

GIVEN AWAY. £50 GIVEN AWAY.



CAPTAIN NEMO.

By CHAS. HAMILTON.



Headed by their young commander the bluejackets boarded the vessel.

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Next Friday: Our New Serial by Henry St. John.

CAPTAIN NEMO

OR, TRACKED O'ER THE SEAS.

By CHAS. HAMILTON.

Author of "The Corsair Captain," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO SCHOONERS—DRIVEN TO DOOM.

Dark stormclouds lowered over sea and land, and the waves of the Atlantic broke on the rocks and banks of the Northern Bahama Islands, with a sullen roar that presaged an approaching commotion of the elements. The wind had been increasing in violence all day, and at sunset it blew with steady force towards the shore. The skipper of a small schooner that was drifting towards the rocky reefs of one of the northernmost of the two thousand islands that form the Bahama group, walked the deck of his vessel in nervous perturbation. His eyes were directed alternately at the sea, the sky, and at a large vessel which was following in his wake. The latter was a schooner, with a long, low hull, and tapering masts that, in spite of the rising storm, were crowded with canvas. One look at her would have told her character. The raking masts, the unusual number of guns for a vessel of her dimensions, the crowd of

with an anxious look at the line of coral reefs that showed just above the water directly ahead of the little "Water-bird." "Anything is better than falling into the clutches of the Black Pirate."

As the mate spoke, there came a puff of white smoke from the bow of the "Sea-wolf," and a cannon-ball hurtled across the quarter of a mile of agitated water that intervened between the two ships.

"That's a signal to heave to," said Captain Brail, shaking his fist at the pursuer. "But they shall be baffled, the pirate dogs, for I'll send the 'Water-bird' to the bottom before they shall take her!"

"Captain Brail," said a soft voice beside the skipper, "are we in peril of capture?"

"Yes, Mrs. Fairfax," replied Brail, turning to the lady, who was a slender, delicate-featured young woman of twenty-five. "You must know soon, so I may as well tell you now. Unless yonder vessel leaves us, we are doomed!"

"Heaven help us!" murmured the lady, clasping tighter the hand of a little lad of five or six who walked by her side. "Is there no hope?"

"I am sorry to say there is none, madam," replied the captain. "The Black Pirate is known far and wide as a merciless brute, and rather than fall into his power I have resolved to run my ship ashore."

"If we only had a little sea-room, we might elude them yet," said the mate, glancing keenly over the troubled ocean. "The 'Water-bird' could show a clean pair of heels to any craft afloat, I warrant, in a stern chase; but we are so encompassed with reefs that I fear it is impossible to gain the open sea."

"Let us keep on," said the skipper gloomily. "If we must go down, perhaps we may be able to take the Black Pirate to Davy Jones' locker with us. The hurricane will be upon us in a few minutes, and then the most skillful seaman alive could not save a ship on this lee-shore."

The crew of the "Water-bird," six all told, had gathered round their chief, and they listened to his words in gloomy silence. There was some consolation in the thought that they might include their foes in their own destruction, but not much. But the sailors had heard too much of the cruelty of the commander of the "Sea-wolf" to wish to trust themselves into his hands.

"The hurricane!—the hurricane!" suddenly shouted one of the seamen, a tall, broad-shouldered English tar, pointing to the eastward with outstretched finger. The captain's eyes followed the line indicated, and he saw an immense black cloud rolling up from the eastern horizon. The sun had now almost disappeared, and a sort of twilight covered the sea.

The masts of the "Water-bird" were bare of canvas, and everything was prepared for the shock. Brail's eyes wandered to the pirate ship, and he saw seamen out on the yards swiftly furling the sails. But the approach of the tempest did not frighten the rovers from their prey. Under set storm-sails, the "Sea-wolf" still glided through the water towards the fleeing trader. From her bow-chaser came another puff of smoke and a loud report, and a ball whistled between the masts of the "Water-bird."

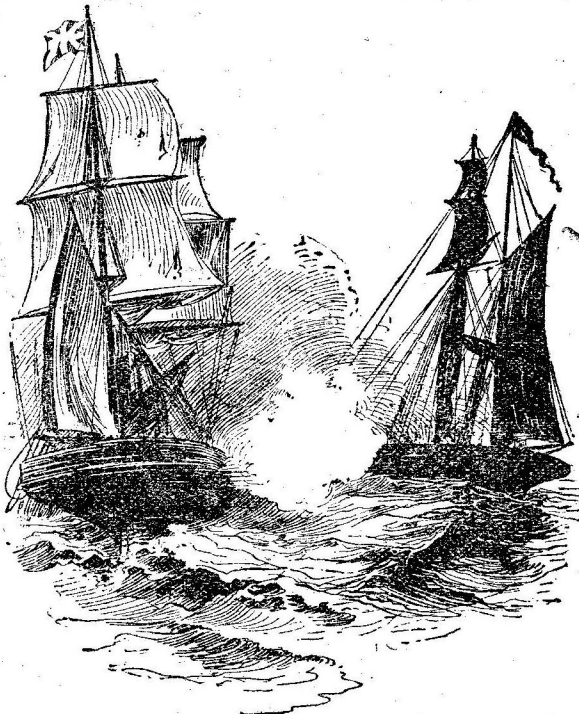
"There's Captain Nemo!" exclaimed the mate, as a tall figure, clad in black, showed himself on the poop of the pirate, with a speaking-trumpet in his hand. The two vessels were now close enough to allow of hailing.

"Schooner, ahoy!" came from the Black Pirate. "What ship is that?"

"The 'Water-bird,' Baltimore," answered Brail through his trumpet.

"Heave to, or I'll sink you!"

Brail made no reply, but turned his head to look at the black cloud in the east, which had increased to an alarming extent, and was rolling towards the two ships with frightful rapidity. The wind had risen to a gale, and the waves were already agitated by the oncoming tempest.



