl-studded girdle; she wore a necklace to match, and each of her arms was encircled with a curiously wrought bracelet of gold. Her face was, moreover, white, and her complexion pure. A mass of black curls rested like a coronet on a broad and noble brow, and her flashing, gypsy-like eyes, slightly aquiline features, firm mouth, and broad

chin, bespoke at once intelligence, high courage, and strength of will.

Yet, kind as Nature had been to the island queen, she evidently belonged to the same queer race as her people. Though her face was white (comparatively, for she was a decided brunette), the lower parts of her neck and throat were hued with bronze; so also were her arms and one of her feet; for, like the maidens in the veranda, she wore neither sleeves nor stockings.

But as I had already found out, there was a marked difference between the piebald of the women and the piebald of the men. As touching the latter, the copper-colored spots were, so to speak, stamped on the white ground, and clearly defined; but with the women it was otherwise; the two shades blended into each other; you could not say where the one ended and the other began, and the more obtrusive color was less prominent and glaring. It should be observed, too, that none of the adjectives I have used for the purpose describe this color exactly. I have called it "red" and "coppery;" it might with equal accuracy be defined as "cinnamon," as all three, in fact; for the piebalds vary as widely in the color of their epidermis as the so-called white races of Europe and North America. As for Queen Mab, though she certainly looked *bizarre*, I thought then, and I think still, that the peculiar tint of her neck rendered her all the more striking and picturesque. At any rate, it made an admirable setting for the brilliant pearl necklace which adorned her throat and the white and crimson orchids which she wore at her breast.

"Excuse me for looking at you so curiously," she said, after our mutual inspection had lasted a couple of minutes, "but you are the first really white man and the first Englishman I have seen."

"We are all English," put in Fane, abruptly—almost rudely, indeed.

"We are pleased to think so, and we are of English blood; but you cannot deny that it is rather mixed. There is a good deal of difference between you and Mr. Erle, for instance."

"You are right. He is not quite so tall, nor, perhaps, quite so strong. He is near-sighted, and hard of hear-

ing, and so short-winded that it was all he could do to walk up the hill from the lake."

I was deeply stung by this insolence, all the more so as it was impossible in the circumstances to resent it as it deserved.

"So would you be short-winded if you had been four months at sea, and gone through what I have gone through," I said, warmly. "But wait——"

"You forget where you are and to whom you are speaking, Amyas," interposed the queen, severely. "Remember that Mr. Erle is our guest; and as for shortness of sight—well, sharp eyes are quite compatible with a shallow mind."

Mr. Fane collapsed.

"I infer from what you say, Mr. Erle, that your voyage has been an eventful one—that you have undergone great hardships. I want you to tell me all about it, and how you discovered the Fair Island, and made the passage of the Painted Rocks. No ship ever did it before. When I saw you cast anchor in the bay this morning I could hardly believe my eyes."

"Willingly, your majesty. It is rather a sad story, but——" Here her majesty broke into a merry laugh, Mr. Field seemed amused, and Fane smiled sardonically.

"Why do you say 'majesty?'" asked Mab, when she had done laughing.

"Because in addressing a crowned head it is the right thing to say. At least, I have always supposed so, though I freely admit I never spoke to a crowned head before, and know nothing of the etiquette of courts."

"Crowned head is good," said Mad, laughing again; better than 'majesty,' I think. But you are mistaken. I am neither a crowned head nor a majesty."

"Then these gentlemen misinformed me," I said, feeling both foolish and vexed. "They always speak of you as queen—Queen Mab."

"So I am"—proudly—"in the sense that I am chief of the state, but that makes me neither a majesty nor a crowned head. There are neither crowns nor courtiers in Fair Island, and there is nothing I should more detest than to be addressed in terms of fulsome, and therefore insincere compliment. 'Majesty,' indeed! But more of

this another time. Your story, Mr. Erle! I want to hear your story. Begin, please. But I am forgetting; you must be hungry. It is a long way from your ship hither."

And with that she crooked her forefinger, put it between her lips, and gave a low, musical whistle.

The next moment the door opened, and one of the maidens whom we had seen on the veranda appeared at the threshold.

"Order a refection to be served for these gentlemen an hour hence," said this queer queen of a queer race. "Now, Mr. Erle, pray begin; and, if possible, make your tale last until the refection is ready."

I obeyed; and when I saw how much the account of my voyage interested my listeners—above all the queen, who never took her eyes off me, and I am sure missed not a word—I told it in full, from start to finish, and as I warmed to my work I think I told it effectively, keeping back nothing save the incident of the chaplain's manuscript, which, as I thought, belonged rather to Tom's story than mine.

Once or twice the two men made as if they would have interrupted me; but Queen Mab stopped them with an imperious gesture. Until I had finished she would not suffer a word to be spoken, and then I was simply overwhelmed with questions.

What did I mean by an auxiliary screw and getting up steam? How could a ship move when there was no wind? were among the first.

I tried to explain; but, as they were absolutely ignorant of the properties of steam, I had a difficulty in making my explanation clear. Mab, I could see, fully believed me; but when I spoke of railways, locomotives, steam-engines, and the rest, Field and Fane smiled incredulously. On this a bright thought struck me.

"Go with me on board the Diana," I said, "and I will ship the screw and start the engine. There is coal enough in the bunker for a run round the bay. When that is done we must fire up with wood."

"By all means," exclaimed Mab. "Yes, I will go on board, and then you can show me all these wonders. Only to think that ships can be made to move and car-

riages to run simply by boiling water! It seems almost——"

"Impossible!" put in Fane.

"No, not impossible; I am sure Mr. Erle tells the truth. Say, rather, incomprehensible, and most passing strange. We have no right to disbelieve things merely because they are new and startling. But pray tell me, Mr. Erle, whether there are any books on the Diana."

"Yes, a good many. Two or three hundred volumes, I should think."

"Two or three hundred volumes! Oh, how glad you make me!" she exclaimed, fairly clapping her hands with joy. "Books are better than steam-engines; and we have so few books, and those we have are almost in pieces. See this copy of 'Shakespeare!'"—holding up the volume she had been reading—"it will hardly hold together; my 'Plutarch's Lives' and 'Paradise Lost' are in the same evil case, and poor 'Robinson Crusoe' has almost ceased to exist. We have several works in manuscript, and I am having more copied; but paper is not plentiful in Fair Island. Think you there is any on the Diana?"

"Some, certainly; perhaps, a good deal. Our cargo is miscellaneous, and paper is largely exported from England."

"England! Ah! I shall want to know much about England, Mr. Erle. I shall tire you with my questions; I am sure I shall. But here is Marian, to say the refection is served; and after so much talking you cannot fail to be hungry."

As Mab spoke she rose from her chair. I rose also, and offered her my arm, which, after a momentary hesitation, she took. I guessed, from her manner and the looks of the two piebald gentleman, that I had done something unusual. But as it did not seem that Mab took the attention amiss, I could easily dispense with their approval.

The refection was set out in the next room on a table which, like everything else about the place, was evidently of home manufacture. The pottery was equally rude; the display of glass scanty, and of ancient fashion and shape. The forks were wooden-handled and two-pronged; the knives bore a strong resemblance to butchers' whittles; but, strange to say, the plates were of silver, and we

drank our Adam's wine—Queen Mab offered us nothing stronger—out of goblets of gold. The viands were abunddant and well cooked. We had soup, fish, and foul, yams and potatoes, savory pies and sweetmeats, with fruit in great variety and abundance; but neither beef, mutton, nor pork. Our hostess took the head of the table; I sat at her right hand, Field at her left, and old Tom sat opposite young Fane. The boatswain did not seem to be enjoying himself much. He was not used to ladies' society, poor fellow, and detested cold water. I am sure he would have preferred a meal of lobscouse and plumduff on board the Diana, washed down with a glass of half-water grog, to the finest refection anybody could set before him. The queen tried in vain to set him at his ease and draw him out. She only succeeded in overawing him. But she made one more effort.

"Won't you take an orange, Mr. Bolsover?" she said, offering him one with her own hand. "It is a very fine one, grown in my own garden, and picked by myself."

"Take it, Tom!" I said, seeing that he hesitated.

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," he exclaimed, stretching out his hand to receive the proffered gift.

"My God! What is this?" she exclaimed, dropping the orange and seizing the arm. "What is this? 'Santa Anna, 1744,' and the figure of a ship! How, when, where—what means it? Tell me, what means it?"

All looked at her in blank surprise. Old Tom seemed thunder-struck, and could answer nothing.

"What means it?" repeated the queen. "How came this inscription on your arm? I want to know."

The boatswain, still speechless, pointed to me.

"This man appears to have lost his senses," she said, turning to me. "Will you be good enough to tell me, Mr. Erle? at once, if you please."

CHAPTER XVII.

A REVELATION.

QUEEN MAB evidently intended to be obeyed; and as Tom's craze and the chaplain's narrative were no secret, and I found myself in the presence of a mystery which I was as anxious to solve as herself, I willingly complied with her rather peremptory request.

"Do you happen to have that document with you, Tom?" I asked him.

"No; it is in my locker aboard the Diana."

"Well, I have read it so carefully and so often that I know it nearly as well as I know Lloyd's Register. So to begin at the beginning."

And then I told them of the elder Bolsover finding the tin case at the Azores, and gave almost as full an account of Mr. Hare's diary as if I had read it aloud. Out of consideration for Tom's feelings I said no more about his craze than was necessary, only that he was fully persuaded that he should see the Santa Anna, before he died, and find the treasure which he believed she contained. This remark concluded my second narrative, to which all had listened with bated breath.

"Mr. Bolsover has been cherishing an illusion, I am sorry to say," said the queen, after a short silence, which she had obviously spent in deep thought. "He will not see the Santa Anna. She perished more than a century ago; and as for the gold and silver she had on board—well, the plates off which you have just dined, the goblets out of which you have drunk, are part of the galleon's treasure; but the bulk of it is still intact and in our possession."

Tom stared at her with a dazed look; his face turned ashen gray, and his lips twitched convulsively.

"You don't mean to say," he said, hoarsely—"you don't mean to tell me as—as the Santa Anna foundered hereabouts and somebody else got the treasure? I won't believe it! It can't be true! God! it would be too hard—too hard—after all these years. No; I won't believe it!"

"If the Santa Anna you mean is the Santa Anna of which Mr. Hare speaks in his diary," said Mab, wonderingly and pityingly, "and which was captured by the Hecate in 1744, there can be no question that she struck on the Painted Rocks in the same year; that all the efforts of the crew to get her off failed; and that she went to pieces a few weeks afterward—not, however, before all her stores and all the treasure were taken out of her and landed on this island."

"I don't believe it! I don't believe it!" reiterated the

boatswain. "It cannot be true. You are making game of me! Say, now, you are making game of me!"

"What mean you? Why should I make game of you?" asked the queen, angrily. "All that I have told you is on record. We have the log-books both of the Hecate and the Santa Anna. Mr. Hare did not die of the illness he was suffering from when he threw his diary into the sea; he lived to be an old man, and died on this island. I can show you his grave. And the Mr. Fane he mentions, who took the command after Captain Barnaby's death, was my great-great-grandfather, and the founder and protector of this commonwealth."

"Then I've been defrauded!" cried Tom, savagely, striking his fist on the table. "That is what it is; I've been defrauded! It's me as should have found that treasure! It's me! It's me! Haven't I thought of it, and dreamed of it, and striven for it thirty years and more? Ay, they were right as called me Crazy Tom. I am crazy! I am crazy! and may God forgive them as has made me so!"

And bowing his head on his hands, the poor old fellow wept aloud.

"Why does the foolish man take on so?" asked Mab, who seemed equally distressed and surprised. "He might have been visited with some terrible misfortune. It surely cannot be disappointed greed?"

"It is the shattering of a long-cherished delusion," I said. "The idea of finding the Santa Anna had become a part of his life."

"And he has found her. At any rate, he has found out what became of her, and that is all he had any right to expect; while as for the treasure, I shall be glad to give him an ingot or two of gold or a few handfuls of doubloons."

"I'll have no gifts from nobody," said the boatswain, in a quavering voice. "If I had found it, all would have been mine; but I would have shared and shared alike with Mr. Erle. Ain't I speaking the truth now? Didn't we agree to share and share alike?"

"Say no more now, Tom," I said, soothingly. "We will talk the matter over to-morrow, and I hope you will see it in another light. Go into the garden and smoke your pipe."

"Ay, ay, sir!" he muttered, and without another word left the room, greatly to my relief, for I could see that the queen was beginning to lose patience.

"These are strange stories you have told us, Mr. Erle," she said, turning to me, "and no less strange is the manner of your coming hither. It would almost seem as if Fate, or Fortune, or Providence had directed your course and sent you to the Fair Island for some purpose which is not yet clearly discernible. And no less strange than the story you have told me is the story which I am about to tell you. Don't shake your head, Waterlow Field. I shall tell Mr. Erle everything. He is a man of honor, and will neither abuse my confidence nor do aught to injure our people or compromise their safety. Besides, who knows? he may be persuaded to remain with us and give our commonwealth the benefit of his knowledge and experience; and you must admit that we are sadly lacking in many things. If isolation has great advantages, it has also serious drawbacks! But to my story. You must have already guessed, Mr. Erle, that we are the descendants of the Hecate's crew; indeed, I just now told you that Commander Fane was my great-great-grandfather. The Santa Anna struck against those very Painted Rocks through which you so marvelously threaded your way——"

"Then the inscription I saw——"

"You saw the inscription! That is the very place. It must be well-nigh obliterated by this time. We will have it renewed. Since the wreck of the Santa Anna, several ships have been lost in the same place; for the most part they went to pieces immediately, and their crews perished to a man. Yours is the only ship that ever got through, and you are the first born Englishman who, since 1774, has landed on the island. But if I go on at this rate I shall never finish my story, and I had perhaps better not attempt to finish it—at present. You shall read the log-books of the Hecate and the Santa Anna, also our records; they have been well kept, and then afterward—yes, that will be the better way—Mr. Field will place all the records at your disposal. Let him see everything, Mr. Field."

Mr. Field bowed acquiescence, and I said I should read the log-books and records with the greatest interest.

After a few further remarks had been exchanged I inquired if the queen was still in the mind to pay her promised visit to the Diana.

"Certainly," she said, smiling. "I am not in the habit of changing my plans except for good cause; and I am most anxious to see your wonderful steam-engine, and, above all, those books. I fear I shall never be able to tear myself away from them. May I bring some back with me?"

"Of course. Have I not said that the Diana and all she contains are entirely at your disposal? But I shall have to precede you. It will take me an hour or two to get steam up; and we shall require help to heave the anchor. The boatswain and I cannot do it alone."

"You shall have all the help you want. See to it, Mr. Field, that Mr. Erle's orders are as implicitly obeyed as if I gave them myself; and give him and the boatswain quarters in your house."

On this he bowed again. Then the queen gave me her hand, which I kissed as before, and withdrew with Field, leaving her alone with Fane, whom I now knew to be her kinsman; for the commander of the Santa Anna was doubtless the common ancestor of both.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DENZIL FANE.

I LEARNED much about the queer race from the Santa Anna's log-books and the other books to which Mr. Field, by his mistress' command, gave me access; by reading between the lines, by conversation with that gentleman and with others, and from my own observation, I learned even more. The gist of this information I propose to embody in the present chapter, for it is essential, not only to a right understanding of the people among whom I found myself, but of the events that afterward came to pass, as also of my own personal narrative, which I shall presently resume.

It will be remembered that when Mr. Hare, the chaplain, threw his diary into the sea, he thought he was like to die, and that his companions would not long outlive him. As the reader already knows, these anticipations were not realized. Mr. Hare lived a good deal longer

than he expected, and only a portion of the ship's company—the sick, the wounded, and nearly all the Spanish prisoners—succumbed. The fittest survived, in fact; but they suffered terribly from scurvy and thirst, and were saved when almost at the last gasp by a tremendous downpour of tropical rain, followed by a succession of storms, which drove them hundreds of miles out of their course, dismasted and damaged the ship, and left her little better than a wreck. For days together the officers were unable to take an observation. Before jury-masts could be rigged and damages made good, they drifted into the fog, from which they emerged only to strke on the Painted Rocks. Fortunately, however, the ship was jammed between two reefs, and impaled on a third in such a way that she could neither sink nor make much water.

This happened in the night, and the joy of the harassed and weary sailors may be imagined when at daybreak they saw before them a land of waving forests and running waters. As the island was not marked on any of their charts, they had no means of knowing whether it was the possession of a European power or inhabited only by savages. But as the boats (which were at once got out) approached the shore, they were met by a multitude of canoes, crowded with copper-colored aborigines, whose demeanor showed that they had never before beheld men with white skins and hairy faces. They brought fruit and other offerings, and made overtures of friendship which the English sailors were only too glad to reciprocate, since it was evident that, whatever else happened, they would have to remain on the island for a considerable time; and being too few to conquer a whole people, their only chance was to make friends of them.

The natives, as Commander Fane thought, were Caribs, of the same race as the unfortunates who inhabited the Bahamas when Columbus discovered America, and who were afterward so completely wiped out by the Spanish Conquistadores. They were gentle and hospitable, and looking upon their visitors as superior beings, treated them with great deference and respect. Though for the most part hunters and fishermen, the Caribs of the island were not wholly uncivilized. They dwelt in villages; their houses were something more than mere

shelter-huts; they had a rudimentary knowledge of gardening and agriculture; the make of their flint and bone tools and weapons showed considerable skill; their ornaments were deftly wrought; and they contrived, in a rude way, to spin and weave, fashion into clothing, and even to dye, the indigenous cotton of the island. Physically well made, with senses wonderfully acute, they had a ready wit and dignified manners, and Commander Fane was not long in coming to the conclusion that the islanders might easily be converted into a Christian and civilized people.

The first idea of the castaways was to build a boat big enough to carry them to England or the Bahamas; to which end they lost no time in taking out of the Santa Anna everything likely to be useful to them, and that was pretty nearly all she contained—ropes, spars, sails, tools, arms, ammunition, and the rest. They even broke up and took some of the planking, and stripped as much of the copper sheathing as they could get at. The treasure was all removed and safely stored.

All this occupied two months or more, and it was barely completed when the Santa Anna, which had been terribly buffeted in a storm, went to pieces.

So far the men had worked willingly and well, obeying their officers without hesitation; but when it became a question of building a boat and "affronting new dangers" (to use Commander Fane's own words), they began to murmur. Why, they said, should they undertake a perilous voyage in a frail craft—a voyage of at least two thousand miles (that being the distance to the nearest British possession)—with the almost certainty (if they should escape shipwreck a second time) of falling into the hands of the Spaniards and being immured for years in some horrible prison, possibly tortured and put to death by the Inquisition? Why not stay where they were? The country was fertile and beautiful, the climate genial, the people kindly. What could they do better than make the Fair Island* their home, and let the world wag?

Whether this idea had already occurred to Fane does

* A name conferred on the country by the sailors because of its supposed resemblance to the Isle of Wight, which in the last century was generally known as the "Fair Island."

not appear, but before the suggestion could be considered an event occurred which seems to have helped him to a decision. He and his men were living in tents and huts near the present site of Fairhaven, when one morning several of the native chiefs made their appearance, and gave them to understand that they were threatened with a grave danger, and taking the commandant round the mountain, pointed to the west, where there was a breach in the barrier of rocks, and where the mist occasionally lifted.

Looking through his glass, Fane saw that the sea was simply black with canoes, which were rapidly approaching the coast.