The Englishman poured in her broadside.

well-armed men that thronged her decks, and, above all, the sable pennon that flowed in the breeze from her peak, all proved the vessel to be one of the pirate craft which at that period infested the waters of the Bahamas. On her black hull was seen the name "Sea-wolf," painted in white.

"There is no hope," said the skipper of the little vessel, an American, trading between Baltimore and the West Indies, addressing his first mate, who stood by his side. "That vessel is the 'Sea-wolf,' of whom we heard so much in Baltimore, and we have the choice of surrendering and getting our throats cut, or of running ashore and going to pieces."

"Then let us go ashore, Captain Brail," answered the mate,

"Heave to!" came from the speaking-trumpet of the pirate chief.

There was no answer from the trader, and the pirate descended from the poop. A minute later a sheet of flame burst from the side of the "Sea-wolf," and a rattling broadside swept through and through the little "Water-bird." Down came one of the masts with a crash, and splash it went into the sea, carrying with it three of the sailors, who were clinging to the rigging to save themselves from being swept away by the wind.

"Mrs. Fairfax," said the skipper, turning to the lady, who stood white and trembling, still holding the hand of the lad, "you had better go below."

"Oh, Heaven, help my poor boy!" cried the mother, clasping little Harold in her arms, and pressing him convulsively to her breast.

"Help her down the companion-way, Robin," said Brail, addressing the tall English sailor we have mentioned before. The good-natured young sailor started forward to assist the lady, when another broadside came from the merciless pirate, and a splinter from the shattered bulwark struck the young woman in the side. She fell upon the deck with a shrill scream, and Brail, bending over her, saw that she was fatally injured.

"Leave her there," he said to Robin. "She is dying, and, as we shall all be at the bottom in a few minutes, it isn't worth while carrying her down to the cabin."

The hurricane had now burst on the ocean in all its fury. Mountainous waves leaped and foamed round the ship, the wind rattled through the shrouds with a solemn chant, and the "Water-bird" danced on the stupendous billows like a cork. The first force of the hurricane drove her almost on her beam ends; but she soon righted again, and careened along at a fearful rate towards the fatal line of coral reefs.

The last gleam of daylight was now gone, and to the horror of the storm was added the horror of darkness. The roll of thunder seemed to shake the heavens, and frequently athwart the black firmament shot flashes of lightning, that for an instant vividly illuminated the storm-swept sea.

Captain Brail, at the helm, kept the schooner steadily towards the reefs, determined that she should not be captured by the "Sea-wolf." Hurdled hither and thither by the foaming billows, the little schooner neared the rocks with terrible swiftness. Still the merciless pirate continued the chase, and whenever a flash of lightning showed the two vessels to each other, a broadside burst from the "Sea-wolf."

Over the deck and through the hull of the "Water-bird" roared the leaden hail, and soon only three living persons stood on the deck of the devoted schooner, the captain, the English sailor, and the boy.

Suddenly a terrific shock shook the schooner from stem to stern.

"She's struck!" shouted the captain.

Robin took the little lad in his strong arms, as the tumultuous waves came pouring over the deck in an irresistible torrent.

"Hold to my collar, my lad," he said, "and I will try to save you."

Then, springing into the cauldron of foam, he struck out shorewards. A wave lifted him on its crest, and carried him over the reef, and he was thrown ashore, more dead than alive, with his little charge still clinging to his breast.

The captain was not so lucky. A shot from the Black Pirate struck him in the side, he reeled, and fell upon the corpse of the slain woman. Both were washed overboard by the roaring breakers; and then, as the schooner went to pieces on the rocks, shot after shot came from the pirate's guns, riddling the sinking wreck until the last plank had disappeared, and the "Water-bird" was no more.

CHAPTER II.

ROBIN'S CHARGE—THE "SEA-WOLF" AGAIN.

Fourteen years have passed since the tragic scene described in the preceding chapter. The Bahamas now smiled beneath the rays of a summer sun, and the sea was calm and tranquil. On the shore of the island, whose reefs proved so destructive to the ill-fated "Water-bird," walked the two survivors of that vessel's crew.

Harold, now grown into a fine young man of twenty, with a handsome, manly face, and an athletic form, strolled by the side of the sailor who had saved him from the wreck, honest Robin Holt, now a bearded seaman of thirty-nine. The two men were engaged in earnest conversation as they walked along the sandy beach of the isle.

They had not wasted their time since the wreck upon the island. A year after the sinking of the "Water-bird" by the Black Pirate, the man and the child had been rescued by a trader that touched at the isle for water, and they had taken passage to Baltimore. Some of the belongings of the lady passenger of the "Water-bird" had been thrown on the beach by the breakers, and among them was a box containing valuable jewels,

which the honest seaman had scrupulously reserved for the future benefit of the orphan boy.

By the sale of some of the jewels in Baltimore, Robin obtained enough money to place the lad at a respectable boarding-school, where he left him till he was just on twenty. Then he visited him again, and explained to him his whole history, as far as he knew it. The youth at once expressed a wish to revisit the isle where his mother had met her death, and thither the sailor conducted him, making the voyage in a small lugger, which now lay in a little rock-locked inlet, a hundred yards or so from the spot where the "Water-bird" had struck.

"And this, Robin," said the young man, who held in his hand a gold locket, containing the portrait of a young and beautiful woman—"this was attached to a chain round my neck when you brought me ashore?"

"Ay, lad," replied the sailor. "'Tis a picture of your mother, and though I was forced to part with most of the other jewels to obtain money to keep you at school, I allus preserved that, for I guessed as how you would jest like to hev' a picter o' your mother when you grewed up."

"You're a good fellow, Robin!" exclaimed Harold, grasping the hand of the sailor. "I owe you more than I can ever repay."

"Don't mention it, lad. Your mother—bless her—she was kind to me when we was on board o' the pretty little 'Water-bird,' and when I was ill during the voyage she nussed me well agin, tho' I was only a common foremast-man, and she was a lady born and bred."

"I hardly remember her," said Harold, with a moisture in his eyes. "I have only a vague recollection of a beautiful lady who held me by the hand on the deck of a vessel in a storm, and who was struck down by my side."

"'Twas by a shot from the pirate, lad!"

"Has the Black Pirate been captured, Robin?"

"No, lad."

"Who is the captain of the outlaw ship?"

"Nobody knows. He is a born fiend, though, whoever he is. He is called Captain Nemo, 'cause nobody knows his name, and he is known as the Black Pirate, because the 'Sea-wolf,' his ship, is painted black as a coffin—hull, masts, bulwarks, blocks, all dead black."

"Then for the future I shall live but for one object!" cried the youth, his eyes flashing, and his chest heaving.

"And what's that, my lad?"

"To hunt down the Black Pirate, and avenge my murdered mother!" was the stern reply.

"You have another task to perform, lad—to find your father," said Robin.

"True," replied Harold. "But first will I punish the miscreant you call Captain Nemo."

"You say right, lad; but before you can go in pursuit of the pirate you must fit out a ship, and you have little gold."

"Did you not say you had still some of the jewels that once belonged to my poor mother?"

"Ay, lad, here they are!" replied the sailor, taking a small casket from one of his capacious pockets.

"For what better purpose can they be used than for punishing my parent's murderer," said Harold, opening the casket.

"Here are ample to defray the cost of rigging and manning a ship."

"How much are they worth, lad?"

"I am not a particularly good judge; but I should compute their value at the very least at twenty thousand pounds."

"Whew! that's a fortune. Enough for your purpose, and to spare."

"Every penny, if necessary, shall be spent in bringing the Black Pirate to justice!" said the young man.

"Your resolution is a commendable one, Harold," said Robin Holt. "But it seems to me that success is exceedingly doubtful. All the best English and American cruisers in these seas are looking for the Black Pirate, and have been looking for years, but in vain. For more than fifteen long years Captain Nemo has defied justice."

"It is a long lane that has no turning."

"True, and Captain Nemo may be nearly at the end of his rope. At any rate, you do right in attempting his capture, and I'm with you heart and soul—that is, if you want me."

"I do want you, Robin; you shall be my first mate."

"Nay, lad, Robin Holt ain't up to that; but I will be your boatswain, and willing."

"Just as you like, Robin. But I shall not be in too great a hurry to commence my quest. For a year I shall diligently study navigation, and then, when I get my ship, I shall be able to command her well."

"A good idea, boy; 'tain't no good going at an affair of this kind like a bull at a gate. Slow and steady wins the race," said Robin.

"This locket containing my mother's picture I shall always keep," said Harold, affixing the locket to a ribbon he wore

round his neck. "It may, perhaps, help me in finding out my family."

"I'm sorry I can't give you a clue, Harry, lad. None of your mother's papers came ashore, and none of these jewels have any name on them, only the initials 'J. K.' All I know is that your mother was known aboard the 'Water-bird' as Mrs. Fairfax, and she called you Harold."

"Nevertheless, with Heaven's aid, I hope to be successful. But now, Robin, I have paid a visit to this isle and explored it, I am anxious to get back to Baltimore, to prepare for my voyage. Let us return to the cutter."

The two men descended to the waterside, and were soon aboard the little dipper which had conveyed them to the island. They had only two bluejackets to aid in working the vessel, which did not require more.

Just as the cutter got clear of the line of reefs that closed in the little bay, and glided away into deep blue water, a shout came from one of the seamen:

"The Black Pirate! The Black Pirate!"

"Already!" murmured Harold, as his eye rested on the sombre vessel, which had now appeared from behind a mountainous cliff to the northward, and was bearing directly upon the tiny craft.

"The 'Sea-wolf'!" cried Robin Holt, as he sprang to the helm. "We shall have to be smart now, lads, or walk the plank!"

"The pirate won't be able to overhaul us, I think," remarked Harold, with a keen glance at Captain Nemo's ship, which was speeding along under a cloud of canvas. "Our cutter is a flyer, and we shall be able to walk away from them in this stiff breeze."

"No, no," said one of the American sailors. "The Black Pirate can outsail any craft on the sea."

"Ay," added the other. "The finest vessel that ever left the Kennebec is nothing to the 'Sea-wolf.'"

"Nevertheless," said Harold Fairfax, "we'll try the quality of our wings, and I think 'twill be a stern chase, even if the 'Sea-wolf' does catch us in the end. Up there, and let loose the fore-sheet!"

The sailors obeyed with alacrity, for they knew their lives depended upon the speed of their ship. Harold aided in setting the sails, and in a few minutes every stitch of canvas on board the cutter was set and drawing. Robin, at the wheel, kept the cutter away to the southward, hoping to run into the frequented seas of Cuba and Hayti, where men-o'-war mustered plentifully, and where the Black Pirate would hardly dare to follow. Like a white bird the cutter skimmed over the surface of the smiling waves, and like a hawk in pursuit of prey the pirate swooped after her.

"You see the Black Pirate sooner than you wish," observed Robin to the young man, who stood by his side.

"Not so," replied the youth. "I am glad to catch a glimpse of his vessel, for it will enable me to recognise him when next we meet."

"But if he catches us now it will knock all your schemes on the head."

"He will not catch us now, and that I'm certain of. We have kept our distance so far, and I think we'll be able to keep it, and when we run in sight of the Blue Mountains of Jamaica, the rover will leave us."

"That is likely enough. But, look yonder, lad, ain't that a sail in the offing?"

"A brig under full sail," said Harold, looking at the new vessel which now appeared from beyond the promontory whence the pirate had emerged.

"By George! she's chasing the Black Pirate!" cried Robin. "The 'Sea-wolf' ain't arter us, but is runnin' from the brig!"

"If the brig catches up with him, he's a goner," said one of the Yankee sailors. "Fur the brig is half as big again as the schooner, and I'll warrant carries heavier metal."

"Let us lay to and watch them, Robin," said Harold, his interest fully awakened. "The pirate has his hands full, and won't interfere with us."