It was a flotilla of invaders, and the Carib chiefs, who seemed greatly alarmed, implored him by signs to join his forces to theirs and help them to repulse the foe. Fane, who wanted nothing better, ordered his plan of campaign on the spot. It would be impossible to reach the west coast before the invaders (whom, for want of a better name, the sailors christened "Cariberoes") disembarked, the more especially as the country was thickly wooded and destitute of roads. But the creek that lies below Fairhaven joins a stream which sweeps round the foot of the mountain, and flows half-way across the island in a westerly direction. It was on the banks of this stream (navigable for small boats) that the English officer resolved to intercept the Cariberoes and give them battle. His men were summoned forthwith, and embarked on the four boats which had once belonged to the Santa Anna. The crews were, of course, well armed, and the long-boat carried a small carronade in her bows. A few hours sufficed to organize the expedition, which included a hundred canoes, carrying about a thousand natives, armed with bows and arrows and spears, the whole under Mr. Fane's command.

The spot he selected for making a stand was at a ford near an opening in the forest that the invaders must needs traverse in order to reach the eastern or Fairhaven side of the island, which was assumed to be their objective point, as thereabouts were the principal Carib villages.

By great exertion Fane and his men succeeded in reaching the ford three or four hours before the enemy

put in an appearance. Keeping his blue-jackets in reserve, he sent the greater part of the Caribs to meet the invaders in the open, with orders to fall back fighting as the latter advanced, recross the river, and take up a position among the brushwood on the banks. At the same time, feeling himself quite strong enough, and having no doubt as to the result, he ordered two of his officers to take a second party of Caribs through the forest, lie in ambush near the invaders' line of retreat, and cut them off from the boats.

These dispositions made, the allied forces awaited the onset of the enemy, who came on several thousand strong.

The Caribs, after making a show of resistance, fell back, and then, pretending to be panic-stricken, made in desperate haste for the river, the foe in full cry after them. When the latter were well within range, the blue-jackets (who had been lying *perdu* under the bank) opened fire on them both with their muskets and the carronade. The invaders, utterly dumfounded by this unexpected reception, retreated in great confusion; but once among the trees again, they rallied, and, turning to bay, showed a most resolute front.

On this the commander ordered a general charge, which he led in person. Then followed a desperate struggle—"the hottest thing I was ever in," wrote Fane. The blue-jackets, after giving the Cariberoes a couple of volleys point-blank, fell on them with cutlasses and clubbed muskets, and were bravely supported by their native allies. The fight lasted fifteen minutes, and there is no telling how it might have ended if the ambush party, hearing the firing, had not made a diversion in the rear, whereupon the invaders, being seized with a panic, threw away their arms, and made off in all directions. Many were killed; more were taken prisoners; only a very small remnant succeeded in reaching their boats and getting away.

The Caribs had no idea of keeping the prisoners alive, and were proceeding to make short work of them, when Commander Fane interposed. He would have nobody killed in cold blood. The question then arose as to how the prisoners were to be disposed of. To let them go away would never do; they might come back another

day. To let them roam about the country was equally impolitic; they would be a chronic trouble and a permanent danger. There was only one other alternative, and that was adopted. They were enslaved.

Fane had many ideas advanced; but the age in which he lived was neither a sentimental nor a humanitarian age. He not only thought there was no wrong in slavery, but that the best use to which the prisoners could be put was to reduce them to servitude. So they were bound in twos and threes and distributed among their captors, and slavery became one of the permanent institutions of the island.

The invaders, as Fane afterward ascertained, came from an island about a hundred miles east of Fair Island, and when he first saw them their appearance excited his unbounded surprise. Some were black, others copper-colored or red; but the greater part had the same spotted skins as the Caliban crew of Field's boat—were, in fact, their ancestors. How African negroes had found their way so far west was a matter of conjecture; they were probably, as Fane surmised, the descendants of a cargo of revolted slaves, who, after killing their captors, had landed on the island and intermarried with the natives.

Speaking for myself, I am unable to assign any cause for the peculiar hue of these people, or to decide whether it was the outcome of some subtle evolutionary process, or a mere caprice of atavism. As the mixture of aborigines with Englishmen on the one hand, and negroes on the other, produced analogous results, the piebaldism of their progeny may be attributable either to soil or climate, or possibly to some racial peculiarity. I have heard of tribes in Central America presenting similar characteristics, and it is a well-known fact that the issue of a black and white, or a mulatto and a white, are not always of the same type. Their children are occasionally born with black limbs and a white face, or *vice versa*, and I know of no reason why the offspring of mixed races should not have variegated skins rather than skins of one uniform color throughout. Miscegenation has produced even stranger results.

But as I am simply relating my own personal adventures, it is no part of my purpose to suggest explanations

of the obscure natural phenomena which have come under my notice.

And now to resume my story.

When the prisoners (among whom were many women, the object of the invaders being to take entire possession of the island) had been disposed of, the Carib chiefs waited on Commander Fane, and, after expressing unbounded gratitude for the great service he had rendered him, begged of him to stay with them for good, and offered him the sovereignty of the country. As for his people, they might have as much land and as many slaves as they liked, and choose for themselves wives from among the most beautiful girls of the island.

It was not like a British officer to accept such an offer as this, for doing so involved both a dereliction of duty and a breach of discipline. To remain on the island, except under compulsion, was tantamount to desertion; and desertion by a combatant officer in war time is an offense punishable with death. Yet Denzil Fane not only did accept the offer of the Carib chiefs, but constrained his brother officers to follow his example. I assume the constraint, albeit no mention of it appears in the records, because it can hardly be supposed that the officers—the two lieutenants, the master's mates, the surgeon, the chaplain, and the half dozen midshipmen—would willingly agree to expatriate themselves and renounce all hope of ever seeing England again. But the recalcitrants were a small minority, and, being too few to build a ship and get away by themselves, they had no alternative but to throw in their lot with the others and make the best of it. And some of the officers, like the survivors of the crew, may have preferred freedom and the Fair Island to life on the ocean wave, for the British man-of-war of that time was not exactly a paradise.

As for Denzil Fane's motives I can offer no adequate explanation. One, and perhaps the most powerful, may have been that since his arrival on the island he had married a wife. The Spanish captain of the Santa Anna, who fell on his own quarter-deck, had with him his wife and daughter, the latter a handsome girl of nineteen. The wife (Senora Velasquez y Blanco) survived her husband only a few weeks; but Mercedes was among the remnant who reached the island, and a month after-

ward she and Fane were made one by the Reverend Robert Hare.

If the commander had left a wife in England (and such things have happened), his reluctance to return thither would be accounted for. But, though his conduct may have been questionable, and his motives obscure, there can be no question that Denzil Fane was a man of resolute will and strong character—a born leader of men, I should say. If his people thought they were going to lead idle lives, they were very much mistaken. So soon as the decision was taken to remain on the island, he assigned to every one his task, organized a government, and promulgated a code of laws. Opposition (if the idea of it was ever conceived) would have been out of the question; the Caribs simply idolized their "White Chief," and rendered him the most implicit obedience. Roads were made, houses built, gardens laid out, trees cut down, and the country opened out. Sailors are always handy fellows, and among so many there were naturally some with a turn for mechanics and engineering, and great improvements were effected in the native methods of manufacture, and several new industries set on foot. Into this work Fane threw so much energy that I am disposed to think he wanted to justify himself to his own conscience by civilizing his Carib subjects, and making the island the home of a happy and thriving community. This may possibly have been his ruling motive from the first; and if so, there can be no doubt that with the materials at his command he succeeded better than might have been expected.

Some of the rules he laid down are worth mention. Although he acquired the Carib tongue, he made English the official language, and insisted on the Caribs learning it. The process was probably slow and painful in the beginning, but in the end the desired result was attained. At the time of my arrival on the island there were not a hundred men who could hold a conversation in the Carib tongue. He also made them Christians—after a fashion—which was all the more easy, as their own primitive religion seems to have sat very lightly on them, and they were ready to believe pretty nearly everything the Great White Chief told them.

In his own family Denzil Fane made the practice of

athletics and the training of the senses a religious duty, whereby it came to pass that his descendants were distinguished by exceptional bodily strength, litheness of limb, acuteness of hearing, and keenness of vision. Owing to their descent from two European ancestors, moreover (though Fane's children had necessarily intermarried with Caribs and half-breeds), they were whiter and less piebald than the other families of mixed blood, and formed a true aristocracy, not by right of birth merely, but by virtue of their physical and moral superiority, which was probably the end Fane had in view.

He called his government a commonwealth, and himself its "Protector" (from which I infer that he was an admirer of Oliver Cromwell); but in reality it was a paternal despotism of a very uncompromising sort. The ruling body was ostensibly a Council of Nine, presided over by the Protector, and nominated by himself; and though they were at liberty to offer suggestions and make proposals, he was under no obligation either to adopt the one or accept the other.

The office of protector was made hereditary in Fane's own family; but on the strictest principle of primogeniture—in other words, the first-born child was to succeed, whatever might be its sex. Sons and daughters were placed on a perfect equality. The Council of Nine had, however, a right to veto, and it was about the only right they possessed. In the event of two thirds of their number declaring that, in their opinion, the heir or heiress was physically or mentally unfit, or morally unworthy to rule, he or she would have to stand aside in favor of the next child in the line of succession.

Denzil Fane lived long enough to consolidate his authority, firmly establish his dynasty, and organize, according to his own ideas, the community of which he was the head. He ruled the Fair Island for nearly half a century, and died full of years and of honors. The islanders revered his memory as the children of Israel revered the memory of Moses, and even more religiously than the Americans of to-day revere the the memory of George Washington. His recorded opinions were held in high honor, and the views and sayings ascribed to him by tradition had almost the force of law.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHY NOT QUEEN?

ALTHOUGH I spent half the night in poring over log-books and other records, and conversing with Field—who, now that the ice was broken, threw aside his reserve, and treated me with all the cordiality I could desire—I rose next morning before the sun, and, accompanied by Bolsover, and my host, and ten fishermen, went on board the Diana to prepare for the reception of Queen Mab.

On our way thither Field explained how the present ruler came to her title. Two years previously Mabel Fane had succeeded her father, the fourth Protector; and as she strongly objected to the appellation as being unsuitable for a young woman, and the Council of Nine concurred in the objection, it became necessary to choose another. The choice was, however, attended with some difficulty. "Protectress," besides being questionable English, did not sound well. "Governess," besides sounding worse, was generally used in another sense. "Chief" and "President" have no feminine, and Miss Fane made it a condition *sine qua non* that the title selected should denote her sex.

The difficulty was solved by an ingenious member of the council. "Why not queen?" he said. "It is the feminine of king; and 'king,' in the original signification of the word, meant simply 'the man who can'—the strong man, in fact; he who is best qualified to be leader and chief. Hence 'queen' means the 'woman who can,' and no more implies divine right or royal descent than the title of 'Protector' chosen by the first Denzil."

Mabel liked the idea. She decided on the spot that she should be called "queen;" but strictly in the sense mentioned by the member of the council to whom the suggestion was due. As for the shortening of her Christian name to Mab, which was almost in the nature of things, she rather liked it. "Queen Mab" sounded so much better than "Queen Mabel," she said.

"What sort of a queen does she make?" I asked Field.

"A very queenly one, I should say," he answered, with a smile; "and as you have seen already, she is rather ab-

solute. But she is both able and well instructed. Indeed, I think she is the ablest ruler we have had since the first Denzil."

"She is a woman who can?"

"Exactly. But between you and me"—dropping his voice—"I fear that she does not hold her great ancestor's maxims in quite so much respect as might be desired. She has done several things which do not quite square with his recorded opinions; and on one occasion, when I ventured to remonstrate with her, she said—this is strictly between ourselves, Mr. Erle—she actually said—I can hardly bring myself to repeat the words—'A fig for old Denzil! There!'"

"God bless me! I can hardly believe——"

"She did, though, I assure you. It is quite true that she remembered herself the next moment, and said she regretted having spoken so hastily. But the words were spoken, and I shall never forget them."

"Yes," I replied, sympathetically; "they must have made you feel pretty bad. So the queen is hasty sometimes?"

"Rather; but then you must remember that she is young, and lacks experience; she is quick-tempered, too, and just as quick, I am bound to say, to acknowledge a fault or own to a mistake. Of a right noble nature is Queen Mab."

Once on board the Diana, I set to work with two of the men to get up steam, while the others, under Bolsover's directions, occupied themselves in putting the ship to rights, swabbing the decks, and otherwise, as he expressed it, "making her fit to be seen."

I saw with deep regret that disappointment about the treasure had made old Tom quite another man. It seemed to have changed his character. Instead of the simple-hearted, cheerful, chatty fellow he had once been, he was taciturn and morose. He did everything I wanted; but I found it impossible to draw him into conversation; he answered me only in monosyllables. Something had come between us; we were no longer the close friends we had been, and I felt sure, from his manner, that by a strange perversion of ideas he held me to blame for the shattering of his illusion; or, perhaps, considering

the treasure rightly his, he thought I should have claimed it on his behalf.

All this both annoyed and grieved me, not only because I had a sincere respect for old Tom, but because I began to fear that we should not find it very easy to get away from Fair Island, and that unless we pulled together we might not get away at all.

After we had been on board some three hours, and everything was in readiness, Queen Mab arrived in a large boat, manned by half a dozen slaves, which was speedily followed by two other boats, bringing a brave company of men and women, principally composed, as I afterward learned, of members of the Fane family and their kindred.

When I had shown them round the decks, I took them into the engine-room, and explained, as well as I could, how the engine worked. Then the capstan was manned and the anchor weighed. Tom took the wheel and I started the engine. I need not repeat the exclamations of surprise which this proceeding called forth, nor the thousand and one questions which I had to answer. To use a somewhat trite phrase, they may be more easily imagined than described.

The most curious of the company was Queen Mab. After going on deck to make sure that the ship really moved and see how it did move, she returned to the engine-room, plied me with questions, watched everything I did, and remained with me until we reached the mouth of the cove, where (the place being well sheltered) we had decided to let go the anchor.

It was still early in the day, and I thought the best thing we could now do was to overhaul a part of the cargo, so we opened the hold, rigged a derrick, and hoisted up a few of the cases. The first we opened was a case of Manchester prints; the next contained silks and mixed goods. Mab and all the women on board were in ecstasies. The island did not produce silk, and none of them had ever seen a piece of print in their lives before. The queen took one of the prettiest (by no means the gaudiest; she showed good taste), and drawing it round her like a robe, asked the others how it suited her.

"If you will come with me into the saloon," I said, "you shall see for yourself."

"I don't know what you mean; but go on—I will follow," was the answer.

So a few lengths of the print were cut off, and we went into the saloon, which happened to be rather prettily decorated with painted panels and long mirrors. The surprise and delight of Mab and her maidens were really comic, and amused me immensely. They had never seen themselves full length before. Looking-glasses were not manufactured in Fair Island, the only mirror the queen possessed being a relic from the Santa Anna, about the size of her hand, and very much cracked, and a precious possession it was. She would not have exchanged it for its weight in diamonds. I thought they would never have done contemplating the reflection of their figures and faces, and the most mottled seemed to be quite as satisfied with their complexions as the comparatively fair.

But nothing lasts forever, and after awhile we returned on deck and resumed our inspection of the cargo. What pleased most, after the silks, prints, and looking-glasses, were some pins and needles, which we found in a case of haberdashery; for albeit these articles were made on the island, they were of a rude and primitive sort.

Queen Mab was in a fever of delight, and when I asked her to do me the favor of accepting one of the long mirrors (which, I explained, could easily be taken out and put in a frame), she took both my hands in hers and said she would never, never be able to repay my kindness, a demonstration which, judging by their looks, did not altogether please some of those about her.

"Oh, I have forgotten all about the books!" she exclaimed, shortly afterward; "and they were what I most wanted to see. But you have so many wonderful things that I am really quite bewildered. Show me the books, please, Mr. Erle."

I said they were rather scattered about, and would require getting together, but if she would come again to the saloon I would show her some of them. So we went below a second time, and I fetched a number of books from my own berth and some of the other berths, and put them on the table. Among them were several bound volumes of the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*,

and other illustrated works. This was another surprise. The only picture the queen had ever seen before was a daub by a native artist. Engravings she never had seen before. As she turned over the leaves she became almost wild with excitement.

"Oh, how I should like to see England!" she exclaimed, after looking at the illustration of some English scene. "Would it be possible to go thither, I wonder?"

On this, all who were in the saloon—and it was quite full—regarded her with pained astonishment, as if they could hardly believe their own ears.

"Yes," she repeated, defiantly, "I should like to see England, and so would you, only you are afraid to say so. How I hate these hypocrisies!"

Then she turned to the pictures again. There were many which she could not understand, and she was continually demanding explanations.

"This," she said, smiling, "reminds me of Hamlet and Polonius. It is very like a whale."

"It is a whale," I said; "those men in the boat are harpooning him."

"You call it whale-hunting, I suppose?"

"'Whale-hunting' is not bad; but it is generally called whale-fishing."

"Did you ever see shark-hunting?"

"I have seen sharks hunt a man, if that is what you mean," I said, with a shudder, thinking of the terrible death of poor Peyton.

"I don't mean that; I mean men hunting sharks—'fighting' would perhaps be a better way of putting it."

"Never, and I don't——"

"You shall, then. It is splendid sport. We will have a hunt to-morrow. Which will you be, a hunter or a spectator?"

"Well, until I have seen something of the sport I think I would rather be a spectator," I answered, cautiously.

"You are wise," said the queen, dryly; "for unless you are a strong swimmer and very expert in the water—— However, you will see. I suppose we may take some of these books and a few of these cases ashore with us?"

To this question there could, of course, be but one answer; and I was about to give orders accordingly, when somebody shouted from the top of the companion that Bolsover, who was still at the wheel, wanted me on deck.

The ship was still under way, for at Mab's request we had steamed slowly round the bay, and were now within a couple of miles from the place we had selected for an anchorage.

Tom was talking to Amyas Fane, with whom he seemed to have struck up a friendship, and who, knowing the coast thoroughly, was acting as pilot.

"Mr. Fane thinks as we had better run a bit further on than the place you thought of," said the boatswain. "He knows of a little inlet where we can moor her, stem and stern, and where she'll be almost as safe as if she was in dock. That'll be better than anchoring."

"But is there water enough?"

"Enough and to spare. Fourteen feet at low tide alongside the rocks."

"All right! Nothing could be better; and it will be so much handier for landing the cargo. If you and Mr. Fane will remain at the wheel and do what is necessary, I'll stand by the engine."

"Ay, ay, sir! I'll pass the word when you are to stop. I think you had better slow her a bit now. We shall have to send one of them boats ashore with a rope."

Half an hour later the ship was safely berthed, and moored stem and stern in such a way that she could rise and fall with the tide without touching the rocks, which rose sheer out of the water on either side of her.

This done, the cases selected by the queen, and the books, were lowered into the largest boat, and we all returned to Fairhaven. I was in the same boat with Mab and Field; old Tom went with Amyas Fane, and as we walked up from the jetty he informed me, rather curtly, that he should not go with me to Mr. Field's, but that he was going to stay with Mr. Fane.

"As you like, Bolsover," I replied, coldly, for his manner was not only unfriendly, but almost discourteous.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SHARK FIGHTERS.

"WHAT relation is Amyas Fane to the queen?" I asked Field, as we sat smoking our pipes in the veranda of his house, and watching the crescent moon as it rose out of the mist beyond the Painted Rocks.

"He is the eldest son of her father's younger brother, and the next in the line of succession."