"Maybe, he'll give a shot in passing," answered the seaman. "But we'll run that risk to see the fun. I reckon they're about equally matched in sailing, Harold. But if it comes to a close fight, the brig has got the best set of teeth to show."

The cutter was rounded to, and the sails taken in. From the deck the Englishmen watched the chase.

The "Sea-wolf" in her flight passed within half a mile of the cutter, and Holt and Harold had a near view of the strange vessel. Her decks were crowded with seamen, whose attention seemed to be concentrated upon the ship in pursuit of them, which was now firing shot after shot from her bow-chasers, though with little or no effect.

"That's Captain Nemo at the wheel," said Robin, pointing to the tall, black form of the pirate chief, plainly visible at that distance.

"I wonder who the brig is, said Harold. "Have you a glass, Robin?"

The sailor handed him a telescope.

"The 'Hunter,'" said Harold, spying the name of the brig through the glass. "An appropriate name, it seems."

"Yes," assented Robin. "I wonder why she is arter the pirate? She don't have the cut of a Government vessel."

"Perhaps some private individual commands her, bound, like myself, on a mission of vengeance," said Harold.

"Well, we may as well take advantage of the preoccupation of the pirate to get back to Baltimore," observed Robin. "We shall gain nothing by staying here, that's quite certain."

"Yes," said Harold, reluctantly. "Let us go."

The cutter's prow was again pointed northward, and as she skimmed over the blue waters, both brig and schooner quickly vanished beneath the horizon to the southward.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTURE.

"Sail on the starboard bow!"

The "Hyperion" sloop, of Charleston, bound to Port Royal, was gliding over the blue waves of the Atlantic, with the reefs of the Caicos in view on her starboard quarter, when the words with which this chapter opens rang from the masthead.

The "Hyperion" was a trader; but she carried passengers as well as a cargo of cotton. Mr. Anderson, an English gentleman, who owned extensive plantations in Jamaica, with his wife and his daughter Una, were aboard the sloop, returning to the West Indies after a visit to some friends at Charleston.

Captain Wilcox ran up the companion with his telescope, and took a long look at the stranger.

"What do you make her out to be, sir?" asked Harden, the first mate, as the skipper lowered his glass.

"A large schooner, under full sail," replied the skipper gravely. "I can see nothing of her but her topmasts, so of her character I cannot judge with certainty. But we have heard so much of the depredations of the Black Pirate in these waters lately, that I reckon 'twould be advisable to give her a wide berth, whoever she is."

"Do you think she may be the pirate, sir?"

"That's as it may be; but we won't go near enough to see if I can help it. Helmsman, two points to the larboard."

The sloop swung round away from the stranger, and glided through the water on a new tack. But before an hour had passed, the sails of the stranger had risen far above the horizon, and were visible to the naked eyes of all aboard the American sloop.

"She outsails us on a wind," observed the skipper to the mate. "I confess that I don't like her looks. Do you see the colour of her spars?"

"All black," said Harden.

"Yes, the hue of the 'Sea-wolf.' Can it be that she is the famous rover?"

"Shall we beat to quarters, sir?"

"I'm afraid if it is really the 'Sea-wolf' we haven't much chance; but the pirate never shows quarter, so we will show our teeth if he tries to lay aboard us," replied Captain Wilcox.

The "Hyperion" was armed with two guns forward, and half a dozen carronades ranged along her sides. She had a crew of forty men, enough to defend the vessel against an enemy of equal force. But the Black Pirate carried twenty guns, and a crew of two hundred, besides being twice the size of the little "Hyperion." Nevertheless, the Americans determined to show fight if overhauled, for the Black Pirate never spared a victim, and to fall into his hands meant certain death for all aboard the sloop.

"Run out the port nine-pounder," ordered the skipper. "If it is the pirate, and we shall soon know, we will fire it at intervals, and the reports may attract some of John Bull's cruisers."

"Is it possible that yonder vessel is the notorious pirate, Captain Wilcox?" asked Mr. Anderson, who, with his wife and daughter, was on deck, enjoying the cool seabreeze.

"I'm afraid so, Mr. Anderson," returned the skipper. "But," he added, as he saw the two ladies become pale with apprehension, "it is by no means a certainty. Do not alarm yourselves too soon."

"I can see the hull of the schooner, sir," said Harden. "Tis as black as midnight. Ah! there goes a salute."

As he spoke, the report of a cannon reverberated across the waters, and a ball plunged into the ocean a hundred yards from the sloop, having fallen that distance short of the mark.

"He's too far off to bite at present," said Wilcox. "But he has got the tail of the breeze in his canvas, and he will be up with us pretty soon if we can't get along quicker than this."

"Shall we begin with the gun, sir?" asked Harden.

"Yes, yes, by all means."

The gunner commenced loading and firing the piece as fast as the weapon could be manipulated, while the sailors of the sloop spread every inch of canvas to the breeze that the vessel could bear.

"They're running up her bunting," came from the look-out man.

Every eye was turned on the pursuer, and a shiver ran through every frame as the ball ran up to the masthead of the schooner, and, unrolling in the breeze, resolved itself into a sable pennant.

"A rover, beyond a doubt!" muttered the skipper gloomily. "I warrant you it's the 'Sea-wolf'!" exclaimed Harden. "Call old Belton, the foretop man, he has seen her, and can tell us fur certain."

The old seaman named, a veteran of sixty-five, came at the call, and, after taking a long look at the schooner, said:

"Tis the 'Sea-wolf,' sir, without a doubt."

"Are you sure of that, Belton?" asked Wilcox anxiously.

"Yes, sure as a sextant ain't a quadrant! I know the cut of her jib, and I'd know it among ten thousand other sail."

"Besides," said Harden, "I've never heard of another vessel in these seas painted all in black. 'Tis Captain Nemo's ship, I'll swear!"

"We must prepare for a desperate fight," said the skipper calmly. "Mr. Harden, see that arms are served out to the men, and powder and shot passed up from below. Mr. Anderson, I must ask you to conduct the ladies below to their berths before the firing begins."

"Ay!" said old Belton; "grape and canister are no respecters of persons, and if their leddies stay yere they may git some o' their purty front teeth knocked out."

Una and her mother immediately descended to the cabin in the stern.

Mrs. Anderson was in a terrible fright, and her husband did his best to comfort and reassure her. Una was made of sterner stuff, and she showed little emotion, save that her cheek was a trifle paler than heretofore. With affectionate care she tried to compose her mother, and when she had succeeded she went to the cabin window, which looked out of the stern, and watched the advance of the pirate.

Meanwhile there was uproar and confusion on deck. While the sloop was still kept before the wind, to escape, if that were possible, Wilcox was preparing for the contest which appeared inevitable. The guns were double-shotted, and men stationed at their posts by the slides. Small-arms were served out to the men, and a dozen of the best shots were placed in the tops, provided with rifles, with which to pick off the pirates crowded on the decks of the 'Sea-wolf,' when the vessels were within gunshot.

"We shall be able to give him a tussle fur his money!" observed Captain Wilcox, with a satisfied glance round the warlike deck. "And as there are so many cruisers in these seas, there is a chance the cannonading may be heard from a distance, and one of our ships, or a John Bull, may come to the rescue."

"I hope that will be the case. But look, the rascal begins in earnest now!" exclaimed Harden.

The pirate was, indeed, proceeding to business.

The "Sea-wolf" rounded to, and her long row of muzzles, peeping from her portholes, were visible for a moment to the men of the sloop. But only for a moment, for as the schooner came broadside to the sloop a hail of lead and smoke burst from her glittering twenty-pounders, and went crashing through the American vessel. The two vessels were as yet too far apart for the volley to have its full effect, but still the broadside did a great deal of damage aboard the "Hyperion." Six men were struck down, dead or wounded, and several spars fell upon the deck, while the rigging was a good deal cut up. Immediately the broadside was discharged the schooner tacked, and stood towards the "Hyperion" again. Her bow guns kept up a brisk fire upon the sloop as she gradually neared the little trader.

"They can keep up that popping as long as they like," said Captain Wilcox. "So long as we don't have another broadside, we can afford to laugh at their shooting."

But he was mistaken. One of the pirate's shots, whether by skilful aim or by chance, struck the steersman of the "Hyperion," and the man fell. As his dying hands released the spokes, the rudder was uncontrolled, and the ship at once yawed. As she swung round helplessly the captain and the mate simultaneously started towards the wheel.

As they did so a loud crash was heard, and a terrific shock shook the vessel from the stem to the stern. The mainmast, weakened by the shots from the pirate's twenty-pounders, had gone by the board.

"Hang the luck!" cried the mate, with an imprecation. "Our wings are clipped now!"

A cheer sounded across the water from the rover as the mast fell.

"Confound you!" shouted the enraged skipper, shaking his fist at the pirate schooner. "Now," he continued, "we have got to fight! Harden, take the helm, and keep up straight at the schooner."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The mate obeyed, and the "Hyperion," answering her helm obediently, swung clear, and then stood towards the sea-rover.

The "Sea-wolf," directed by the skilful hand of Captain Nemo, was thrown into the wind, and again her long-armed side was presented to the trader. The expected volley came; but Harden, obeying the skipper's signal, with a turn of the wheel sent the "Hyperion" flying to port, evading the storm of lead by a few cables-lengths. The volley of canister went screaming away over the curling waves, and the sloop, thanks to the skilful manoeuvring of her commander, remained untouched. The next minute the "Hyperion" rang alongside the schooner, and poured in her broadside, and glided on out of the line of fire before the pirates could reload their guns and return the rough salutation.

"Malediction!" cried Captain Nemo between his teeth, as the shots from the trader whistled over his decks. "Load, load, you there, and return the fire! Quick, you rascals—quick!"

The "Hyperion," unfortunately, was hampered by the wreck of her mainmast, which, still attached to the ship by the stout rigging, clung to her like a leaden clog, and obstructed her evolutions. Captain Wilcox directed a number of men to take hatchets and cut the wreckage adrift, and this work was being accomplished rapidly, when the pirate, recovered from his momentary confusion, ran alongside and delivered a raking broadside. The heavy shot went through and through the unlucky trader, and her deck presented a terrible scene of slaughter and ruin.

"Fire, gunners!" roared Captain Wilcox.

And a broadside burst again from the "Hyperion." But this time the well-managed "Sea-wolf" had shot ahead, and the lead fell far astern of its target. Before the American could tack, the "Sea-wolf" had doubled her, and ranged alongside on the other side, delivering a sweeping fire as she closed, with her yards touching those of her adversary. Half the crew of the "Hyperion" were stretched upon the deck, not a mast remained standing, and the bulwarks were absolutely riddled. Most of the carronades had been unshipped by the rover's fatal fire, and the Americans could not oppose a single gun to the terrible twenty-pounders of the Black Pirate.

While the "Hyperion" still shivered with the concussion of the raking broadside she had just received, the voice of the pirate chief was heard calling for boarders.

"Stand firm!" shouted Captain Wilcox. "Stand by to repel boarders!"

A shout from the few survivors of his crew answered the order, and as the fierce buccaneers swarmed over the side the Yankee seamen rushed to oppose them. A sanguinary conflict raged, until the pirates, by dint of overwhelming numbers, forced back the Americans to the opposite side of the deck, where one by one they fell or were thrust into the sea. The boarders were led by the Black Pirate, whose tall, sable-clothed figure moved over the deck with swift steps, striking down all who opposed him with a long, sharp-edged sword, which he wielded with fatal effect.

Captain Wilcox was stunned by a blow from the butt-end of a musket, and when he fell all resistance ceased. Harden was taken prisoner, and bound to the mast, as Captain Nemo wished to ask him questions relative to the stowing of the cargo. The rest were slain, excepting two or three who escaped into the hold, and concealed themselves among the bales.

"Shall we search the ship, chief?" asked the second in command of the "Sea-wolf," a black-browed Brazilian named Marcos Gomez.