"You mean that if she were to die, he would become king?"

"Not king; protector."

"I mean protector. I have no certain information on the subject, but I take it for granted that she is not married."

"No," laughed Field. "Mab is not married. I wish she were."

"Nor likely to be?"

"Not that I am aware of; nor do I think she favors anybody."

"Does anybody favor her?"

"Oh, dear, yes! Most of our eligible young men would be glad to become Mab's husband. But I suppose she will choose for herself in good time."

"Do your Fair Island ladies propose, then?"

"As often as not. Denzil was a strong advocate for the equality of the sexes; he said that when a young woman takes a fancy to any particular young man, there is no harm in her telling him so."

"And is that principle acted on at present?"

"As often as not. It is sometimes one way, sometimes the other."

I then asked my host how it was that the queen's expression of a desire to visit England should have caused so much surprise, not to say horror, among those who heard her.

"She said that, did she?" exclaimed Field, horrified in his turn. "What will she be saying next, I wonder? I don't think she was in earnest, though. She often says outrageous things, just to startle people; and 'pon my word, she succeeds. I can easily tell you why they were surprised. Her great-great-grandfather was one of the wisest men

that ever lived. We have to thank him for all our happiness and prosperity; and there was nothing he more insisted upon than the necessity of preserving our independence; and so long as we maintain our isolation and keep the existence, or, at any rate, the whereabouts of Fair Island secret, we shall be safe from molestation. In his time he would let nobody leave the island, except perhaps for a sail round the coast, on any pretext whatever; and the rule has been enforced ever since. I ought rather to say that nobody has ever so much as expressed a desire to break it. (Mr. Fane was wise in his generation. The visit of a British man-of-war might have been rather awkward for him and some of his companions.) You may judge, then, what a sensation Mab's declaration of a wish to visit England—which she could not well do without quitting the island—must needs create."

"I think I understand the great Denzil's motives for laying down such a rule," I said. "But how about strangers who come here by accident, like Bolsover and myself, for instance? Are they not allowed to leave?"

"The contingency does not seem to have been contemplated. All that Denzil said—you will find it in his valedictory address, written a few months before his decease—all that he said was: 'Resist hostile strangers to the death, but friendly strangers welcome, and give them of your best.'"

"Nothing about letting them go?"

"Nothing; from which I infer that he did not desire to lay down any general rule on the subject, but rather that his successors should deal with any case that might arise strictly on its merits."

"So my fate depends on Queen Mab. Suppose, now, that after awhile—I am in no particular hurry—suppose I desire to leave the island, how shall I carry my purpose into effect—how get away? Assuming, of course, that the queen makes no objection."

"In that big ship of yours. How else?"

"If our chance of returning to England depends on Bolsover and me getting the Diana past the Painted Rocks and through the mist, to say nothing of navigating her across the Atlantic, I am afraid we shall have to

stay here for the term of our natural lives," I said, gloomily.

"And would you regard that as a misfortune? Where can you find a pleasanter country than this, or one where you could enjoy a greater measure of prosperity and contentment? The queen and the Council of Nine would be only too glad to give you land and slaves, and build you a house, and with your fair skin and red hair and beard, you would be sure to have eligible offers of marriage——"

"My hair is not red; it is chestnut," I interposed, impatiently.

"Call it what you like; I only mean that it is very beautiful hair. Everybody admires it. The girls cannot keep their eyes off you. And I am sure you will not find finer women in the world than the Fanes (my mother was a Fane), and if their complexions cannot be described as exactly European, they have a beauty all their own. It is merely a matter of taste."

In this opinion I was able cordially to concur, although I did not say (as I thought) that piebald complexions were not to my taste. As to Mr. Field's proposal that I should settle on the island for good, I observed that, tempting as it was, I did not see my way to accept it; that I did not take kindly to the idea of never seeing England and my friends there again, and that if my mother did not receive news of me before long, she would be broken-hearted. To this he made no answer, and after some further conversation I repeated an inquiry I had already made more than once as to the position of the island; and producing a chart, I asked him to give me at least an approximate idea of its whereabouts.

"Not at present," he said, with a quiet smile. "You have only been here two or three days: why are you so eager to know everything? Have patience, my friend."

So I returned the chart to my pocket, and resolved, on the first opportunity, to put the same question to Miss Mab. To tell the truth, I felt rather disappointed that she had not invited me to spend the evening at the Queen's House (formerly Protector's House), as I found her dwelling was called.

Before we separated for the night, Field informed me that, as the shark-killing expedition would set out at sun-

rise, we should have to breakfast by candle-light, and that I was to be one of the queen's guests on board her own yacht.

I am always punctual, and at five the next morning I entered my host's dining-room, arrayed in my flannels, and we reached the jetty at the very moment that the sun emerged from the sea and chased the shadows from the mountain-top.

We had not long to wait. The day was hardly born when the island queen, followed by a gay company of male and female Fanes and their kindred (who alone were admitted to her intimacy), came trooping down the hill. She greeted me very graciously, and invited me to join her party, an invitation which, I need scarcely say, was "accepted with thanks."

Rather to my surprise, her yacht, the Sunflower, was a schooner of some seventy tons burden, solidly built, and well fitted and found. So soon as we were on board, the order was given to weigh anchor and make sail, and followed by several other yachts and a crowd of smaller boats, we moved slowly—the wind being light—down the creek.

"There they come?" cried Mab, pointing to a large boat, with a lug-sail, for which all the other boats respectfully made way.

It was the shark-hunters' boat, and contained eight men, six of whom were rowing, while one steered, and the other seemed to be attending to the sail. The cockswain, and apparently the captain, was Amyas Fane. In the bottom of the boat were two or three dark objects that looked like bundles of rags. As she passed us the crew gave a cheer, which was cordially returned by the people on the yacht.

"The shark-fighters, I suppose?" I said to the queen.

"Yes. What do you think of them?"

"I never saw a set of finer young fellows in my life."

And I never had. All were over six feet three, brawny and broad-shouldered, deep of chest and long of limb, and as lithe and active as so many cats. They were nearly naked, wearing only short drawers, but each man had on a belt, from which hung a sword, and their black hair was confined in a sort of fillet.

Their boat was ahead, and when she was well into the

bay, about three miles from the furthest headland, the lug-sail was lowered, and one of the dark objects (which turned out to be goats) fastened to a line and thrown into the sea. Then the oars were unshipped, and Amyas Fane, standing up, saluted the queen, and said, half laughingly:

"*Morituri te salutant.*"

After this a few minutes' silence, during which the other boats came up and formed a wide circle round the hunters' boat.

"Do you see that?" said Mab, in an intense whisper.

"That" was the dorsal fin of a shark, and the next moment the huge fish rolled over, and opening his great jaws, bit the goat in two. Then another floated up from unseen depths and tried to tear the precious morsel from his companion's mouth, while a third, darting suddenly forward, snapped up the remaining portion.

"Now!" shouted the captain; and six of the hunters, drawing their long, sharp swords, slipped quietly overboard.

The sharks, having by this time finished with the goat, gave their attention to the new-comers. But while they were chasing one, the hunters dived under their bellies and stabbed them repeatedly with their swords, drawing blood at every stroke. Then, when the wounded monsters turned round to meet their enemy, the pursued would become pursuer, and help the comrade who had just helped him. The sharks, bewildered and infuriated, dashed hither and thither in wild confusion, lashing the water with their tails and dyeing it with their blood.

This went on for a quarter of an hour. It was horrible, yet fascinating. The very intensity of the excitement kept the spectators silent. Nobody spoke except the captain, who gave his orders from the boat like a commander during an action. Over and over again I thought one or other of the hunters would surely be killed or mutilated; but at the very moment when destruction seemed imminent, the almost victim would either evade the snap by an agile turn or dive out of sight, or a comrade distract the shark's attention by a sudden stab. One hunter thrust his sword into a shark's jaws, and leaving it there, swam to the boat for another.

The fight went on fast and furious, until one of the

fishes, turning belly upward, floated to the top of the water—dead.

In obedience to an order from the captain, the hunters now returned to the boat for a few minutes' rest, which they had well earned, as also the praises of the queen and the plaudits of the spectators.

In the meantime the surviving sharks had fastened on the body of the slain, and others, scenting blood afar, were hurrying up to the feast.

"Have at them again! All!" cried the captain; and himself setting the example, plunged into the water sword in hand, leaving the boat to take care of itself.

This time the sharks, occupied with their meal, were rather taken at a disadvantage; but the creatures being so close together, the only way to get at them was to dive under their bellies, and much address was required to avoid blows from their tails, which were quite capable of breaking a limb. As, moreover, other sharks kept coming up and might take them unawares, two of the hunters were told off to keep watch and ward, give notice of their approach, and afford help where help was most required.

In ten minutes after the opening of the second attack two more sharks were numbered with the slain, and almost before the breath was out of their bodies the others began to rend their dead companions, an occupation which they occasionally varied by a free fight among themselves.

"That makes a fourth," said Queen Mab, as another shark turned over on his back. "They have done very well. I think it is almost time to cry, 'Hold, enough!' What say you?"

"I am quite of your opinion," I answered. "Better stop before anybody is hurt."

"Good! I will order the yellow flag to be run up. That is the signal for the combat to cease."

The words were hardly spoken, when one of the hunters anticipated the signal by emerging from the throng and swimming, slowly and painfully, toward the boat. Climbing over the gunwale with some difficulty, he lay down in the stern.

"That is Bertram Hare," said Mab, anxiously. "I wonder what is the matter? Are you hurt, Bertram?"

"Nothing to speak of," answered the young fellow, smiling. "That last beggar we killed gave me a crack on the leg just as he was turning over; I rather think it is broken."

"I am very sorry. I was in hopes the day would end without any mishap. However, Dr. Sergeant will soon set you to rights. You will have to keep the house two or three weeks, though."

"That is the worst of it. But we have had a splendid day's sport, so I must not complain. The fortune of war, you know; and it might have been worse. The last bout we had, poor Tom Ferrers got bitten in two just as I gave the shark that did it the death-stroke."

"What Spartans those fellows are!" I said. "But a broken leg cannot surely be cured in two or three weeks?"

"Not quite; but he will be able to hobble about in two or three weeks, and be quite well in five or six."

"In England broken legs take double that time to get well."

"Yes; but in England you eat beef and drink beer and spirits."

"And don't you eat beef and drink beer and spirits?"

"As we have no cattle we can have no beef; and in the way of animal food we confine ourselves to fish, fowl, and venison, and eat very little even of that—don't care for it, in fact. While as for beer and spirits, one of my ancestor's first proceedings when he decided to settle in the island was to cast all the rum in the spirit-room of the Santa Anna into the sea. When he became protector he prohibited the production of strong drink in any shape, and the prohibition has been maintained by his successors."

"You are all teetotalers, then?"

"Teetotalers! What is a teetotaler?"

"Don't you know? Ah, I was forgetting. It is a word of the present century. Teetotalers are people who religiously abstain from strong waters."

"In that case we are teetotalers, for we only drink nature's own water."

"And athletes," I added. "Your ancestor was a wise man, Queen Mab. I dare say you are all the better with-

out beef and beer. At any rate you look wonderfully strong and healthy, and Mr. Field tells me you are very long-lived. But you must remember that you have an exceptionally fine climate, and spend much of your time in the open air; that counts for a very great deal."

"Yes," she said, significantly, "there are worse places to live in than the Fair Island; and though I should certainly like to see England——"

Here she paused, and I seized the opportunity to drop a hint that I should like to see England at no distant date, and to inquire whether I might reckon on her consent to my departure and her assistance in getting away. But she pretended not to hear (though her ears were as sharp as her cousin's), and instead of answering, asked me to dine with her at the Queen's House.

"We are going to have some cock-fighting," she said, "and afterward a dance. Our dances are, of course, very old-fashioned; but you will perhaps oblige me by teaching us some of the steps that are now the mode in England."

I bowed, and answered that I should be only too delighted to oblige her in that or any other way; but I was much put about by her refusal to grant my request (for that was what it amounted to). I saw that for some reason or other she was resolved not to let me go; and for the first time I began to consider seriously whether it would not be possible to find a way of leaving the island without her knowledge, and in spite of her evident desire to detain me. Though as ignorant as ever of our exact whereabouts, I had gathered from the records that we were "in the west," and I felt sure that we were no very great distance from some part of the American continent.

When I entered my room at Mr. Field's house, some three hours later, I found lying on my table a three-cornered note, on very rough paper, addressed in a sprawling, schoolboy hand to "Mr. Erle." It contained these words:

"SIR,—The Fair Island is not good for your Health, and your Presence is not desired. You may take ten Days to make your Arrangements for Departure; but if after the Expiration of that Time you are still here, you are as

certain as you are living to meet with a serious, if not a fatal Accident.

"A PRESENT FRIEND, BUT A POTENTIAL FOE."

"Pleasant!" I thought, after reading this precious missive over a second and third time. "The queen refuses to let me go; and if I stay I am to be murdered!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A DANCING LESSON.

I HATE anonymous letters. You can never tell what to make of them—whether they are jest or earnest, whether the writer really means what he says, or is merely amusing himself at your expense. The letter I had just received looked like a grim joke; for who could suppose that it was possible for me to get away in ten days, even though the queen and the Council of Nine were as willing to let me go, as they were notoriously unwilling? It was hardly conceivable that I had made an enemy already, and I could think of nobody who had an interest in hastening my departure.

Yes, it must be a joke; and yet—I felt that there might be something in it, after all. But if the rascally writer of the letter thought to frighten me, he was mistaken. His threat should not force me to leave the island a day sooner than suited my convenience, even though I were at full liberty to leave, and the means of leaving were at my disposal.

Had I merely consulted my inclinations, and been able to inform my mother of my whereabouts and safety, I should have been quite content to make a long stay in the island. Queen Mab and her piebald people interested me much, and I wanted to see more of them. But the Diana was long past due at Montevideo; unless she was soon heard of, the owners and underwriters must needs conclude that she was lost, with all on board, and my mother, who had only me, would be well-nigh heart-broken. It was, morever, my duty to inform poor Mrs. Peyton, and the other friends of those who had perished, so soon as might be, of the fate that had befallen them; and I could not forget that the longer I was absent from Liverpool the more difficult I should find it to obtain a

situation when I got back. Out of sight is out of mind; and if people began to think me dead, they would forget me altogether.

Yet what could I do? It seemed that without the queen's help I could do nothing. For aught I knew, the nearest port where it would be possible to obtain a passage for Europe or the West Indies might be hundreds of miles away. Another voyage in the Diana was out of the question; but if Mab could be persuaded to give me an idea of the latitude and longitude of the island, and lend me the Sunflower and her crew, the thing might be done. It would be asking a great deal, since, apart from her own wishes, she could not send her yacht on a distant voyage without running counter to the prejudices of her people and the injunctions of that remarkable ancestor of hers whose will, though he had been dead a century, seemed to be still their law. Yet it was my only chance, and if I went on as I had begun, and continued to please her, I might eventually win her consent to my project.

On the other hand, I felt that it would be a mistake to hurry matters, to weary her by importunity, or appear over eager to get away. I must wait for a favorable opportunity to proffer my request, and it would be well, if I could, to insure her help by placing her under an obligation. My cue, in short, was patience and politeness.

Should I say anything to her—or anybody else—about the anonymous letter? On the whole, I thought not. If it were a hoax, I should only by so doing expose myself to ridicule; while if an enemy were the writer, I should be putting him on his guard and making him think that I was afraid. Better keep my own counsel and watch and wait.

As the note had come through the post (I did not know before that the island possessed a post), I had no clew to the identity of the sender. It was a mystery, and, for the present, must remain a mystery.

My next concern was as to how I should attire myself for the queen's ball. The evening-dress of Europe was not the evening-dress of Fair Island. The latter was a modification of the costume in vogue in the time of George II. and Sir Robert Walpole; and as the islanders had a weakness for bright colors, I did not take kindly to the idea of appearing at a festive entertainment in a

suit of black, a color which they reserved exclusively for mourning.

In this dilemma I consulted Field.

"A black coat, and of that peculiar shape, too, would certainly make you sadly conspicuous—I might almost say ridiculous," he said, when I showed him my swallow-tail, "and the queen might think you had mistaken her dance for a funeral. Have you nothing a little less somber—a uniform, for instance?"

"I have my uniform as captain in a volunteer rifle corps." (My poor mother made me bring it, rather against my own wish. Officers in foreign countries always wear their uniforms, she said, and I might find mine useful; so I brought it.)

"Where is it?"

"In one of the boxes which came up from the Diana an hour ago."

"Wear it, by all means," advised my host, when he had seen the uniform. "Nothing could be better; and the queen, who has never seen an English uniform, will take it as a compliment. She takes great interest in everything that concerns the old country, and that red coat will match well with your—chestnut hair."

This point being settled, we went to the cock-fight, which took place in a public pit not far from Mr. Field's house. A number of mains were fought, and many birds killed. At the outset I was rather disgusted, but after awhile I became as excited as the rest. I had never seen a main fought before, and I understood for the first time why the sport had been so attractive for our ancestors, and its suppression so difficult to enforce. Nobody showed more excitement or followed the fortunes of the various fights with keener enjoyment than Queen Mab.

"A fine old English sport!" she observed to me, when the tournament came to an end. "I hope you have enjoyed it."

"It was an English sport once, but now, like bull and bear-baiting, it is obsolete and illegal—forbidden by law."

"Forbidden by law! But why? What can there be wrong in it? Not having bulls and bears, we can bait neither the one nor the other. But cock-fighting! You surprise me, Mr. Erle. What is England coming to?"

"That is what a good many people used to ask when the sport was abolished. It was considered that we had no right to make the lower animals destroy each other for our amusement——"

"Excuse me, sir, but that is surely a very driveling argument. You kill the lower animals to satisfy your appetites, yet you will not let them fight to make you diversion. Besides, the birds like it; would not you, if you were a game-cock, rather die fighting than have your neck wrung and be put in a pot?"

"Certainly. But there were other objections. It was considered that public cock-fighting, besides being cruel, did harm to those who took part in it—blunted their feelings—demoralized them, in fact."

"In that case I must be very much demoralized," said Mab, with flashing eyes and an angry gesture; "for I have taken part, as you call it, in a hundred cock-fights, and shall probably take part in hundreds more. So, according to your showing, I must be both demoralized and incorrigible."

"Not at all; anything but that," I returned, eager to repair the fault I had so stupidly committed. "You asked me why cock-fighting was abolished in England, and I was trying to explain why. I was not giving these arguments as my own. Moreover, cock-fighting in Fair Island is one thing; cock-fighting in England was quite another thing. It was made a medium for gambling, fell into bad hands, and became a public nuisance. As for you, I am sure that no one who has ever seen Queen Mab could doubt that she was other than——"

Here I hesitated.

"What, sir?"—peremptorily.

"A right noble woman."

She smiled; and I liked her none the less for being sensible to a little flattery.

"You are coming to my ball, of course?"

"Of course."

"I am afraid you will find our dances rather old-fashioned; but you shall teach us some of the new ones. I saw a mention in one of those illustrated papers of a waltz. I think I should like to waltz. Will you show me how?"

I bowed, and said I should be delighted to teach her anything in my power.

The ball was a great success. The orchestra consisted of a flute, a clarionet, a key-bugle, a Carib guitar, and a set of Pan's-pipes. The flute seemed to be new, but the clarionet and bugle looked old enough to have belonged to the bandsmen of the Hecate or the Santa Anna. Yet they produced very fair music, and though the men played without notes, they had a great variety of airs, some of which struck me as being singularly wild and beautiful.