"Not now," answered Captain Nemo. "That brig which seems to follow us everywhere like our shadow is probably near, and if her crew heard the cannonade she will steer in this direction, and that would give us another fight, which would not be handy at present. No; we have no time to spare. Man the sloop with a prize crew, put Garcias in command, and she can follow in our wake."

The pirate chief turned to get back to his own vessel, and as he did so a startled exclamation burst from his lips. Gomez saw that his eyes were fixed on an object far away upon the waters.

"A sail!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "She has approached while all our attention was given to this sloop, and unseen by us."

"A brigantine!" said Captain Nemo, regarding the stranger through his telescope. "Not a trader. Masts rakish, hull low, no flag. I should not be surprised if 'twas one of our congeners, come to demand a share in the spoil."

"Then we had better prepare for war?"

"Yes; but not if our heels will save us. There's nothing to be got by fighting that vessel, save hard knocks, and we have had enough of them."

"Shall we make sail?"

"Yes. Rig a jury-mast for the sloop."

Captain Nemo returned to the schooner, and sent his second lieutenant, Manuel Garcias, a Biscayan, on board the "Hyperion," with fifty men as a prize crew. The pirates swiftly rigged jury-masts on the sloop, while the "Sea-wolf" lay by, primed

for a fight should the stranger attempt to interfere between her and her prey.

While the work was proceeding aboard the little "Hyperion," the brigantine came up with the wind. A puff of smoke rushed from her bow, and a shot whistled over the deck of the Black Pirate, and at the same time her flag was run up to the peak. A curse escaped the lips of the rover captain as he saw the Union Jack floating in the breeze.

"An Englishman!" he exclaimed.

Then, realising that a fight was inevitable, he issued his orders with swift precision. Fifteen men only were left to take care of the prize, under the orders of Manuel Garcias, while Marcos Gomez returned to the schooner with the rest.

Captain Nemo well knew that he would require his full force to cope with the Englishman, who was of his own size and armament. When these alterations were completed the "Sea-wolf" moved slowly through the water towards her new antagonist.

CHAPTER IV.

A NAVAL ENGAGEMENT.

Let us repair on board the brigantine, whose advent upon the scene of action had been the cause of such alarm to the fierce

West Indianman within view of the shore. The young captain had steered in that direction, and after a week's unsuccessful cruise had determined to shape his course for the Northern Bahamas, where rumour said Nemo had his retreat, when the sound of firing was heard one bright afternoon, and the brigantine was at once headed for the place whence the noise came. She arrived, as we have said, soon after the capture of the "Hyperion" by the "Sea-wolf."

"Well, captain, there's the craft you're arter," observed Robin Holt, as the "Avenger" glided through the placid water towards the schooner.

"At last!" said Harold, gazing at the vessel of his foe with gleaming eyes. "At last my vengeance may be taken!"

"That chiel's a braw callant for a tulzie!" said the Scottish first mate. "But nathless we may take her without deeficulty."

"Shall I give the word to fire, sir?" asked Griffith, the second officer.

"Let the long gun open," replied Harold. "Robin, you are a splendid shot; see if you can knock away some of her spars."

"Ay, ay, sir! I'll do my best. No man can do more," replied Robin, as he went forward to the fifty-pounder.

The ships were less than a quarter of a mile apart when he opened on the "Sea-wolf," and the ball went clean over the deck of the pirate.

"Good!" cried Harold. "Try for her mainmast."



He was thrown ashore more dead than alive, and with his little charge still clinging to his breast.

sea-rovers. She was a well-built, well-found vessel of some two hundred tons burden, and carried twenty guns—ten each side—as well as a long fifty-pounder forward. Everything about her was neat and clean. The decks were white as snow, the masts were painted to resemble oak, the cannons were polished until they shone like silver in the warm Southern sun. Although not of large dimensions, she had a crew of a hundred and fifty; but so perfect was the discipline of the ship, and so well-trained the sailors, that she did not seem in the least crowded. The bustling confusion on the swarming deck of the "Sea-wolf" formed a strong contrast to the quiet yet active movements of the British seamen.

The commander of the brigantine was a young man of twenty-one—a well-built, erect fellow, sturdy and strong, and agile as a panther. Our readers will in this personage recognise our hero, Harold Fairfax.

The brigantine, which bore the name of the "Avenger," had been built and equipped at Portsmouth, and manned with as fine a set of British seamen as ever walked a deck. The post of captain was taken by Harold himself, and Robin Holt, as he had promised, became boatswain. The first mate was an old Scotchman, a veteran of the Royal Navy, named Lennox, and the second a Welshman named Griffiths.

Harold had learned at Jamaica that the Black Pirate had been last heard of off Hayti, where Captain Nemo had captured a

"The pirate's standing towards us, sir," said Griffith. "And I can see the men at her starboard guns."

"Yes. They mean to shoot alongside, and give us a raker. Desire the larboard broadside to be ready to fire."

The cannon handled by Robin Holt now sounded again, and the ball went through the foresail of the schooner. The next minute the "Sea-wolf" ran alongside, intending to rake the "Avenger"; but at the same moment the Englishman rounded to, closed with the pirate, and poured in her broadside at a distance of a few yards. The crew of the buccaneer gave vent to a yell of fury as the hailstorm of lead swept over the deck, laying low a score of men, and working havoc among the spars and rigging. The men who manned the guns of the side turned to the Briton were all swept away by our hero's volley, and before the infuriated pirate captain could issue orders to his men to man them again the "Avenger" had passed on.

Now was shown to advantage Harold's skill in navigation. Both sides of the brigantine were ready to fire, and, instead of staying alongside the pirate and reloading for a second discharge, the Briton shot ahead of the buccaneer, tacked, stood past her bow, and as she passed delivered the second broadside, raking the schooner fore and aft. Forty pirates fell before that sweeping fire, and half the guns were unshipped.

Captain Nemo, grinding his teeth, laid the schooner alongside the brigantine, and called for boarders.

"THE SCOURGE OF THE SEAS," by Henry St. John, starts next week.

Nemo stood at the helm of his vessel, and under his guidance she approached the "Avenger" until the yards interlocked. Then, led by Marcos Gomez, the pirate boarders came pouring on the deck of the Briton.

A volley of musketry greeted them, laying half the boarding-party dead on the deck of the invaded vessel; and then, with a ringing cheer, the British tars rushed to engage their adversaries hand to hand. Cutlasses and pikes were freely used. Deadly wounds were given and taken, and the reports of pistols rang through the air. In the excitement of battle the pirates did not observe that the "Sea-wolf" had quitted her station by the side of the brigantine. Captain Nemo had, with heartless treachery, left his men in the lurch.

A fresh sail had appeared on the horizon, and the Black Pirate recognised the brig "Hunter," which had so long pursued him in every sea. Knowing that to remain meant death or capture, the villain had launched half his crew against the Englishman, and now stood under full sail to the westward. He knew the boarders would make a desperate stand, long enough to enable him to escape danger of pursuit by the brigantine.

"The pirate is escaping!" cried Robin Holt, suddenly discovering the defection of the buccaneer.

"Heavens! he will escape me, after all!" exclaimed Harold bitterly.

And he rushed into the fight with redoubled fury.

The rovers saw, too, that they were deserted; but knowing that nothing but death awaited them in the event of capture, they prolonged the fight to the bitter end.

Fifty men still followed Marcos Gomez, and the battle raged hot and furious on the deck of the "Avenger." The English, however, outnumbered the rovers, and were made of stouter stuff. Wielding their long, heavy cutlasses with deadly effect, they drove back the pirates slowly but surely, and one by one the ruffians fell.

Marcos Gomez, resolving on a bold stroke, singled out Harold, thinking that if he killed the young commander he would have a better chance of success. Harold, by no means averse to the encounter, met him foot to foot and point to point.

"Die, curse you!" broke from the pirate in a hiss like a serpent's, as he made a vicious lunge at the breast of the young Englishman.

"Not just yet," returned Harold coolly, as he parried the thrust.

The blades of the two swordsmen clashed for a few minutes, and then the Brazilian, perceiving that he was losing ground, dropped his hand to his sash for a pistol. Before he could use it Harold lunged out, and pinned his hand to his breast with his keen blade. A frightful yell burst from Gomez, and down he went with a crash to the deck.

Meanwhile the British seamen, led by the boatswain and the two mates, had completed the defeat of the pirates. The few survivors threw down their arms and begged for mercy, and they were taken prisoners.

Immediately the fight was over Harold looked in the direction whither the Black Pirate had fled, and saw only the topsails of the buccaneer above the horizon. The brig "Hunter" was still in full pursuit of the rover, but it was plain that the "Avenger" was out of the race.

"Failure is my lot!" said Harold, with bitter accent. "The murderer of my mother is still free. But the chase is not yet ended!"

"We are bound to run him down sooner or later, captain," said old Lennox consolingly.

"Ay! He is a lucky dog, but 'tis a long lane that has no turning!" exclaimed Robin Holt, who had a way of quoting proverbs upon all occasions. "Let us stick to Captain Nemo like a limpet to a rock. 'Fortune favours the brave,' and we must be successful in the long run."

"Suppose we send a boat to the sloop, sir?" suggested Griffith. "She is in the possession of the pirates, and who knows what they may be up to. Shall I have a cutter lowered, Captain Fairfax?"

"At once, Mr. Griffith!"

When the boat was lowered and manned Harold took his seat in the stern-sheets.

"Pull for the sloop!" he ordered briefly.

In a few minutes the cutter lay by the quarter of the "Hyperion."

"Hallo! aboard the sloop!" sang out Robin from the boat.

"Sheer off, or we'll fire into you!" shouted Manuel Garcias from the deck.

"Fire, if you dare!" cried Harold, springing upon the ruined deck of the American sloop, sword in hand, followed fast by his brave seamen.

"Back!" cried Garcias, crossing swords with him.

"Down with the buccaneers!" shouted Harold, pressing forward.

With a shout the Britons charged the handful of pirates who held the sloop as a prize crew, and after a short scuffle the outlaws surrendered to superior numbers without bloodshed.

Manuel Garcias was disarmed by the young English captain, and taken prisoner.

"There has doubtless been a desperate fight here, Robin," remarked Harold, as he glanced over the deck, which was encumbered with torn rigging, broken spars, rent canvas, and dead bodies.

"You're right, stranger!" said a voice close at hand.

"Who spoke?" asked Harold, looking round.

"I did," replied Harden, who was bound in an upright posture to the stump of the mainmast.

"Ah! I didn't see you," said Harold, perceiving the mate for the first time. "Are you the captain of this vessel?"

"No; the captain lies yonder."

"Is anyone else left alive?" asked Robin, as he released the sailor.

"Yes. I believe a few men have hidden themselves in the hold, and down in the cabin are some ladies."

"Ladies?" ejaculated Harold.

"Yes. And it's lucky you happened along when you did, or they'd ha' bin carried away most likely by the Black Pirate."

Harold descended below, and found the door of the cabin fastened. He knocked.

"Who is there?" cried Mr. Anderson within.

"A friend!"

"It is false! I am armed, and if you attempt to break in the door I shall fire!" cried the planter in determined tones.

"You are mistaken," replied Harold, realising that the occupant of the cabin was under the impression that he was one of the pirates. "I am the commander of the British brigantine 'Avenger,' and the pirates are defeated."

"What is your name?" asked Anderson, still distrustful. "It seems to me that I know your voice."

"I know it, papa!" interrupted Una. "'Tis Mr. Fairfax."

"That is my name," answered Harold, "although I did not think there was anyone aboard this craft who was familiar with it."

The door was at once unlocked and thrown open.

"Do you not know me, my brave friend?" said Anderson, seizing his hand.

"Mr. Anderson!" exclaimed Harold. "This is an unexpected pleasure."