My uniform made quite a sensation, and, judging by the compliments I received, it was much admired. Before I had been many minutes in the room I booked several engagements; for as Fair Island ladies deem it not unmaidenly to ask men (on occasion) to be their partners for life, they naturally see no impropriety in asking them to take part in a dance. They were all tall, fine women; not a few were very well favored, barring the queerness of their complexion, and two or three were as fair as Queen Mab herself. They were lively, too, and wonderfully graceful in their movements, dancing with a zest and energy unknown to the languid beauties of European ballrooms. Being, moreover, the descendants of the Hecate's officers (the descendants of able-bodied and ordinary seamen and warrant-officers not being admitted into society), they were intelligent, and, considering their opportunities, well educated. Most of them had read Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, "Plutarch's Lives," "Robinson Crusoe," and "Pamela," and were acquainted with the leading facts of European history up to about 1740. From that time forward, so far as regards the outer world, their minds, like the minds of Fair Islanders generally, were a blank; and it is hardly possible for those who have not tried it to realize the difficulty of keeping up a conversation with people who know nothing of George III. and Napoleon, Nelson and Wellington, the Reform Bill and Queen Victoria, the Indian Mutiny and the American Civil War, Bismarck and the G. O. M.; who have never seen a daily newspaper, a monthly review, or a railway; never heard of the United States, Australia, New Zealand, or the Suez Canal, lighting by gas or printing by steam, and whose knowledge of fiction is limited to "Robinson Crusoe" and "Pamela."

In these circumstances it was perhaps fortunate that I had little to do except answer questions, the ladies whose acquaintance I made being insatiably curious. But I soon found that if I wanted to be believed I must keep back a portion of the truth. When, in answer to a question about the size of London, I said that its population was nearly four millions, and that a hundred thousand strangers left and entered it every day, the significant smile which went round told me that the statement was regarded as monstrous and incredible. My account of the electric telegraph and some other modern scientific and mechanical achievements was received with even greater incredulity, especially by the men, who, though too polite openly to doubt my word, obviously thought me an unconscionable romancer.

Only the queen affected to believe me, either because she was naturally more intelligent than the others, or that she was fresh from the perusal of the books and periodicals which we had brought from the Diana—or for some other and less obvious reason.

The first dance was a Sir Roger de Coverley, in which I had Mab for a partner; then followed a minuet, which, at her pressing instance, I attempted—with poor success, however. There was an immense deal of bowing on the part of the men, and courtesying on the part of the women, the latter bending so low that more than one disaster seemed imminent; but they always recovered their perpendicular with remarkable agility and grace. Next came a fandango, doubtless a bequest from Denzil Fane's Spanish wife. After this the queen asked me to show her how to waltz. She proved an apt pupil—acquired the step in a few minutes; I whistled to the musicians a few bars of a waltz, which they picked up in no time, and the next moment we were whirling round the room—to the astonishment of all beholders. They had never seen anything like it before. We had a long spin—Mab being in excellent wind—and when I escorted her to her seat, I could see by the manner of some of the younger men that they envied me my good fortune, and that the favor shown me by the queen was beginning to excite jealousy, and might make me enemies. Be that as it may, waltzing became the fashion. All wanted to learn the step at once, and I had very nearly as many in-

vitations to dance as there were young women in the room. They voted me dancing-master by acclamation, and for the remainder of the night we did nothing in the world but waltz.

"We are infinitely obliged to you," said the queen, as I took my leave early in the morning. "You have given us a new pleasure."

"He has, indeed!" chorused twenty voices. "We are all infinitely obliged to him!"

"Waltzing is simply divine!" she continued. "We will have another ball—yes, the night after to-morrow. All who are here consider yourselves invited, and perhaps Mr. Erle will kindly teach us something else."

With this request I was, of course, only too glad to comply. I taught them the polka and the schottische, and we had a try at the lancers, with all of which the queen and her guests were greatly delighted; and Field told me that if I went on as I had begun, I should soon be the most popular person in Fair Island.

I was, moreover, often consulted by the queen about the books she was reading. She found in them so many things that were strange to her, so many allusions which she did not understand, that she required almost continual instruction, and I became actually, if not officially, the director of her studies and the superintendent of her new education—for that she called it, and that, in fact, it was.

All this augured well for the success of my scheme. I could hardly think that after I had done so much for her she would refuse me the favor I intended to ask. Nevertheless, I hesitated and procrastinated, missing more than one seemingly good opportunity of preferring my request. Why, I can hardly say; partly, perhaps, because something told me that it was still too soon—that the propitious moment had not yet arrived; partly because the Fair Islanders improved on acquaintance, and that the more I saw of them and their country the less I liked the idea of leaving them."

As for the anonymous letter, I had come to the conclusion that it was either a poor joke or a piece of stupid spite, and though I kept the missive in my pocket, it very soon passed out of my mind.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING.

AND so things went on. For two or three weeks there occurred nothing to disturb the even tenor of my life. In the company of Field and Amyas Fane and some others, and once with a party organized by the queen, I visited several estates and saw something of the interior of the island. All the piebald whites and most of the descendants of the former Carib chiefs owned plantations which they cultivated, with the help of slaves; for land was so plentiful and the soil so fertile that very few of the aborigines would labor for hire. So far as I could see, the slaves, though not ill-treated, were very hard wrought, for in the absence of horses they had to do horses' work. They were, however, comfortably lodged and well fed, and as, according to a law laid down by Denzil Fane, no bondsman could be sold without his own consent, there were presumably none of those cruel separations of families which are usually among the worst features of the system. Insubordination was, however, severely punished, rebellious slaves being hanged without ceremony, and, as Field one day confided to me, the two races were really at bitter enmity. There had been several partial risings repressed, and, as I gathered, not without difficulty.

"The Calibans are our greatest trouble," he said. "They are increasing at such a rate that they will soon be more numerous than ourselves, and if a rising should happen to coincide with an invasion of the Cariberoes, it would be a serious matter."

"The Cariberoes?"

"The people whom Denzil Fane and his men helped to repulse when they first came to the island. The Calibans are their descendants, and they are very strong and brave, and would make desperate fighters."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because they are very courageous. We have had experience of their prowess, though not very recently. It was they who taught us how to fight sharks, and they often fight fiercely among themselves. Yes, the Cariberoes would make splendid soldiers."

"Have you any present reason to fear a rising?"

"No, I don't think we have; still, there is no telling what may happen. But we are well prepared. Our young men are regularly drilled. You shall see a parade of our archer-guard one of these days."

"Archer-guard! Are your soldiers armed only with bows and arrows, then?"

"Necessarily. Our store of gunpowder, being very limited, is reserved for the artillery, which consists of half a dozen brass pieces, part of the Santa Anna's armament. That is why I inquired whether you had any gunpowder on board the Diana. But our archers would make no despicable foes, even when opposed to men armed with muskets."

Mr. Field spoke of the flint-lock muskets of the previous century, and when I saw the archer-guard and examined their weapons, I was quite of his opinion. None of their bows, when unstrung, was less than six feet in length; and their arrows were even longer than the cloth-yard shafts which won for England the battles of Agincourt and Crecy, and did such dire execution among the Scots at Flodden Field. The Fair Islanders, moreover, were splendid marksmen; a good shot could easily hit a bull's-eye at three hundred and fifty yards, and as easily kill a deer (or a man) at four hundred. Compared with theirs, the native bow was a very inferior weapon; and I felt sure, as I told Field, that the five hundred Archers of the Guard would be more than a match for three times their number of Calibans or Cariberoes.

After some further conversation, I ventured to suggest the danger he apprehended might be avoided by abolishing slavery altogether. If I had proposed to abolish the island and declare the memory of Denzil Fane accursed, he could scarley have looked more horrified.

"Abolish slavery! What on earth put so preposterous an idea into your head? Slavery is a beneficent institution. Scripture nowhere condemns it: the Jews practiced it; the apostles approved of it; and so far as we are concerned, my dear sir, the remedy would be worse than the disease. If we liberated these people, they would of a surety conspire against our commonwealth, and endeavor to overthrow it, for they are fierce and truculent. Moreover, we should all have to become hewers of wood

and drawers of water, because once they were free they would work only for themselves."

This was conclusive, and as I could not have answered Mr. Field without the risk of giving serious offense, I allowed the subject to drop.

In the meantime, the Diana's cargo was being unloaded and brought up to Fairhaven, but rather fitfully and slowly; for the ship contained an immense quantity of merchandise of one sort and another, and the warehouse accommodation at the queen's disposal was decidedly limited. The bales and cases had to be stowed anywhere and everywhere, and there being no draught animals in the island, the labor of shifting and carrying the packages about was very great. In these circumstances I suggested to Mab and the Council of Nine that it would be better to let the remainder of the cargo stay where it was.

"You have landed the bulk of it," I said; "what there is left can be brought up as you want it, and when you want it. The ship being securely moored, it is quite safe where it is."

"A happy thought, Mr. Erle," exclaimed Mab. "Let it be so. To-morrow we will go down to the Diana, and see for ourselves what there is left; we may perchance find some more books, and you will perhaps be so obliging as to take out the remaining mirrors. Morris shall go with us."

Morris was a carpenter, and he had fixed up one mirror in the queen's bedroom so much to her satisfaction that she wanted to have all the remaining mirrors taken out of the saloon and fixed up in like manner. As for books, she was simply insatiable. She read anything that came to hand, but liked best something scientific, or a novel with plenty of incident and a complicated plot. When once she became interested in a story of this sort, she would neither sleep nor attend to business until she reached the end, and woe betide the councilor who at such a time ventured to trouble her with affairs of State. When Mr. Thomas, a rather timid old gentleman, secretary to the council, brought her some papers to sign while she was reading "Monte-Cristo," and did not go away the moment he was bid, she half frightened

the poor man to death by threatening to set her puma at him.

We went down to the Diana as arranged, by water of course. In addition to the boat's crew and the carpenter, we were accompanied by Marian Lester, one of the queen's maidens, and a youth of the name of Buttercup, who was half page, half errand-boy.

On reaching the ship, I looked over the manifest, on which I had ticked off the packages already landed, and, in consultation with Mab, decided what others we should take back with us in the boat, and told the men to hoist them out of the hold.

Then, while Morris was removing the mirrors, we took a turn round the ship, and made an inspection of the cabins, on the chance of finding anything likely to be useful and worth carrying away; for we did not intend to make another visit to the ship for some time.

In the captain's cabin were a thermometer and a barometer.

"We will have these," I said, looking at them. "This is a self-registering thermometer, and I want to ascertain the average temperature of Fairhaven, and the barometer may prove very useful. It gives warning of storms. Do you ever have storms?"

"Sometimes, and very bad ones. But they don't often take us by surprise. I have nearly always a premonition of them; so have others."

"I suppose you can tell by the look of the sky and the direction and force of the wind?"

The queen laughed.

"The look of the sky and the force of the wind!" she said. "Why, when the clouds gather and the wind rises the storm has begun. These are signs which children may read. What I mean is, that before any sign is visible, while the heavens are still clear, the sea still calm, something tells me—I know not what; it is a feeling, a foreboding—that within a few hours the weather will change for the worse."

"That comes from increase of pressure," I said. "You are sensitive to atmospheric conditions."

"I don't know how that is. I dare say you are right," she returned, pensively. "But I have exactly the same feeling when people are thinking evil against me."

"But that is not possible. Nobody can think evil against *you!*"

"Yet such a thing has happened, my friend. Fair Island is very beautiful, and its people are happy, but they are not all good. And lately—the last few days—I have had a foreboding. For three nights past, Cato, who, as you know, sleeps always at my chamber door, has growled fiercely, as if he scented danger; and this morning I was wakened by Denzil Fane's sword falling from the wall and clashing on the floor; and, worse still, it broke off at the hilt. Nothing could be more ominous of evil—and then this foreboding, the like of which for intensity I have never experienced before——"

Here she came to an abrupt stop.

"A foreboding of what?" I asked.

I had already discovered that the islanders were somewhat superstitious; but I thought Mab knew better than to believe in signs, omens, and presentiments, or attach importance to the falling of a sword or the growling of a puma.

"A foreboding of danger."

"To whom?"

"To myself, to the commonwealth, and to you, Mr. Erle."

"Why to me?"

"I know not. But I am sure the danger which threatens me threatens you also. The foreboding weighs heavily on my soul, yet whence it comes or how it is caused I cannot say. When we return to Fairhaven I will consult Sybil."

"Who is Sybil?"

"The oldest and wisest woman in the island; the only one to whom it is given to interpret dreams and foretell events."

"A very useful woman to know. I should like to ask her a few questions about myself. My own future is decidedly obscure at present. Perhaps she could throw a little light on it," I said, with mock gravity.

"It is only when she is in the mood that Sybil can discern the shadow of coming events," returned Mab, coldly, and almost sternly, as if she resented the skepticism which my remark implied. "The prophetic mantle rests not

always on her shoulders. But you shall see her, and then you can judge for yourself. And now let us go on with our inspection."

As we passed through one of the berths—I think it was poor Bulnois'—I saw a carpet-bag in one corner.

"What is here?" I said, opening it.

"Books!" exclaimed the queen. "Let us see what they are."

So I carried the bag into the saloon, and emptied on the table at least a score of volumes, the greater part of them novels.

"There!" I said, taking up a copy of "The Woman in White." "You have only to begin reading this, and you will forget all about your melancholy forebodings, and the supposed dangers which a too active imagination has conjured up."

"Is it very interesting?" she asked, with sparkling eyes.

"Very."

"I will begin it at once," she said, and suiting the action to the word, she sat down, and opening the volume, settled herself for a good read. "Let me know when the boat is ready."

An hour later the boat was ready, but so crowded with bales, cases, and one thing and another, that it was evident she could not take us all back at one trip.

On this I went below to the queen, whom I found deep in Wilkie Collins' thrilling romance, and after explaining the difficulty we were in, suggested that she and her personal attendants should go off in the boat, and that two of the men and myself would wait on board until another could be sent to take us off.

"No; let the people go. They can send a boat for us when they get to Fairhaven—I mean for you, myself, Marian, and Buttercup."

"It cannot be here for two hours, and in much less time than that it will be dark."

"I am not afraid of the dark. You have lamps, I suppose?"

"Yes, we have lamps; still——"

"Let the boat go, I say!" and the next moment her head was again bent over her book.

I went on deck, gave orders for the boat to shove off,

and told the cockswain to send another for us with all speed, the instant he arrived. This done, I lighted a cigar and paced to and fro, absorbed in thought, until the thickening twilight warned me that it was time to trim the saloon lamp.

Mab was still reading, nor until I lighted the lamp which swung over her head did she look up.

"Thank you," she said; and then turning round, looked intently through one of the ports toward the almost departed sun. "There is going to be a storm," she added, wistfully.

"Why should you think so?" I asked. "The sky is perfectly clear, and there is hardly a breath of wind."

"You will see. I hope it won't be more than a storm —a tempest, I mean. But there is a feeling in the air. Is the ship quite fast—safely moored, I mean?"

"Quite. I looked to that the moment I came on board."

"Good! We are safe, then. The boat will be here in an hour. That will be time enough," and then she took up her book again, and I went once more on deck.

The short twilight had now almost deepened into darkness, and I was quite alone, Marian being with her mistress, and Buttercup fast asleep in a corner of the saloon. I lighted another cigar, and was about to resume my solitary walk where I had left off, when it occurred to me to verify the queen's weather-forecast by glancing at the barometer.

The result was startling. The mercury had fallen several points since I last looked at it—that is to say, in three hours.

"Gad, she is right!" I thought; "we are in for a storm, and no mistake—a regular ripper! I hope it won't burst before we get back to Fairhaven. The creek is certainly not the open sea, and we are safely moored. All the same, I would rather be on dry land for choice."

I looked round, for, as yet, the darkness was far from being absolute. Myriads of stars studded the sky, and the sea was phosphorescent. The creek shone like a river of molten gold, and as the tide (thereabouts very strong) ebbed rapidly past, fiery wavelets broke on the shore and dashed merrily against the Diana's sides. The mountain, its summit pointing toward the Southern

Cross, loomed large and silent under the vaulted sky, like some monstrous genie guarding hidden treasure, or a giant sentinel keeping watch over the sleeping island that nestled at its base.

Westward, as well as northward and southward, the calm was complete, and anything more superb than the orb-gemmed heavens and the shining sea it were impossible to imagine; but out of the mist and beyond the Painted Rocks were beginning to creep ominous shadows —shadows that swiftly took the form of clouds, and spreading pall-like over the sky, swallowed up the stars and turned the water to an inky blackness."

It became so dark that I had to grope my way to the binnacle, intent on lighting the lantern, as without something to denote our whereabouts the people who were coming to fetch us off would be unable to find the ship. There was a peculiar feeling in the atmosphere, too, that made me think it was strongly charged with electricity. My temples throbbed as if they would burst, when I pushed my hand through my hair I could hear it crackle.

I had reached the binnacle, and was feeling about for the lantern, when a terrific peal of thunder crashed over the mountain, and a long, vivid flash of forked lightning rent the clouds asunder, bringing every object which it illumined into sharpest relief. It did not last the hundredth part of a second, yet I saw everything—the creek, the sea, the tall masts of the Diana, the very leaves quivering on the trees—*and the figure of a man cutting one of the ropes by which the ship was moored to the shore!*

CHAPTER XXIII.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

I SAW it distinctly—a man hacking at the rope with a long knife; and if his back had not been turned toward me I should have seen his face—possibly recognized him. Yet I could hardly believe my eyes. I thought they had deceived me, and tried to persuade myself that I was the victim of an optical illusion. But my doubts were quickly and rudely dispelled. The next moment the ship swung round, and the second rope, unable to withstand the strain, or perhaps weakened by the slash of another

knife, parted with a report like the shot of a pistol, and the Diana was adrift.

I ran to the helm without any definite idea of what I should do, for I knew how helpless we were, and I feared we should be dashed against the opposite side of the creek. It was, perhaps, the best thing that could happen to us; if we were carried out into the bay we should be past praying for. Just then I heard the sound of hurried footsteps.

"What has happened, Mr. Erle? Where are you?" asked a voice which I recognized as that of Queen Mab.

"At the wheel. Somebody has cut the ropes, and the ship is adrift."

"Somebody has cut the ropes? What do you mean? How do you know?"

"When the lightning flashed just now, I saw a man cutting the stern-rope."

"Saw you his face?"

"No."

"You have no idea who he was, then?"

"Not the least."

"Somebody was thinking evil against us, then, and plotting it. My foreboding has soon come true, yet you did not believe it, Mr. Erle."

"You were right, too, about the weather," I answered, evasively. "The barometer has gone down rapidly, and we are going to have a night of it. My God!"

Another blinding flash of lightning, followed by an even more terrific peal of thunder than the first. At the same time a violent gust of wind, coming down the channel of the creek as through a funnel, drove the ship before it like a straw, and almost threw her on her beam-ends.

Mabel was now close by me, holding on to the binnacle.

"How will it end? I mean, what is likely to be our fate?" she asked, quietly, and with no more fear in her voice than if she were putting an ordinary question.

"Drowning is likely to be our fate. Even if the ship were manned by a full crew, and commanded by a skillful captain, we should be in great danger; and there is only one man on board, and he no seaman."

"If it is God's will for us to perish, so be it. He knows

best, and we can die but once. We cannot escape our destiny."

This answer, spoken with measured gravity, surprised me exceedingly. Never before had I heard Mab mention religion. I had thought her practically a pagan, though she did go to church sometimes.

"We cannot escape our destiny," she repeated. "Still, I like not to yield without a struggle. It is our duty to live as long as we can. Must we drift helplessly on? Can you think of no expedient? There is surely an anchor?"

"Of course there is. What an ass I am! Why didn't I think of that before? But I told you I was no seaman. Yes, we will let go the anchor—if we can—and put a light in the mizzen-top, and then, when the boat comes, it may perhaps be seen, and ourselves rescued."

But the idea was much more easily conceived than carried out. A light was indispensable, and after several unsuccessful attempts to obtain one from a match, we were compelled to go into the saloon, and there light a lantern. Then, followed by Marian and Buttercup, we made our way forward with great difficulty, for the ship was rolling like a log, and the decks were wet and slippery with the whirling spray, which lashed our faces and impeded our progress.

It was an exciting moment; Mab clinging to the capstan and holding up the latern; Marian and the boy cowering behind a coil of ropes; myself, maul in hand, groping for the pin by which the chain is fastened to the ring of the anchor.

After a good deal of hammering—for I made several bad shots—I succeeded, though more by good luck than address. The anchor dropped into the sea, and the huge cable flew through the hawse-hole in a sheet of flame. What with the wind and tide, the ship had a good deal of way on her; and when the anchor took ground, she brought to with a shock that shook her like a leaf, dashed the lantern from Mab's hand, and sent me sprawling into the scupper.

We had to find our way aft in the dark—no easy task, for the force of the wind increased every minute, and the ship heaved and rolled viciously.

"Can we do anything more?" asked Mab, when we

were all in the saloon. She had lost her hat; her dishevelled hair was damp with spray; her face flushed with exposure to the storm, her eyes aglow with excitement; and as she stood there near the swinging-lamp, erect and fearless, she looked wondrously handsome.

"The only thing more we can do," I said, "is to hang a lantern in the mizzen-top; not that I think it will be of any use. No boat could live in this sea; but it is well not to throw away a chance."

"How long do you suppose we shall have to remain here, then?"

"That depends on how long the storm lasts; but at any rate until sunrise."

"In that case I may as well resume my interrupted novel. If any change takes place either for the better or worse, Mr. Erle, kindly let me know." And with that she sat down and went on with her reading as unconcernedly as if she had been in her own room at Fairhaven.

As for me, I lighted another lantern, and after at least three narrow escapes of falling overboard, succeeded in fixing it securely in the mizzen-top.

This done, I returned to the quarter-deck and remained there—I cannot say on the lookout, as there was nothing to be seen—for I had an uneasy feeling that something would happen, and not for the better. The wind continued to blow in gusts so fierce that I was more than once nearly carried over the taffrail. I could not have made my way to the forepart of the ship to save my life; and though the cable was invisible, I knew that the strain on it must be terrific. And the wind did not always come from the same quarter. Several times it veered completely round, the ship veering with it, till at last (being unable to see the compass) I had not the most remote idea in which direction lay the land. This went on some hours, and about midnight (as nearly as I could tell) what I dreaded came to pass—the anchor began to drag. At first I thought I might be mistaken, but when I felt sure that the ship moved I went below and informed Mab.

"I am not surprised," she said, laying down her book. "This wind would move anything. What shall we do?"

"Wait the issue of events. What else can we do?

We are helpless. It is impossible to let go another anchor."

"That settles the question. Well, if we cannot struggle, we may at least hope. Whither are we moving?"

"I don't know. I have not another lantern. One was broken in the bows; another is at the mizzen-top. The rest must have been taken ashore. I only hope we are not moving toward the island. In that case it won't be long before the ship is dashed to pieces."

"And if we are moving toward the Painted Rocks it will be still worse."

"Perhaps. But we shall be longer in getting there."

"We are between Scylla and Charybdis."

"Very much so; and if the cable parts—— But we may possibly keep on dragging until the wind goes down, and that, I take it, is our sole hope, if you can call it hope."

"At any rate, there is hope; and while hope exists despair would be a crime. I don't despair; do you?"

"It would be a crime if I did, with such an example of high courage before me."

This was no mere compliment. In truth, she bore herself so bravely, and looked so bright and serene withal, that I could not for very shame allow myself to be discouraged, although, to tell the truth, I should have been sorry (speaking professionally) to insure the ship or our own lives for a premium of ninety-five per cent.

"You are surely not going on deck again?" she said, as I made toward the companion. "You can do no good, and you must be very tired. Sit down here and rest awhile."

The queen was right. My presence on deck just then could serve no useful purpose, so I gladly accepted her invitation; and I was so overcome with excitement and fatigue that I had hardly sat down when I fell fast asleep.

I must have slept a long time, for I was awakened by Mab telling me that day was breaking, and suggesting that we had better go on deck.

The storm was still raging, the anchor still dragging, and all round was a wild waste of angry water lashed into foam by the fierce and fitful wind. On one side of us lay the island, shrouded in gloom; on the other were faintly

visible the Painted Rocks, against which the waves were beating with a long, hollow roar like that of distant thunder. The sun was above the horizon, shining through a deep rift in the heavy clouds, like a fiery ball at the bottom of a hole, and throwing a ruddy glare over the heaving sea.

It was a grand, yet dreary and awful scene, and though Mab still looked calm and confident, and I tried to be hopeful, I saw no way of escape. The ship being invisible from the shore, we could expect no help from that quarter, even if a boat could have weathered the storm; and, unless I was much mistaken, we were a long way past Fairhaven and the creek. The Diana was moving in a direction nor'-west by west—that is to say, obliquely toward the Painted Rocks. The rate of her progress was regulated by the wind; when it blew hard she went fast; when the wind fell off, as it did at intervals, she became almost stationary. But, at the utmost, we could not count on a respite of more than three or four hours; and once among the Painted Rocks, our doom would be sealed. The ship must needs go to pieces at once, and the strongest swimmer in the world could not resist the impact of those terrible waves. The storm, moreover, showed no sign of abatement, and as the barometer was as low as ever, we could not count on any change for the better before night—perhaps not even then.

"Not a very cheerful outlook," said Mab, after a long silence, during which her thoughts had doubtless been of the same color as my own. "Nevertheless, I have a strong feeling that we shall escape, though I confess I don't see how; and, as you know, my presentiments have a way of coming true. And I dreamed, a little while ago, as I slept in the saloon, that I saw a rainbow."

"You consider that a good omen?"

"How could you wish for a better? And, see, there is a rainbow!"

It was true. Rain had begun to fall, and over the rocks and the mist, and, as it seemed, touching them both, hung a most beautiful bow. But only for a moment; a black cloud passed before the sun, and the "sign" vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

"Keep up your courage, Mr. Erle!" exclaimed Mab.

"I am now sure that we shall escape. The rainbow was sent to give us new hope."

Hardly had she spoken, when, as if to belie her words, the wind, which had lately fallen off a little, rose again, and the Diana drifted more rapidly than before. Nearer and nearer she drove toward the fatal rocks, and the din of the waves beating against them, and the roar of the storm, were so great that we could not hear each other speak. It seemed as if nothing on earth could prevent our destruction. But as we drew within a mile of the barrier, the wind lulled once more, and the anchor ceased to drag.

Death now literally stared us in the face. When the next gust came we should not have five minutes to live.

I went forward to the bows to look at the cable. It was all paid out, and as rigid as a bar of iron. I was watching it intently, and wondering how near it was to the "breaking strain," when Mab joined me.

"What do you think of the rainbow now?" I said. "It does not appear to have done us much good."

"I shall not give up hope, Mr. Erle, until the ship is on those rocks and I find myself in the water," was the undaunted reply; "and even then—— Good heavens! what is that?"

"Where?"

"Beyond the Painted Rocks."

I looked, but saw nothing; and then, remembering how much sharper were the queen's eyes than mine, I had recourse to my glass. Well might she exclaim and stand with outstretched arm and blanched face. A great wall of water, black and solid, higher than the Painted Rocks, higher than the Diana's masts, was coming out of the mist and sweeping swiftly toward us.

For a moment I was too much taken aback either to think or speak. I was lost in astonishment and dread.

But by a strong effort I recovered my presence of mind.

"It must be a tidal wave," I said. "I have often heard of them, but this is the first I ever saw. If it strikes us while the ship is at anchor we shall go under and never come up again; I am enough of a sailor to know that."

"What will you do, then?"

"Slip the cable and trust to Providence."

"Well said, Mr. Erle. Can I do anything to help you?"

"Yes; there is only one hatch open. Shut it, and tell Marian and Buttercup to stay where they are. Then lash yourself firmly to something."

All this passed in a few seconds, and I stood by, maul in hand, ready to slip the cable, taking care not to do it too soon, lest the ship should drive on the rocks before we were overtaken by the wave. As it leaped over them I knocked the pin out of the shackle. Away flew the cable, and without a moment's delay I lashed myself to the capstan. Mab had fastened herself to the foremast.

What happened next I can hardly tell. The huge wave curled over us, then a cascade of green water fell on the deck, and for a minute or two all was darkness. We were under water, and I verily thought the ship was going to the bottom; but she came up again like a strong swimmer after a deep dive, and sometimes on her beam-ends, sometimes stern foremost, rolling, pitching, plunging, gyrating like a twig on a mill-stream, was carried madly forward on the crest of that mighty wave.

I began to think we were out of the frying-pan into the fire; for to be flung ashore at the speed we were going would be quite as bad as falling foul of the Painted Rocks.

The coast toward which we were driving was strange to me—a part of the island I had not seen before—low and thickly wooded, and I saw no signs of life or cultivation. On sped the wave, as remorseless as fate; it rushed up a sandy beach, carried us over the tree tops, and finally landed the Diana high and dry, stranded in a ravine at least two miles from the shore.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SAVED.

WE were saved, but I was so dazed with the speed at which we had driven, the rolling of the ship, the rush of the wave, and the tumult of the storm, so overwrought with excitement and suspense, that it took me some time to realize the fact and to make sure that the sea had done its worst, and that I might safely unloose myself from the capstan.

So soon as I fully recovered my senses, my first thought was of Queen Mab. She was still lashed to the foremast —like myself, drenched to the skin; her long black hair, which reached to her waist, hanging loose over her shoulders.

"Let me release you," I said. "We are aground on dry land, or land that soon will be dry."

"We are quite safe, then?"

"Quite."

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed, fervently. "This has indeed been an ordeal. Beforetime I had persuaded myself that when my hour came I should not fear to die; but as that wave struck us and the water came over me, and I felt as if we were going down, down, and should see the bright sun, my beautiful Fair Island, and those I love"—here she looked at me strangely—"never more, I knew what was meant by the bitterness of death. Yes, I am glad the danger is past; and I have to thank you, and I do. But where are we?"

"That is more than I can tell—somewhere on the island, I suppose."

"We must be. But"—putting her hand over her eyes and looking intently round—"I do believe—yes—this is Swamp Island."

"Swamp Island? What is Swamp Island?"

"An unwholesome swamp, at the southwestern corner of Fair Island, from which it is separated by a narrow channel, and inhabited only by snakes and alligators. Nobody ever comes here, and we are a long way from Fairhaven. We have almost made the circuit of the island; the Painted Rocks are no longer in sight. But let us go below and see how Marian and Buttercup have fared since we fastened them up."

I had already noticed that Mab looked pale and worn, and I now saw that she was weak. As we walked aft she had to lean on me for support."

"You are ill?" I asked, anxiously.

"I shall be better in a few minutes. For the first time in my life I feel faint."

"No wonder, after all you have gone through. Any other woman would be more dead than alive. Why, it must have been twenty-four hours since you tasted food!'

"You have fasted quite as long."

"Never mind me. I have been too anxious and excited to think about eating; but now I am beginning to feel terribly peckish——"

"What?"

"'Peckish' is a modern colloquialism. It means hungry. The one thing needful just now is grub."

"Grub?"

"I beg your pardon; I mean food. I think there are a few tins of preserved meat still on board. I must look them up at once."

By this time we had reached the saloon. Marian and Buttercup were alive, but very haggard and limp, and only just recovering from the worst agonies of seasickness. They were so ill, in fact, that my announcement that we were aground and out of danger did not seem to interest them in the least; all they wanted was to be quiet. As for eating! the very idea was enough to—— So, in the interest of all parties, I proposed that Marian should lie down in one of the berths and let Mab have her clothes while Mab's were drying in the sun, for the clouds were now dispersing, and the weather taking up.

"But what will you do?" said the queen. "You are quite as wet as I am."

"Oh, I shall easily find a rig-out. I can don some sailor's togs while mine dry."

"'Rig-out,' 'togs!'" repeated Mab, with a puzzled look. "You speak in riddles, Mr. Erle. I don't understand."

"Of course you don't. I am always forgetting that you are not familiar with modern colloquial English. I mean clothes, garments."

"Good. 'Rig-out' is expressive, I think. I will go and rig myself out in Marian's togs. You will go and rig yourself out in some other body's togs; and if after that you will kindly find some grub I shall be extremely obliged, for I feel awfully peckish. Is that the correct thing?"

"You could not express yourself more correctly, Queen Mab, if you had been 'finished' in a London boarding-school," I answered, with a bow.

She responded to the compliment with a gratified smile, and went away with Marian, while I betook myself to another part of the ship.

I had no difficulty in finding what I wanted in the way of clothes, and in the way of food I was fortunate enough to unearth several tins of preserved meat and preserved vegetables, a tin of biscuits, as well as some cheese and salt beef. There was tea, too, and I told Buttercup (he could hardly crawl, poor fellow, but I thought it would do him more good than going to bed) to light the galley fire and set the kettle on; and half an hour later the queen and I were eating as only people who have fasted twenty-four hours can eat.

When we had taken the edge off our appetites we took to discussing our plans. Mab had only a vague idea of the distance from Swamp Island to Fairhaven. There are few roads in the remoter parts of Fair Island, and no mile-stones. She thought it was about three days' journey. The best way would be to go by sea. As, however, we had, unfortunately, no boat, that was out of the question. But, once on the mainland, we should fall in with villages and plantations, where we could obtain shelter and help. Mab, being of opinion that the channel which divided the two islands was but a few miles away, proposed to set out at once. To this I demurred. It was now the hottest time of the day. We were all very tired; we neither knew exactly how far it was to the channel, nor how far we should have to go on the other side before reaching a settlement.

"Better stay all night where we are," I said, "and start at sunrise in the morning; the more especially as the channel being no doubt a tidal one, we may have to wait some time before we are able to cross."

"You are quite right. Let it be as you say. We shall be all the better for a good night's rest. At the same time, I am very anxious to get back to Fairhaven as soon as possible. They are sure to think I am dead, and in that case there may be bad work."

"Bad work?"

"Yes, bad work—trouble. Amyas Fane is my natural successor, and in the ordinary course of things should become protector in my stead. But the Council of Nine have a right of veto, and they may reject him in favor of my second cousin, Oliver Fane."

"I know him—he was among the shark-fighters—a

very fine young fellow. Still, I don't quite understand why they should prefer him to the other."

"He is better liked than the other, and I think he is a better man. I like Amyas; he has many good qualities; but, to tell the truth, he does not inspire me with implicit confidence. He is ambitious and masterful, and, I fear, not always sincere."

"I see. You think that if the Council preferred Oliver, Amyas would refuse to accept their decision."

"I think it is very likely."

"And then?"

"There might be trouble, confusion, strife, perhaps bloodshed, all which my return would of course prevent. While we were afloat I did not think about it. My mind was too full of other things; it never occurred to me that we should be cast away so far from home, and in circumstances which would make it appear that we had perished. But now I see clearly that the consequences may be very serious. Amyas has friends, and Oliver has friends, and both are brave and impetuous. Yes, Mr. Erle, I am very anxious to get back."

"I can well believe it, and we must get back with all possible speed. But we shall gain rather than lose by delaying our departure until to-morrow morning. And are you not taking the matter rather too seriously? We shall be back in two or three days—at the outside in four—and in that time no great harm can be done. They will surely seek for us; because the Diana has disappeared, it does not follow that we are all drowned, and Amyas could not decently——"

Here I pulled up short, for a startling suspicion had flashed suddenly into my mind, an idea to which I hesitated to give utterance.

"Well," said Mab, "what were you going to say?"

"Nothing particular. Only that I was sure Amyas would not take any steps—would not attempt to assume the protectorate till he had assured himself that—you were not living."

"That is not what you were going to say!" she exclaimed, imperiously. "Tell me at once; I insist on knowing!"

"You cannot make a man tell you his thoughts, Queen Mab," I answered, quietly. "Suppose I admit that you

are right, that I was going to say something else, how are you to know that I am telling you my real thoughts, after all? I may tell you something else."

"But you will tell me your real thoughts, Mr. Erle. You have a right to be offended. I was too absolute; I insisted when I ought to have besought. Tell me frankly what was in your mind. You may be sure I shall not abuse your confidence, and I—I will give you mine."

She spoke softly, almost caressingly; and when Mab lowered her voice it was singularly sweet and musical. I had already half resolved to "speak out;" and even if I had not, it would hardly have been possible to refuse a request so graciously made.

"Well, my thought was this—it came unbidden—take it for what it is worth; I dare say you will deem it very absurd. It referred to your cousin—Amyas. You said just now that he is ambitious and insincere. That means he is not too scrupluous. Now, ambitious and unscrupulous men do strange things sometimes. Is it possible that he had anything to do with cutting the Diana loose—that his was the figure revealed to me by the flash of lightning?"

Mab started and turned pale, and her eyes were troubled.

"I should be sorry to think so," she said, hesitatingly; "yet still—— There are many things in his conduct lately—— And, to tell the truth—I said I would be frank with you—the same suspicion has occurred to me, yet vaguely, and I thrust it from me. I would not listen to the promptings of my own mind; would not have it that a Fane could be a traitor; and I have been so kind to him. One favor only I refused him. Yet nothing is impossible, and as the suspicion occurred also to you, there must be something in it. Yes, Amyas is the man, or, if he be not, he knows who is."

"Don't let us go too fast, Queen Mab. Suspicion is not proof, remember; and we are a long way yet from connecting your cousin with the crime. But there is something else. A few weeks ago I received an anonymous letter. Deeming it a sorry jest, or an empty threat, I said nothing about it; but now it is only right that you should know."

"An anonymous letter! Where is it?"

"Here!" taking it from my pocket and handing it to her.

She read and reread the letter with knitted brows several times, her face growing darker with every perusal. Then she struck the paper with her hand and sprung excitedly to her feet.

"I know not who wrote this letter," she exclaimed; "the handwriting is disguised; nevertheless, I will find out. Sybil shall tell me. But this I know: the hand which wrote it is the same that cut the Diana adrift. It is a vile plot. They—I say they, for there may be more than one—they saw that in you I had found a new friend, a friend whom I could trust; and they wanted to get rid of you, to frighten you away, before trying to get rid of me. There is but one man in the country who is capable of contriving such a plot, and he is the only man who would profit by its success—my cousin Amyas. It is more serious than I thought. Depend upon it, he will not wait for the verification of my death before proclaiming himself protector. No crisis so grave has occurred since Denzil Fane founded the commonwealth, whose ruler I am, and whose ruler, please God, I will remain. But I am only a woman. I shall want counsel and help. You will stand by me, Mr. Erle—you will be my friend?"

These words, delivered with much fire and animation, moved me strangely. I took her hand and kissed it, and before I knew what I was saying I had protested that I would stand by her to the death.

"I know you will," she said, smiling; "and afterward —when the danger is past—you will find that Queen Mab can be grateful; anything in her power—you have only to ask."

"Shall I ask her about going away?" I thought. "I shall never have a better chance." But before I could make up my mind Buttercup (who had been lying down in one of the cabins) came into the saloon, and the opportunity was lost.

"Poor boy!" exclaimed Mab, compassionately, "you look very hungry; sit down and eat something."

Buttercup required no second asking, and having a good deal of leeway to make up, he devoured nearly everything before him. He was a tall lad of fourteen, a

descendant of one of the Hecate's midshipmen, wonderfully good-natured, and very devoted to his mistress, with whom he was a great favorite.

"Whither are you going, Mr. Erle?" she asked, as I went toward the companion.

"To prepare for our journey. We shall have to provision ourselves for at least a day; and there are a few things I should like to take with us; among others, a couple of rifles and a revolver and some cartridges. It would be a pity to leave them behind. They might prove very useful—in certain eventualities.

"So they might. Let us take them, by all means. And the books. I should be very sorry to leave the books."

"Well, we will do our best. But books are heavy things to carry."

"Never mind. I can carry them," put in Buttercup, looking up from his plate. "I could carry twice as many, and other things too, if you want. They don't weigh above a hundredweight."

"Thank you, George," said Mab. "I know you are both strong and willing. All the same we must not burden you too heavily; for we have a long journey before us. I think I should like to be able to load and fire a rifle, Mr. Erle. Will you be my teacher?"

I answered, of course, in the affirmative, and fetching one of the weapons, I explained its mechanism, and showed her how to insert the cartridges, take aim, and fire. We then went on deck, and I let her burn a dozen cartridges—I did not think we could afford to waste more. Mab proved herself an exceedingly apt pupil, and I told her—what was, indeed, the truth—that with a little practice she would make an excellent shot.

CHAPTER XXV.

SAVED AGAIN.

ALL our preparations were completed before we turned in, and so soon as it was light enough to see our way we set out on our journey.

Our burdens were pretty equally divided. I carried the cartridges (which were pretty heavy), the revolver, one of the rifles, tools, cooking utensils, and some twine,

rope, and nails. Mab absolutely insisted on carrying the second rifle, and she and Marian also carried the greater part of the provisions. Buttercup, as he proposed, carried the books in two bags, which he slung over his shoulder. He could have carried more, but, though strong, he was only a lad, after all, and I knew, from my experience as a volunteer and a pedestrian rambler, that a pack weighs a good deal heavier at the end of a march than at the beginning.

My plan was to make straight for the seashore and follow the coast until we came to the channel, then follow that until we found a ford.

Failing a ford, I meant to extemporize a raft.

We got on better than I expected. The tidal wave had opened a broad track down to the sea, and the sand on the shore, being firm and hard, made very good walking. Despite the weight of literature which he bore on his back, Buttercup went gayly ahead. The two women were splendid marchers, walking with an even, elastic tread, heads erect, shoulders well thrown back, and looking as if they could go on all day long. It was all I could do to keep up with them.

We reached the creek in about three hours. It was very full, the tide being just then at its height. Fording was out of the question; swimming, with our kit, rifles, and the rest, equally so; and I could see no suitable timber for raft-making. So I proposed that we should strike inland for a few miles, in the hope that by the time the tide ebbed we might find a practicable crossing.

Mab concurred; and after a short halt and an *al-fresco* breakfast, we turned our backs to the sea, and followed, as well as we could, the course of the stream; but as its banks in many places were swampy and covered with almost impenetrable brushwood, we had to make several detours, and for some time we got on very slowly.

Shortly after we resumed our tramp, a bird, of which I did not take particular notice, flew out of a tree.

"That is a bad sign," said Mab, who missed nothing.

"A bad sign! Why?"

"Don't you see that it is a magpie?"

"Yes, it is rather like one. I did not know you had magpies in this part of the world."

"At any rate, we call it a magpie."

"Why shouldn't you? I am sure I have no objection. But you have not told me why it is a bad sign."

"Don't you know that a single magpie bodes evil?"

"'One for sorrow, two for mirth,
Three for a wedding, four for a birth.'"

"I think I have heard something like that before," I said, laughing. "I once heard an old woman repeat it when I was a small boy."

"You don't believe in signs and omens?"

"No, I don't, and I am surprised you do. Yet why should I be? Superstition dies hard; and your ideas are naturally——" Here, feeling that I was rather putting my foot in it, I paused for further consideration.

"Oh, don't hesitate. I know what you mean," returned the queen in a hurt voice. "We islanders are backward and ignorant—our ideas are old-fashioned. I admit it. All the same, you must acknowledge that my forebodings have so far proved only too true, and if the flight of that magpie does not prove a presage of sorrow I shall be agreeably surprised."

"I have not the least doubt it will. Sorrow is sure to come sooner or later—rather sooner than later; mirth, too, whether magpies fly singly or in pairs; so are weddings and births—at the rate of a few thousand a day."

"Don't talk nonsense, Mr. Erle," returned Mab, impatiently (she was not used to being chaffed). "The sign is only for those by whom it is seen. The appearance of that magpie boded sorrow for some of us. Of that I am sure."

"Which of us is going to be married then? For see, there are three of them flying over that tree!"

This time the queen did not answer; but a minute later she uttered an exclamation.

"Stop! Look there!" she cried.

Her sharp eyes had detected a deer browsing in a glade a few hundred yards ahead. I instinctively raised my rifle to my shoulder, and as I pulled the trigger the creature bounded away.

"Confound it!" I exclaimed. "I forgot that I was not loaded. What a splendid shot I should have had! However, I will be ready for the next." And with that I opened the breech and inserted a cartridge.

"Let me have one, too," said Mab (she was a keen sportswoman). "I wonder whether I could hit a deer?"

"I have no doubt you could. There, your piece is charged. You shall have the first shot, if we do see another; and if you miss I will try. I thought you said Swamp Island was inhabited only by snakes and alligators."

"There may be also a few deer. Or perhaps the one we saw just now has crossed over from Fair Island."

"In that case there is likely to be a track and a ford not far off. We must keep our eyes open."

As we went through the glade, looking carefully for the slot of the deer, Buttercup, who was just then leading the way, came to a sudden stop, like a pointer setting game.

"Do you see something?" I asked.

"Rather! Look there!"

"The embers of a fire, hardly cold, and feathers and bones! Who has been cooking here, I wonder—snakes or alligators? Or perhaps it is the deer we saw a little while since."

"It is very strange," said Mab. "I am sure nobody is living here, or I should have heard. Hunters from Fair Island? But why hunters should come here when game is so much more abundant over there, I don't quite see."

"There is no accounting for taste," I put in. "They must be hunters, and if we can find them, their coming will be all the better for us. They can show us the way."

"There they are! But——"

"Back, back! behind the trees!—for your lives, behind the trees!" I cried, as an arrow whistled past my head, and another grazed the queen's shoulder.

Poor Buttercup was less fortunate. As half a dozen nearly naked savages came toward us at a run, spears in hand, he fell to the ground without a groan, struck through the heart.

"I will take the man to my right; you take the next," I said to the queen. "Now!"

The next moment two of the black fellows jumped into the air with a yell, and then fell forward on their faces, dead.

"Charge again, quickly! Here is another cartridge." But before we were ready for a second volley, the remaining four, after staring at each other for an instant in evident consternation, disappeared into the forest.

Mab threw down her rifle, knelt beside Buttercup, and raised his head.

"My poor, poor boy! They have killed him! they have killed him!" she cried, as the tears streamed down her cheeks. "Oh, how shall I tell his mother? Say, Mr. Erle! say, Marian! how shall I tell his mother? She had only him."

And then, closing Buttercup's eyes and stroking his stiffening fingers, she wept silently.

I waited several minutes, and then suggested as gently as I could that, as the poor lad was past our help, it behooved us to think of our own safety, and the sooner we got away the better.

"You are right," she said, rising to her feet. "God has taken him; his work is done, ours is not; let us be up and doing. Pity, though, we cannot bury him! But it would be risking too much. What shall we do?"

"Make straight for the creek, and get through it somehow. There may be hundreds of these villains about, for anything we know. If we could only find that deer-track——"

"Here it is!" said Marian, who had been questing about; her eyes were, if possible, sharper than Mab's.

"So it is; and plainly marked! Let us be off at once; we have not a moment to lose."

The track took us past the bodies of the two men we had killed. They were very tall, with long, muscular arms and broad, square shoulders. Their skins were almost black-red, their features of a decidedly negro type, but their faces and breasts were so extensively painted and tattooed that it was impossible to distinguish at a glance—and we had not time for more—whether they were piebald or the reverse.

"What are they?" I asked Mab, as we ran on. "Fugitive slaves?"

"If they were, there would be need for us to run. No; they are Cariberoes."

"Like those who invaded the island in Denzil Fane's time?"

"Yes. I never saw any. But I have not a doubt of it. And I fear they are invading the island a second time."

"In that case—and I am afraid you are right—these are the first comers—the advance guard."

"Yes, and they will be followed by thousands more. They have evidently chosen Swamp Island as their base of operations. The stroke we have so long feared has fallen. The safety, nay, the very existence of the commonwealth depends on us. If we reach Fairhaven quickly, we will have such time for preparations as will enable us, please God, to make head against the danger. The Cariberoes are sure to be joined by most of the Calibans, and if our people are taken by surprise and overcome, not a single Christian will be left alive; and we have only ourselves to depend upon."

"But the aborigines—the Caribs—you can surely count upon them?"

"On their good-will, yes; but not on their help in the field. They have lost their old fighting habits, and have not been trained as our young men have been trained. It was considered policy not to train them—a mistaken policy, in my opinion; but such is the fact, and this is no time to cherish illusions."

"Do you know the country on the other side of the creek?"

"Pretty well. But you must be very familiar with a country to find your way through a thickly wooded district, where roads are scarce and people few. There is a hamlet called Weston's which cannot be very far off. We must make for that, and, with the help of your pocket-compass, I daresay we shall be able to get there."

In the meanwhile we were pushing on through bush and brake, wading swamps, clambering over fallen trees, our clothes in tatters, our hands and faces scratched with brambles and covered with blood—stopping at nothing in our race for life, yet all the while listening intently, and not forgetting to keep a lookout for lurking enemies.

At length our perseverance receives its reward. The channel is in sight. We have struck it (following in the track of the deer) at a point where it is wide and pre-

sumably shallow. The banks on the hither side are low, marshy, and covered with reeds; on the side over against us, high and steep, and, for a space of several hundred yards, destitute of cover.

On coming to the water's edge we pause for a brief colloquy. The tide, though not at its lowest, is ebbing fast. Shall we wait until it ebbs further? My advice is, decidedly not. The Cariberoes may be on our trail—almost certainly are on our trail; the low reeds afford hardly any protection, and even while we stand here whispering we may be shot down by unseen foemen.

"There is no fear of our drowning," says Mab; "we can all swim."

"But if we swim we shall wet our ammunition, and that might be fatal. We are all tall, too, and I hope we shall be able to do it wading. Come! There is no time to lose. I shall fasten the cartridges round my neck, and hold my rifle and revolver over my head. You two go first, and as you cannot well wade one way and look another I will stay here and protect your passage."

"And when we are on the other side we will do the same service for you. Come, Marian!"

And with that they plunged boldly into the stream, the queen (who had fastened a few cartridges in her hair) holding her rifle above her head; the tide ran very strong, and I watched their movements with considerable anxiety; but these women were strong, active, and courageous, and though more than once up to the neck, they showed no sign of wavering, and in a few minutes had gained the opposite bank.

Mab raised her rifle to show that she had kept her powder dry, and, standing on guard, motioned me to join them.

"So far so good," I said, when I was safely across. "Now mount that bank as quickly as you can, and wait for me among the trees."

"And what will you do?"

"Stay here until you are safe up there. You will be very much exposed while you are climbing that bluff and walking up the slope."

"And you?"

"Don't trouble about me. I shall be all right. I can mount the bluff in a few minutes, and I shall make

sure the coast is clear before I start. I remain behind only by excess of precaution—to make assurance doubly sure, as it were. Your life is very valuable, remember. We must not throw away a single chance. But this is no time for discussion. Don't stand upon the order of your going, but go."

Mab acquiesced, though, as it seemed to me, rather reluctantly.

"When you hear the cry of the bell-bird," she said, as they set off, "you will know that we have reached the trees."

When the two girls had gained the top of the cliff (from which to the edge of the forest was a stiffish ascent of nearly a mile) and were lost to view, I considered my own position.

It was very exposed. Between the foot of the bluff and the edge of the water was a space of some ten or a dozen yards, and as I stood there, waiting for Mab's signal, it struck me that I should make a splendid target for the arrows of any Cariberoes who might be lurking about on the other side; so I thought it might be just as well to take advantage of the only bit of cover there was about—a stunted bush. But finding that it would not conceal me sitting, much less standing, I laid myself down, almost full length, at right angles to the creek, and, after placing my weapons and ammunition handy, leaned on my elbows and peered lazily through the bush, wondering the while how soon I should hear the cry of the bell-bird.

After this I think I must have dozed a few seconds, for I opened my eyes with a start, and by way of keeping myself awake for the rest of my vigil (the run and the wade having made me decidedly sleepy) rubbed them vigorously and stared my hardest.

The reeds were moving.

"A deer," I thought (they were about the height of a deer), "or perhaps some other wild animal. I am sure there is a good deal more game on Swamp Island than Mab has any idea of. There it is again. Something black. The snout of an alligator, perhaps. No. The woolly head of a Cariberoe, by Jupiter! Nothing else."

The next moment the woolly head was followed by a bronzed, tattooed savage face. It gazed furtively round,

and then the Cariberoe, seemingly satisfied with the result of his inspection, rose to his feet and waved his hand, whereupon six more Cariberoes rose to their feet; and after another look round, the seven put their heads together, like jurymen considering their verdict.

At the same moment the note of the bell-bird rang out loud and clear.

"I am glad you are safe, Mab," I muttered; "but I am afraid I shall not be able to join you until these rascals have taken themselves off."

That they would take themselves off I made no doubt —in time. They had nothing to gain by following us further, and were not in sufficient force for a raid. This was my theory, at least; but after awhile I began to fear that the Cariberoes did not take quite the same view of the matter. Their proceedings, when they had done putting their heads together, were ominous in the extreme. They went down to the water's edge, gesticulating fiercely and talking incessantly. They pointed to our footmarks in the mud, then to the bluff and toward the forest, as if they had a very strong suspicion that we were not very far off. Perhaps they had seen the flutter of a gown among the trees.

Were they going to follow us up, after all? It looked like it; for after another putting together of heads, they unstrung their bows and fastened the strings round their heads. Then the tallest of the lot, after beckoning to the others to follow, stepped into the stream, and cautiously feeling his way with his long spear, made straight toward the bush behind which I was lying *perdu*.

"I am in a pretty tight fix now, and no mistake!" I thought. "Seven blood-thirsty savages within a hundred yards of me, and no getting away! The mere raising of my head would be my death-warrant."

I confess it candidly, I was dreadfully frightened; but only for a moment. The very extremity of my peril seemed to steel my nerves and clear my brain, and almost on the instant I made my plan of campaign. Though I had little hope of saving my life, the attempt was worth making, and I might, at any rate, stop the pursuit and give the two girls a chance of making good their escape.

Again the note of the bell-bird.

Slowly, and taking infinite pains to avoid stirring the

bush or exposing my body, I brought my rifle to bear, and waited until the Cariberoes were in mid-stream, up to the arm-pits in water. Then, taking deliberate aim, I shot the tall fellow who had first stepped into the water through the head. Down he went, and was swept away with the tide; but the others, after a moment of hesitation, gave a loud yell and charged in a body toward the bush. Wading in deep water is, however, slow work. I reloaded my rifle, fired again, and brought a second man down.

"Surely," I thought, "that will stop them!"

But no; they came on, if possible, more resolutely than before; and one rascal threw his spear with aim so true that had I not managed to ward off the stroke with my rifle, I should have been pinned to the ground.

I gripped my revolver, loosened the knife which I carried at my belt, and prepared for a life-and-death struggle at close quarters. But the odds were fearfully against me—five to one—and I felt that there was now nothing for it but to sell my life as dearly as possible.

Hark! The crack of a rifle up there beyond the bluff, the whistle of a bullet through the air, and a third Cariberoe drops stone dead, and is swept away by the tide.

"God bless you, Queen Mab! You have saved my life."

The four surviving savages, now effectually cowed, pull up short, and, turning round, make back as fast as they can. I had already reloaded my rifle, and could easily have picked one of them off, but for pity's sake I forbore; the danger was past, and I felt that there had been slaughter enough. Mab, however, gave them a parting shot, which, though it hit one of the fellows, did not seem to hurt him much; for, after a howl and a stumble, he continued his flight, and kept up with the others.

As they disappeared among the reeds I sprung up the bluff, where, as I expected, I met the queen.

"Thank Heaven you are safe!" she exclaimed, fervently. "I feared those wretches had killed you. I am again your debtor for my life."

"It is the other way about: you have saved mine."

"Oblige me by not talking nonsense, Mr. Erle," she answered in her imperious way. "Had you not stayed

down there at the risk of your life, what would have become of Marian and me?"

"Had you not left the shelter of the forest, at the risk of you life, and shot that Cariberoe in the very nick of time, what would have become of me?"

"You would have shot him yourself and escaped all the same."

"I am sure I shouldn't. They would have been on me before I could reload my rifle, and though I might have killed two or three more of them, they would certainly have killed me. Shall we settle the dispute by saying that each of us saved the other's life? Then we shall be quits."

"Say what you like; we shall not be quits"—smiling. "I am still your debtor, and some time—— But never mind that now. Why did those Cariberoes attempt to follow us across the creek?"

"The very question I have been asking myself."

"Don't you think they wanted, at all hazards, to prevent us from giving the alarm?"

"Either that, or there are many more of them down there than we have any idea of, and they are going to invade Fair Island at once.

"It is possible," said Mab, anxiously. "Let us go on. Oh, that we had fleet horses, or, still better, some of those wonderful speaking wires you have told me about!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

FRIENDS IN NEED.

It was very easy to say, "Let us go on." But as Mab had only the vaguest idea of the way to Weston's, and I had none whatever, the carrying out of the proposal was attended with some little difficulty. She thought that if we went east by north we should not be far out, and east by north we went—as nearly as we could; for going straight in that part of the island was quite out of the question. We were forced to make long detours, and in order to advance one mile in a straight line we had generally to walk about three miles. And yet we seemed to get no further; we were always toiling over the same sort of ground, always surrounded by the same bushes and

trees, and our view was always limited to a circle of a few yards.

At lengh late in the afternoon, when the deepening gloom of the forest was reminding us that if we did not soon get out of it we should have to stay there all night, we came to a knoll bare of underwood, where the trees were tall and far apart.

"Suppose you climb one of them?" said Mab.

It was a happy thought, and I proceeded to act on it forthwith, selecting for the purpose the tree that seemed the easiest to mount, for I was fearfully tired.

The first look when I got to the top was bitterly disappointing. The prospect was magnificent, but nowhere a sign of life, and I was just about to descend with my bad news, when I caught sight of a faint blue line rising slowly out of a mass of greenery, about two miles to the eastward.

"Smoke!" I shouted, as I slithered rapidly down the tree. "I have seen smoke," I repeated, as I reached *terra firma,* "and where that smoke is we shall find a fire and a house, and somebody to show us the way."

We resumed our journey in high spirits, and after a further tramp of half an hour or so we struck a beaten track which led us to a clearing, a field of maize, an orchard, and finally to a farmhouse.

This was Weston's, and we found Weston at home, and, despite our disreputable appearance, received a warm welcome. But Mab looked so very unlike a queen, that when I told him who she was he evidently thought we were poking fun at him. But when he heard our story his doubts disappeared. The possibility of an incursion of Cariberoes alarmed him greatly; he offered to accompany us part of the way to Fairhaven, and to do everything in his power to facilitate our journey thither. We were too much fatigued to go on without rest, but we gathered that if we took about six hours' sleep, started at midnight, and traveled by light of moon, we might possibly reach our destination by the following evening —"possibly," because much depended on the wind.

Mab asked what the wind had to do with it, whereupon Weston explained that we could not foot it all the way to Fairhaven much under two days and a half; but at Dottrel's, distant about six hours, was a stream known

as the Roothing (doubtless so named by some Essex man), by which, as it ran very swiftly, we could reach the coast in six hours more, whence, with good luck and a fair wind, we might make Fairhaven Creek before nightfall.

As for boats, Dottrel would see to that; and if the queen desired, he would, of course, be delighted to act as our pilot.

After asking my opinion, and thanking Weston for his advice, Mab decided to take it, and trust to Providence for a fair wind.

In the meanwhile Weston's wife had prepared us a substantial meal, of which we stood in sore need. She, moreover, placed her wardrobe at the disposal of Mab and her maid; and being as ragged as any beggar, I gladly accepted the offer of a suit of Weston's homespun.

It was the first time I had been in a Fair Island farmhouse. The building was of wood, one-storied, and very roughly put together, and the internal arrangements were primitive in the extreme. On the other hand, if there was little refinement, there was great plenty. The Westons had fields and orchards, slaves and goats (which supplied them with milk), and food and fruit in abundance; but none of the family (and there were seven children) could either read or write, and there was not a book in the house.

Weston complained much of the wear and tear of slaves arising from their use as beasts of burden. It was this which made them so savage and discontented. If they had horses or oxen, he thought slave labor might be dispensed with, and that would greatly simplify matters so far as the Cariberoes were concerned.

This was obviously meant as a hint to the queen.

"I know," she said, thoughtfully, "but horses are not the only things we lack, and when the present danger is past we will have several changes for the better, as you will see, Mr. Weston."

The place-names in Fair Island were rather peculiar. A farm or plantation, even though it might afterward expand into a village, was almost always called after the first settler. Thus, Weston's would remain Weston's, whoever might subsequently become its owner. Occupations and professions were most hereditary, not by law, but by the force of custom. The parsons were all de-

scendants of the Hecate's chaplain, and bore his name; the doctors were Sergeants; the school-masters, Switchers; the carpenters, Browns; the blacksmiths, Coleses; and so forth. Lawyers there were none; but that, as Mab afterward told me, she looked upon as a blessing to be thankful for, not as a want to be deplored. Neither were there any prisons, breaches of the law (except treason, the sole capital offense) being punished solely by "sequestration" (a rigorous form of boycotting). A few weeks of this regimen was generally found quite sufficient to bring the most hardened sinners to their senses, and wrong-doers who expressed contrition and seemed really repentant were always pardoned.

It was hard work, rising at midnight. I felt as if I had only just fallen asleep; but our business did not brook delay, and at a quarter past twelve we set out on our six hours' tramp, accompanied by Weston, who took us to Dottrel's, and Dottrel placed his best boat at our disposal, and agreed to pilot us to Fairhaven.

Before we parted from Weston, Mab asked him to keep a sharp lookout for the Cariberoes, and if they appeared in force, to send her word immediately.

"If they appear," he said, grimly, "I shall disappear. I don't want to have my throat cut. I will come myself, and bring the women and children with me."

The swift-flowing river carried us rapidly to the sea; the wind was fair; when the sun sunk behind the mountain we were off Fairhaven Creek, and by the time we reached the landing-place at the foot of the hill it was quite dark.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TREASON.

MAB, who for the last hour or two had been thoughtful and taciturn, told us in a whisper to follow her silently, and if we were accosted by anybody not to answer. She did not want to be recognized. At the outskirts of the town she turned off into a by-path, and after walking about ten minutes, stopped at the door of a solitary cottage.

"Have you that letter?" she asked me.

"Yes; here is it!"—giving it to her.

"Wait there until I return;" and with that she opened the door and went in.

"Whose house is it?" I asked Marian.

"Sybil's."

"Very old, isn't she?"

"More than a hundred; she is the only person in the island who remembers Denzil Fane. She is very wise, and they say——" hesitating.

"Yes; what do they say?"

"That she can read your thoughts by looking into your eyes, and tell your fortune by examining your hand."

"I suppose people are afraid of her?"

"Awfully. They say she can kill with a glance, or, at least, work anybody who offends her grievous harm. But the queen fears her not, and Sybil likes her. Nobody else would dare go into Sybil's house unbidden. I would not for all the world."

We went on talking, or, rather, I let the girl go on chattering until the door opened a second time, and Mab, standing at the threshold, beckoned me to enter.

I obeyed, and, after passing through a sort of vestibule, found myself in a little low-ceiled room, dimly lighted by a swinging-lamp. Under the lamp sat a tall old woman, with the most peculiar countenance I ever saw—and since I left Liverpool I had seen some very queer ones. A mass of snow-white hair covered her shoulders, and fell down to her waist. Her powerful face was like a corrugated bronze mask; but her ears, her neck, and her eyelids were as white as her hair, and her little eyes glowed in their deep, sunken sockets like live coals.

Though rather startled, I did not feel much alarmed, and met the gaze of those burning eyes without flinching.

"Let me see your hand," she said, after staring at me a full minute.

I showed her my hand, which she examined with great care, both back and front.

"He is the man!"—to Mab.

Then turning to me:

"You are an Englishman. The last Englishman I saw was Denzil Fane. He founded this commonwealth. You are its destined savior. You have done much already, yet your task has only just begun. But fortune and

happiness await you. And now go, for there is danger in delay. Take with you the blessing of an old woman, and ask God for His. The peril is great, and so is the prize, and the omens are good."

"Come!" said Mab, giving me her hand; and we went out into the darkness.

"Whither?" I asked.

"You will see. Quick! If we are late, harm may befall."

She led the way, almost at a run, back into the main road and up the hill, never pausing until we were in the middle of the great square. The Government House was lighted up, and before the entrance, which seemed to be guarded by armed men, was gathered the largest crowd I had yet seen in the island. But nobody recognized us —hardly noticed us, in fact; and giving the crowd a wide berth, we went round to the rear of the building, which we found silent and deserted. It was, however, easy for Mab, who knew all the ins and outs, to gain admittance, and we entered unperceived, by a wicket opening into a corridor which gave access to the great hall, where we could see all that went on without ourselves being seen.

Torches of resinous wood, stuck in brackets, threw a lurid light on a strange and picturesque scene. Fifty or sixty armed men, broken up into twos and threes, some walking rapidly to and fro, others violently gesticulating, are engaged in a discussion which evidently excites them to the utmost, but as all talk together it is not easy to distinguish what they say. Suddenly a side door opens, and Amyas Fane flings into the hall. He is followed by Oliver, Field, and other members of the Council of Nine.

The clamor ceases, and is succeeded by a silence so intense that we might have heard the dropping of the traditional pin.

"I protest against this decision of the Council," exclaims Amyas. "They have actually dared to reject me, and nominate Oliver Fane as Queen Mab's successor. It is infamous. I am her legitimate successor. Her death makes me *ipso facto* protector of the commonwealth, and I will maintain my rights against all comers."

This declaration is followed by shouts of applause

from several of his friends, who gather round him, as if for the purpose of giving him their moral support, and, if the need should arise, probably something more.

"You forget, Amyas," says Field, quietly, "that according to Denzil Fane's will and our constitution, the Council have a right of selection, and this right they have, by a unanimous decision, exercised in favor of your cousin Oliver."

"It is all a base intrigue. The right is obsolete, and I refuse to recognize it."

"You set the Council at defiance, then?"

"I treat their decision with contempt, if that is what you mean; and I shall instantly declare myself protector, and appeal to the people for their support."

"That is flat rebellion, and, as president of the Council, I order you under arrest."

"You do, do you? And who will execute your decree, I should like to know?" demands Amyas, insolently.

"I will," says Oliver, stepping forward with dignity. "You had better submit quietly, Amyas."

"Oh, yes; very quietly"—drawing his sword, an example which is followed by his partisans, among whom I perceived Bolsover, armed with cutlass and revolver. "Touch me at your peril!"

Oliver, Field and the others also draw their swords.

"You are mad, Amyas. I ask you for the last time to submit," says Oliver, "if only for the sake of your deluded friends. You are the weaker party, and are sure to be worsted."

"Take that for your answer!" shouts Amyas, making a desperate lunge at his cousin. "Now, gentlemen, at them! We will soon see which is the weaker party."

"Stop!"

And Queen Mab, who has glided unseen from her hiding-place, stands between the combatants, and with imperious gesture bids them lower their weapons. The two leaders step back aghast, and terror is depicted on every face, for all believe they see before them a visitant from the world of spirits.

"So you thought me dead, Amyas! You might, at least, have made some effort to ascertain whether I was

perchance not still alive, before trying to step into my shoes."

"The Diana went down in the storm—and it did not seem possible——" stammers Amyas, in a voice so broken as to be hardly audible.

"How know you she went down? And, even though you had seen me perish, would that have been enough to justify you in setting the Council at defiance and provoking a civil war? Amyas Fane, you are a murderer, a traitor, and a dastard."

"Madame!"

"I repeat it; a murderer, a traitor, and a dastard. You cut the Diana from her moorings in the hope that she would be carried out to sea, and that we who were on board would thereby perish. Don't deny it; I know you did. It was a murderous, a traitorous, and a dastardly deed. And you wrote this letter to Mr. Erle, virtually threatening him with death if he obeyed not your behest to leave the island within ten days, because, I suppose, you thought I had in him a brave and devoted friend, who, in case of need, would defend my person and defeat your plots! And so he has. Twice, nay, three times, has he saved my life. But for him I should not be here to-night."

To all this Amyas answers never a word. All his boldness has vanished; his knees bend under him, and he bows his head in shame and confusion.

"You have nothing to urge in your defense. You admit the truth of these charges. It is better so. Without adding perjury to your other sins, you could not deny them. Gentlemen, I appeal to you all—even to those of you who call yourselves his friends—what shall be done with this man, who virtually pleads guilty to a charge of actual treason and attempted murder? Pronounce his doom! It is not meet for me to be both accuser and judge."

The queen paused for a reply; but none liked to utter the word which was in every mind, and there ensued a painful silence that lasted for several minutes.

At length a white-haired member of the Council, who numbered more years than the century, broke the spell.

"This man deserves death," he said, slowly and deliberately; and the sentence was repeated by fifty voices.

Not even the men who had been ready to fight for him had aught to urge in arrest of judgment.

"Yes," said the queen, "he deserves death. But the prerogative of mercy is mine, and I freely pardon him, as I have a right to do, for his offense was against me personally. I pardon him, not because he is my kinsman, but because I believe that he is not wholly bad. He has been led away by pride, envy, and ambition; yet he has good qualities, and if opportunity be given him he will make reparation and redeem his honor. Another reason for sparing him is that we have need of him, as of every man who can wield a sword and draw a bow. The Cariberoes are in Swamp Island, and I dare say by this time have crossed the creek——"

"The Cariberoes!"—"Impossible!"—"Who says so?"—"Has anybody seen them?" and a hundred other exclamations of incredulity, astonishment and doubt followed the queen's announcement, which caused almost as great a sensation as her own reappearance had done.

"Is this really true, Mabel?" asked Field, when the clamor had somewhat subsided. "I know you think so; but there is such a thing as being misinformed. Has anybody actually seen the Cariberoes?"

"Yes; we have seen them, been chased by them, and had to run and fight for our lives."

And then Mab told what had happened, from the beginning of our involuntary cruise on the Diana to our return to Fairhaven. This done, she continued:

"So, you see, that which we and our fathers have so long feared has at length come to pass. You may be quite sure that the braves we encountered are either the forerunners of a large force, perhaps two or three thousand strong, or that a large force has already landed on Swamp Island. At any rate, it is not safe to act on any other assumption. You know, too, that many of the Calibans, who are of their own blood, being greatly discontented (I fear not without reason), will certainly join them—have probably invited them to come over, for several of late have mysteriously disappeared; boats have also been missed. Hence the danger is very great, and unless it be nipped in the bud the consequences may be disastrous, nay, ruinous. It will not be enough merely to repel the invasion. We must crush the invaders if we

would not be crushed ourselves. It will be a severe struggle, yet if we all pull together success is sure. What say you, Amyas: will you take part in the struggle, and endeavor, by loyalty and devotion, to win back your good name and my confidence?"

"Only give me the chance, and you shall see, I swear——"

"But I cannot allow you to remain captain of my guard—that were unfair to better men; you must serve in the ranks as a common archer."

Amyas, who seemed deeply moved, bowed his head and kissed her hand.

"I am more than conquered," he said. "The life which I had forfeited and you have spared is yours, Queen Mab. Dispose of me as you think best. I ask only an opportunity to prove that I am not unworthy of your kindness and forgiveness. So help me God, I will serve you faithfully to the death."

"It only remains now," the queen went on, after a moment's consideration—"it only remains now to say who shall undertake the necessary preparations, organize our small army, and command it in the field. To this office I appoint our guest, Mr. Sidney Erle. He holds the Queen of England's commission; he has been trained to arms. I can personally testify that he is brave, and as wise in council as he is prompt in action. It is a post of great difficulty and danger; nevertheless, although we can offer him little other reward than our gratitude, I am sure we may count on his loyalty and devotion."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BOLSOVER HIMSELF AGAIN.

ASTONISHMENT was not the word. For the moment I was simply stricken dumb. The idea of my commanding an army of piebald warriors in the field seemed too absurd for credence. I could not believe that Mab was in earnest, and I was about to tell her so, when she drew me aside.

"I know all you are going to say," she said. "You would rather not; but for my sake——"

"I would do a great deal for your sake; but, really, you know, it is quite out of the question. I cannot con-

duct a war and command an army. You must find a much better man——"

"I cannot find one so good; not only so, I cannot find one—now Amyas is in disgrace—under whom the others would be willing to serve, and serve heartily; but all would be proud to serve under a British officer. If you refuse, the consequences may be serious—perhaps fatal."

"In that case—— Let it be as you wish, then. I can only do my best."

"It is all I ask." And then, addressing the others, she said that, albeit I naturally hesitated somewhat to undertake so great a responsibility, I had decided, at her pressing request, to accept the command, and that if I was loyally supported she felt sure the result would be all they could desire. For her own part, she conferred on me the most ample powers; every measure which I advised must be adopted, every order I gave obeyed.

This speech was received with applause, and rather to my surprise, everybody seemed to be eminently satisfied, whether merely out of complaisance, or because they really shared the queen's confidence, I could not, of course, determine. But, after all, I did possess some qualifications for the post. I had served both in the volunteer artillery and infantry, gone through a course of musketry instruction at Hythe, been brigaded with the regulars, and taken part in several autumn maneuvers and sham fights. I had, moreover, given some attention to strategy and the theory of war, and studied the plans of a good many battles, ancient and modern. All this was, of course, not enough to make me a general, but I had so far the advantage of everybody else in the island; and as the enemies we should have to encounter were only half-naked savages, I hoped that I should be equal to the occasion.

I began the work of organization at once and on the spot. The first necessity was a staff, and I hardly knew one man from another. I decided to appoint the best shark-fighters as my *aids*, and select from among them the superior officers of my army. I knew them to be fearless and resolute, and I thought they would prove apt and intelligent. The result justified my expectations.

The next thing was to ascertain upon how many men I could count, and I gave orders for the archer-guard, and

every man in the neighborhood between eighteen and thirty-five, sound in wind, limb, and eyesight, to be mustered in the great square on the following afternoon.

Then I asked whether there were any maps of the island. Two or three were produced, which, though roughly drawn, were sufficient for my purpose. After studying them carefully, I asked Mr. Field (who was the leading member of the administration) to send two fishing-boats, the fastest he could find, to the further end of the island, one by the north, the other by the south coast, to watch the movements of the enemy and make inquiries, under strict orders to return with all speed and report any information which they might be able to obtain.

Swift runners were to be dispatched on a similar errand to Weston's, Swamp Island Creek, Wynter's Hill, and elsewhere; and a series of relays organized, so that messages might be forwarded with the least possible delay, and, as a matter of fact, they were forwarded almost as quickly as they could have been by mail-carts or post-horses.

By the time these dispositions were made it was very late, and as nothing could be done until morning, we separated for the night.

As I was leaving the hall with Mr. Field, Bolsover, of whom so far I had not taken the least notice, put himself in my way, and said he wanted a word with me.

"Say on," I answered, coldly; for old Tom's recent conduct had not been at all to my liking, and I rather suspected him of having had a hand in the cutting loose of the Diana.

"I ax your pardon, Mr. Erle," he said, very humbly; "but if you will let me say so, I have done you wrong. I was that disappointed with not getting the treasure—I had thought of scarce anything else all my life—I was that disappointed as I was a'most mad, and scarce knew what I was doing. And I blamed you, I thought as you was somewhat in fault, and as you could have got the treasure for us if you'd liked. Well, when I was in that humor, Mr. Fane comes to me and says as I had a better claim to the treasure than anybody else, and that he would see me righted. I believed him, but I can see

now as he only wanted to make a spoon-handle of me, and may be to do something against you and the queen. But he soon found out as though I might be a fool I wasn't a knave, and he did his dirty work himself, or got somebody else to do it. When the Diana, as was thought, broke away from her moorings and foundered, my eyes was opened, and I knew as I had lost my best friend; but it was not till you came back that I had any idea as Mr. Fane was not as honest as he made out. And now, Mr. Erle, will you forgive me, and let by-gones be by-gones? If you can make any use of me, I am quite willing to serve with you agen these niggers, or redskins, or piebalds, or whatever they are. I'm a naval reserve man, and know my gun drill and small-arm drill as well as anybody."

I took old Tom's proffered hand, and assured him that I should be only too glad to let by-gones be by-gones, that his help would be invaluable, and that I should give him an important command.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WYNTER'S HILL.

NEVER in my life did I work so hard as during the next few days and nights, for I wrought eighteen and twenty hours at a stretch, sleeping as opportunity offered.

When my messengers returned, ten days later, with the news that Swamp Island swarmed with Cariberoes, that a considerable number had disembarked in the neighborhood of Wynter's Hill, and more canoes were in sight, the state of affairs was this:

I had an army of some one thousand five hundred men, all of them in the prime of life, none less than five feet ten inches in height, as keen-sighted as hawks, as active as cats, and, as I believed, as brave as lions, but with nearly everything to learn in the way of discipline. The archer-guard consisted of five hundred men. They were splendid shots, marched fairly together, and could execute a few simple movements. The others were tolerable bowmen, but when I took them in hand utterly unorganized. I divided the one thousand five hundred into three regiments, which I called first, second, and third, each officered by a colonel, a major, and five captains

(all shark-fighters). The subalterns and sergeants were selected, on the recommendation of Oliver Fane (whom I made the chief of my staff), from the first or archer-guard regiment.

I also organized a rifle company of fifty men, under the command of Tom Bolsover.

It was impossible, with the time at my disposal, to attempt anything like regular drill. We could do no more than teach the second and third regiments to march in step, form in line, and a few other elementary movements. Old Tom, however, drilled his fifty men incessantly, and made very fair shots of them. As for arms, we had any number of bows, and though arrows were in rather short supply, our stock was being rapidly replenished. We had swords and cutlasses enough for the entire force; the former nearly all of Spanish make, and very superior weapons. Our only fire-arms were two cases of rifles (fifty) and three or four others, together with half a dozen revolvers, taken out of the Diana; the old flint-lock muskets which had belonged to the Santa Anna were out of repair, and decidedly less effective than our bows and arrows.

I gave Tom and each of the colonels a revolver apiece, and kept one for myself. Tom and I also carried each a rifle.

My plan of campaign was very simple. I might, as Mr. Field and some of the seniors proposed, have chosen a strong position, and there awaited the Cariberoe attack. But as the Cariberoes might have taken it into their heads to march elsewhere, and I thought it inexpedient to let them take the initiative, I decided to attack them as soon as I found them, and wherever I found them. To this end, though I should have been glad of a little more time for preparation, I resolved to take the field at once. Within an hour of receiving positive assurance that the enemy were at Wynter's Hill, I gave orders to march, and my men being splendid walkers and in good fettle, I reckoned that we should probably reach that place in about three days. We were attended by about five hundred Caribs, who carried our supplies of food and reserve ammunition. I intended also to employ them as scouts, but as they were quite unorganized and poorly armed, I could not reckon them as effectives.

I had not much fear that the Cariberoes would evade me. Whether their purpose was conquest or merely plunder, their objective point must be Fairhaven, whither the direct road ran along the north coast, the best cultivated and most thickly populated part of the country; and unless they took a very devious and difficult route by the south, this was the only road they could follow. I had, moreover, so arranged matters that, let them go which way they would, I should have speedy information.

On the other hand, as they might make a move at any moment, I took every precaution to avoid being surprised. Two of our best runners were sent on in advance; then, at a short interval, followed four more, then eight, after whom came the advance guard, a company of the first regiment. Carib scouts were also continually ahead, and our bivouacs (we had no tents) were guarded by a triple line of sentries and outposts.

These precautions were all the more necessary as multitudes of slaves were leaving their masters, and no doubt conveying information to the enemy. The houses of several planters had been plundered and burned, and we met many fugitives (among others, our friend Weston and his family) on their way to Fairhaven.

It was evident that the fortunes of Fair Island depended on us. If we were beaten, or failed to drive the invaders into the sea, the country would be ruined.

As we were eating our evening meal after our third day's march, two scouts came in with the news that the Caribs were still at Wynter's Hill, that they had been joined by vast numbers of Calibans, and that appearances indicated that they were making ready for a move. In reply to an inquiry as to their strength, I was answered, "Thousands."

This was rather vague, and not very satisfactory; but as waiting would not make them fewer, I determined to attack early in the morning. We had light of moon, and by starting at two o'clock we should be able to reach the neighborhood of Wynter's Hill about six. It would be far better than getting there five or six hours later; for at that time of the year the noon-day heat was almost insupportable.

Having come to this resolution, I called my officers together, told them what I proposed to do, and gave such

orders as I deemed necessary. They were full of fight and confident of success—rather too confident, in fact.

The men were as eager as the officers, and marched so well (doing twenty miles in four hours) that at sunrise the runners reported that Wynter's Hill was in sight. On this I ordered a halt, and while the men were breakfasting I went forward with Oliver Fane and Bolsover to reconnoiter.

The Cariberoes were encamped about two miles off, at the edge of a wood. Between our bivouac and the wood the ground was undulating and open, and, as I thought, not badly adapted for a battle on a small scale. But as the enemy occupied the higher ground they had the advantage of position, and had they possessed fire-arms might have rendered it almost impregnable. Even as it was, if they clung to the wood and declined to "come on," we should not be able to get at them without heavy loss and risk of disaster, for as yet their numbers were an unknown quantity. To overcome this difficulty I had recourse to a stratagem which, though it may seem cruel, was, I think, justifiable in the circumstances, my object being not merely to save the island, but to give the Cariberoes such a lesson as would keep them away from it for at least a generation. As yet they had not seen us—could not see us until we stirred, for we were behind a clump of trees in a dip of the ground. My plan was to send the native camp-followers on first, in the hope that the Cariberoes, perceiving how few they were, and that they belonged to the race they least feared, might come down the hill to meet them, a proceeding which would afford us the opportunity we desired.

My stratagem, albeit far from being a failure, did not prove the brilliant success which I expected. Some of the men, contrary to my orders, lighted fires, so that before our Carib allies marched out the Cariberoes were already on the *qui vive*, and, though they came down the hill in force, they advanced cautiously and, rather to my surprise, silently and in good order. They numbered at least five thousand, and it was obvious that they were commanded by a chief who knew something of the art of war.

The Caribs did not take much harm, after all—then. After exchanging a few shots with the enemy they bolted

—according to order. As they ran down the hill we advanced into the open, marching in line, Bolsover and his rifles in the center, and a little in the rear, as until they were committed to an engagement I did not want the Cariberoes to find out that we possessed firearms. I held three hundred of the archer-guard and fifty men from each of the other regiments in reserve.

The enemy, though, as it seemed, rather surprised by this display of force, stood their ground. When we were about two hundred yards from them, I gave the order to begin shooting, and I was pleased to observe that nearly every arrow found a mark. The Cariberoes replied briskly, shooting two arrows for our one; but their weapons were so inferior that their missiles did comparatively little execution.

This went on for ten or fifteen minutes, when the Caribereos, drawing nearer, showed a disposition to come to close quarters, which was what I particularly desired to avoid; I feared that they might bear us down by the sheer weight of their superior numbers.

"Now is your time, Tom," I said. "Let them have it!"

The old sailor wanted nothing better. His men (who had been lying down, a little in the rear) stood up, the archers opened their ranks, and, advancing to the front, the rifles poured in a volley point-blank, which bowled the Cariberoes over like ninepins. The effect was tremendous. The enemy, completely taken by surprise, gave way in all directions; and seeing that the crisis of the battle had come, I told Tom to go on firing as hard as he could, called up the reserves, and was about to order a charge along the line, when Oliver Fane laid his hand on my shoulder and literally spun me round.

"Good heavens, Mr. Erle!" he exclaimed, "look there!"

He pointed to our left rear, a direction in which I had not turned my eyes since the fight began.

"I see smoke," I said, "and some of the bushes seem to have caught fire. What then?"

"What then? Why, don't you see that the fire is spreading and the wind rising, and that in five minutes all the herbage between the cliffs and Wynter's Wood

will be in a blaze? The wood will burn, too; it is as dry as tinder; so shall we, if we stay here."

"What shall we do? Ah, I see—the gap in the cliff. We must occupy it at once. And it will be who gets there first. I believe the Cariberoes are moving that way already. Give immediate orders for all the men to make for the gap at once—as hard as they can go."

Fighting was now suspended by mutual consent, or rather under a common compulsion; the Cariberoes and ourselves raced madly for the sole avenue of escape from swift and awful death—death by fire. The gap, more than a mile away, was so narrow at the mouth—being, indeed, for a short distance practically a tunnel—that it could be defended by a handful of men against a host; and if the Cariberoes got there first!

I never ran so fast before—or since—and after my three days' march I was in tip-top condition, yet, try as I might, I could not keep up with the swifter of my piebald companions. Oliver would have stayed with me, but I bade him for Heaven's sake hurry on and secure the pass. I would take my chance.

Our foremost fellows are now neck and neck with about an equal number of Cariberoes, also splendid runners; and I watch every phase of the contest with sickening anxiety, for upon its issue depends not our lives alone, but the fate of an entire people.

"Thank God! They are drawing ahead. They will win! They will win! Breed and training are telling, as they always do. Bravo, Oliver! Bravo, Wild! One more spurt like that, and ——"

They have done it—the goal is reached! A score of the brave fellows leap into the gap, and as their swords flash in the sun and they turn to face the foe, I know that the race is won, the victory ours.

But the battle has still to be fought. For the start was by no means "even;" not a third of our little army has gained the pass; while between us and them is a great body of the enemy, trying might and main to force the gap, and through whom we must cut our way or perish. I wait until the remainder of our fellows—among whom are Bolsover and Amyas Fane—come up. I rally them, and then charge right into the thick of the enemy, sword in hand. There is no time for shooting.

They fight like fiends—as only men made desperate by fear can fight, neither giving nor taking quarter. It is man against man, sword against spear, and as we hack, and hew, and stab, thick smoke rolls over our heads. The fire is close behind us.

But for Oliver and his companions we should never have got through. They plied the enemy with arrows, then charged; and the Cariberoes, taken between two fires, were forced back, so that after a short yet fierce struggle, we gained our point—those of us who survived; for many had fallen, and all were wounded.

The poor Caribs perished to a man. They were the last to start, and came up only as the Cariberoes, whose numbers increased every moment, were making one final and frantic attempt to drive us through the gap into the sea. We did our best to rescue them; but owing to the nature of the ground we could sally out only a few at a time, and so failed utterly. Though the Caribs in their extremity fought with frantic desperation, they fell like corn before the reaper, and the fight went on until the fighters, looking more like demons than men, were well-nigh inclosed in a ring of fire. Then, throwing down their weapons, they broke and fled—some making for the wood, others for the cliff.

"They cannot escape, do as they will!" said Oliver Fane, half exultingly, half pitifully. "If they go down the cliffs they will break their necks; and before they can get through the wood it will be all in a blaze. The Cariberoes will trouble us no more, Mr. Erle."

"If we could only have saved those poor Caribs——"

Just then the fire swept up both sides of the gap, filling it with smoke and sparks, and overcome with the heat and foul air (for we were packed like herrings in a barrel), the pain of my wounds, and loss of blood, I went off in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XXX.

AFTER THE FIGHT.

It is nearly a month since the battle of Wynter's Hill, and I am lying with my head bandaged and one of my arms in a sling, in Queen Mab's own room. Though convalescent, I am still very weak, my hurts having been

much more serious than in the excitement of the combat I had any idea of. The wounded had been removed to Fairhaven by sea, and as there was no public hospital in the place they were taken to private houses, myself and several others to the queen's house.

As I lie, with my eyes half closed, listening to the caroling of birds and drinking in the sweet scent of flowers (for the day is young), I go over in my mind all that has happened to me since I left England, and I ask myself, What next? I am as resolved as ever to go back—it is my duty to go back—I must go back. And yet, and yet—though I struggle against the feeling, and try to ignore it, I know that in my heart of hearts I do not want to go back. Why? I had all along admired Mab, and now—— I should be sorry to leave her.

As I arrive at this stage of my reflections, the subject of them enters the room. She is in deep mourning, for, like everybody else at Fairhaven, she has to lament the loss of kinsmen and friends. Of the fifteen hundred who went out to the fight, less than a thousand returned to their homes. Among the slain is Amyas. He was one of the last to fall, and nobly redeemed the promise he had made to his cousin.

"I am glad you are so much better to-day, and that the doctor allows you to talk a little," said Mab. She was more subdued in manner than I had ever seen her, and the pallor of her face and the dark lines about her eyes showed how much she had suffered and how deeply she sympathized with the sorrows of her people.

"Yes, I am very much better, and I think I shall soon be all right again; but the scenes I witnessed at Wynter's Hill will never be effaced from my memory. I dream of them every night. It was like pandemonium. Have you heard whether any of the Cariberoes escaped?"

"So far as we can ascertain, not one. None have been seen, and we have taken possession of all their canoes. But it is time we talked about yourself. The victory was dearly bought, yet it was worth the price; it has saved the commonwealth, and I don't think the Cariberoes will ever invade us again—at any rate, not in our time. Well, this victory we owe to you——"

"No, no! If you had only seen how pluckily those

young fellows fought, how splendidly they captured the gap, you would know better. I really did very little."

"I give our young soldiers all the credit they deserve; yet I am sure that but for the way in which you organized and led them we should not have won the victory. They all say so; I say so too, and I forbid you to contradict me. You have behaved splendidly, and I want to know what recompense we can offer you."

"Recompense?"

"Yes; what shall be done to the man whom the queen delights to honor?"—smiling.

"Let him go home."

The smile vanished, and was replaced by an angry frown.

"Let him go home! You want to leave us, then?"

"Don't put it in that way, please. I shall be very, very sorry to leave you; but I have friends in England, and an old mother, who is a widow. I am her only son, and if she thinks I am dead, it may bring her gray hair with sorrow to the grave. It is my duty to go home—if I can."

"And among these friends there is one perhaps dearer even than your mother?"

"Not at all. There is nobody else I care very much about, or who cares much about me. I dare say all the others have pretty nearly forgotten me already."

"How would you go?"

"If you would point out the position of the island on the map, and lend me the Sunflower and a few men, I think Bolsover and I could navigate her to some port where we should find vessels—possibly a steamer bound for England."

"And you would never come back?"

"That depends. I should be very sorry—— I mean I should hope to come back—some time."

"Some time?"

"I mean that I am a poor man, and have my way to make in the world, and I might not be able to come back so soon as I could like."

Mab seemed much agitated. She rose from her chair, walked excitedly up and down the room, then returned and sat near me, at the head of the sofa.

"I have a confession to make and a question to ask,"

she said, in a low, tremulous voice. "I know it is not usual in England, but here, in Fair Island—— I thought —I mean that I did not intend—but now that you want to go home—and it is right you should—I must. Has it never occurred to you—have you not seen" (impetuously) "that—that I love you—love you with all my heart, and that I should be glad—oh, so glad!—to be your wife? Say, now, have you never thought of this?"

This avowal took me so completely by surprise that I knew not what to say—could hardly think, in fact—for in my wildest dreams it had never occurred to me that it would ever enter into Mab's mind to make me a formal offer of her hand and heart.

"You do not answer—you are angry with me!" she exclaimed, in a broken voice. "You think I am unmaidenly. You do not love me. Well, be it so"—averting her face; that face which had never seemed to me so beautiful.

"No, no, no!" I said, taking her hand and pressing it to my lips. "Not until this moment did I know how dear you are to me; and if I had known I should not have dared to speak. You are a grand woman, a true queen, my queen, and I love you as you say you love me—with all my heart."

"As I say I love you! Oh, how little you know!——"

I drew her toward me and put my arm around her neck.

"Do not think that I shall ask you to forego your visit to your mother. I will go with you to England!"

"You will go with me to England!"

"Do you think I would let you go alone? Now that we are no longer in fear of a Carib invasion, I can easily be spared for a few months. And I want to see England. We are very backward. We must have more books, and a printing press and machinery, and other things. And when we come back you shall take part with me in the government. We will abolish slavery—I have been reading 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'"

"I am delighted to hear you say so. But what will the slave-owners say?"

"If for every slave I give them a horse they will say nothing; they will be quite content. And I shall buy horses."

"That will be a very costly operation. You will want a great deal of money."

"I have a great deal. First of all, there is the treasure, which is worth I don't know how much, and I have pearls enough for a king's ransom."

"Pearls, Mab! Where on earth did you get them?"

"They came out of the sea. There is a very valuable pearl fishery on the south side of the island. But it has not been fished for a long time, partly because we had as many pearls as we wanted, partly because my father feared they might create a craving for riches and luxury, and possibly bring other evils in their train. But if we can exchange them for something useful, and they enable us to abolish slavery, the good will more than outweigh any probable harm. "Don't you think so?"

"Certainly."

"You can exchange fine pearls for money in England, I suppose?"

"Of course you can. To any extent you like."

"Then we will take a lot with us; buy, with the money they bring, the things we need, and pay for the Diana's cargo. I think I would rather not touch the treasure; for Sybil says that so long as it remains on the island the commonwealth will endure. I don't *quite* believe all she says; but she is a wise woman, and nobody ever neglects her warnings with impunity."

"The pearls will do quite as well, though it does seem a pity to let all that money lie idle. Properly invested, it would produce a large income. However, you are perhaps right. You have everything you need, and enough is as good as a feast. But what will Field and the others say to your idea of making a trip to England? It was only the other day that the mere suggestion horrified them beyond measure."

"Well, if it came to a contest of wills, I think mine would prevail. And you don't know what a change recent events have wrought in their ideas. You are the most popular man in the island. They think you were sent purposely to save the commonwealth; and the fact of your having survived so many dangers is regarded as a proof of the Divine favor—for our people, though, as you may think, rather superstitious, are essentially religious. They have often urged me to marry, and our mar-

riage and your undertaking to become one of us would reconcile them to anything. And we can concede so far to their prejudices and the injunctions of my ancestor of sacred memory as to bring no strangers back with us and keep secret the whereabouts of the island."

A few weeks later we were quietly married by the queen's chaplain, a lineal descendant of the chaplain of his Britannic Majesty's ship Hecate, and the next day we left Fairhaven on our way to England. Having ascertained the exact position of the island, we had no difficulty in shaping the Sunflower's course for a not very distant port, where, as I knew, we could obtain a passage to London or Southampton.

As I anticipated, we had not long to wait for a homeward-bound steamer. Our voyage to the Thames was unmarked by any incident of importance. A high-fitting dress, and a foulard carefully adjusted and continually worn, prevented the peculiar color of Mab's neck from being much noticed. But her tall stature, splendid proportions, and powerful face, and, I am bound to add, her somewhat imperious manner, could not escape observation; and owing to the acuteness of her senses she often overheard remarks, complimentary and the reverse, which gave her more annoyance than amusement. For this reason, and for others which will suggest themselves to the reader, I decided to leave her in London while I went to Liverpool to see my mother, and inform her of what had happened to me. But on my arrival thither I found, to my great grief, that she had died a few weeks previously. It was, however, a consolation to know that her death was in no way connected with my absence; it arose from an organic complaint of long standing, and up to the last moment of her life she had cherished the hope of seeing me again.

After settling her affairs and calling on poor Mrs. Peyton, I rejoined my wife, and we left London immediately. Although the great city interested her much, she found life there intolerable, and was beginning to suffer seriously in health. The never-ceasing din distressed her beyond measure; she could hear voices through an ordinary wall as distinctly as I could hear them through a paper partition; hear a cough in the

attic, a ticking watch in the basement. In the hotels at which we stayed I had to engage the rooms both above and below ours, and on either side of them, in order that they might be unoccupied.

Before leaving London I sold some fifty thousand pounds' worth of pearls, and purchased such things as Mab thought her people most required.

To the managing owners of the Diana, I remitted a bank draft for the declared value of her cargo, with no other explanation than that, although the ship herself had become a total wreck, I had been so fortunate as to dispose of the cargo for an amount that, I was glad to think, would recoup the underwriters the greater part of the claims for which they were liable.

To one friend only—an old school-fellow whom I accidentally met in London—did I introduce my wife and tell my story. To this gentleman, moreover, my book, if I may call it mine, will owe its existence. Himself a pressman and a writer of stories, he was good enough to say that my personal narrative, "put into proper shape," might make a readable book; and he offered, if I would give him the necessary particulars, to act as its literary sponsor, and see the work through the press. Mab and I, after some hesitation, agreed to this proposal, making it, however, an imperative condition that the precise whereabouts of the island should on no account be disclosed—for the present.

The first and greater part of my narrative was then taken down in short-hand; the remainder I have written on the voyage out; and as I add these lines, Bolsover is waiting with the Sunflower to convey us and a second consignment of horses to Fair Island.

In the not distant future I hope that Mab and I may have so far overcome her people's prejudice against strangers, and their love of isolation, that we shall be permitted to say where we are, and in some future edition of a "Queer Race" invite those of my readers who may feel so disposed to pay us a visit in our island home.

[THE END.]