"Unexpected on both sides, I think," observed the planter, shaking the young man's hand again and again.

Then he presented his wife and daughter.

Harold had never seen Una but once, when he had dined with Anderson at Port Royal, but he well remembered the sweet face and delicate features of the girl, and when he took her hand he unconsciously held it in his own, until Una's surprised glance recalled him to himself, and he released it, with a momentary blush. The girl, who was some four years younger than Harold, looked at him with a rather amused glance, and then turned away her head.

"Where is the Black Pirate, Mr. Fairfax?" inquired Anderson.

"Gone!" replied the young commander.

"Then you have not captured him?"

"No. He evaded us by a cowardly trick!"

And Harold explained how Captain Nemo had deserted his boarding-party.

"The mean scoundrel!" exclaimed the Jamaican. "He deserves to swing, if but for his treatment of his own men. You came along in the very nick of time, Mr. Fairfax. We had given ourselves up for lost. And to think that I mistook you for a pirate when you knocked at the door!"

"The mistake was natural under the circumstances," said Harold.

For a few minutes Harold remained in conversation with the Andersons, and he then returned to the deck.

He found the survivors of the Yankee crew, four in number, gathered there, as well as the captain, who had come to his senses, having only been stunned in the recent conflict. Harden was directing the four seamen to rig the jury-masts the pirates had begun.

"I'll send some of my men aboard to assist you," said Harold.

"Thank you," replied Captain Wilcox. "We are in a pretty bad state. You will give your prisoners a short shift, won't you? I should dearly like to see them strung up in a row at the yardarm."

"I am going to give them up to the admiral at Kingston," answered the captain of the "Avenger." "You can depend upon it that they will not be dealt tenderly with."

The men of the brigantine were divided into two "watches." One party set to work repairing the damage aboard the "Avenger," which was but slight, and the other commenced operations upon the American sloop.

Before evening fell the brigantine was as spick and span as ever, and the sloop was repaired enough to continue her voyage to Jamaica. As there seemed to be no immediate prospect of falling in again with the Black Pirate, the captain of the "Avenger" offered to keep company with the sloop as far

as her destination, an offer Captain Wilcox accepted with much gratitude.

Harold's motives, however, were not entirely unselfish, for he wanted to keep company rather with a certain passenger in the sloop than with the vessel itself. But of this secret thought he spoke nothing.

As night fell the two vessels, under easy sail, moved through the water, and took their way towards the channel which separates Cuba from Hayti.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN NEMO'S STRATAGEM—THE ATTACK.

With a heart that was almost bursting with bitter fury, Captain Nemo left the "Avenger" master of the field, and turned the prow of his vessel to the west. The "Hunter" followed him, with persistent obstinacy, as he guided the schooner amid the reefs of the Caicos group.

"That vessel is like my shadow," said Captain Nemo to his third officer, who now acted in the place of Marcos Gomez. "She follows me everywhere."

"Yet she doesn't look like a Government craft," observed the Lieutenant, Pietro Gabriel. "A privateer, evidently."

"Yes, some private individual, who thinks to do the world a service by ridding it of the Pirate of the Bahamas," said the pirate chief, with a bitter sneer. "But we shall elude her easily."

"Yes, she cannot know the windings of these channels as we do."

"You speak true, Gabriel. And when I have eluded the brig, can you guess what I intend to do?"

"Return to the stronghold in the Bahamas."

"Afterwards, yes. But first I'll have revenge on that brigantine."

"How can you do that, captain?"

"When it is dark I shall return to the place where the battle was fought, and retake the sloop. She cannot have sailed far in her crippled condition. You know there are women on board, don't you?"

"Yes, captain, I saw them on the deck when we began to chase the vessel, through my telescope," assented Gabriel.

"Well, we'll carry them off to our island retreat. Won't that be revenge on the interfering Englishman?"

"Doubtless, it will be a dig in his ribs. But can this be really accomplished, captain?" observed Gabriel dubiously.

"Yes, I'll do it, if it costs me my ship—ay, or my life!"

"We are terribly short-handed, sir," Gabriel ventured to remind him.

"Yes, I know it; but that cannot be helped. We can still muster a hundred, and I doubt if the Englishman has many more."

"The brig won't follow us among the reefs!" exclaimed Gabriel, pointing to the pursuer, who had stopped, and was tacking in the vain endeavour to find and navigate the passage used by the "Sea-wolf."

"I thought we should drop her behind," said the Black Pirate exultantly, as he saw the indecision of the commander of the "Hunter."

"Yes, we are safe from her now."

"Ha! they begin to fire!" cried Captain Nemo, as the reports of guns sounded across the waters. "Much good may it do them; we are out of range. If we were not, I'd give them a few shots to remember me by, the bold rascals. It isn't every ship that can brave the Black Pirate with impunity, and I long to square accounts with that fine fellow."

"We are not in very good trim for an engagement now," remarked Gabriel.

"No; besides she's bigger than we. Then, too, we have the other vessel, the brigantine, who has knocked so many holes in our planks, to attend to before we pay any attention to the 'Hunter.'"

The "Sea-wolf" ran swiftly through the narrow channels, guided by the skilful hand of the captain, who stood at the wheel, piloting with the precision of one who knew the intricate passages amid the reefs, shoals, and sunken rocks thoroughly.

"Now for the sloop!" exclaimed the vengeful rover, as the schooner emerged again into the open sea, the "Hunter" remaining ten or twelve miles astern. Night had fallen, and gloomy clouds overhung the heaving ocean. But with the exactitude of an experienced navigator, the Black Pirate steered the "Sea-wolf" back to the spot where the fight had taken place.

"The 'Hyperion' was a Jamaica-bound Yankee," he said to Pietro Gabriel. "It is safe to reckon that she has gone to Port Royal, so we'll stand in that direction."

"Do you think we shall be able to overtake her, captain?" asked Gabriel.

"For certain. She is crippled, and will crawl along like a Maine collier. She can't be five miles away yet."

"Suppose the brigantine is keeping her company."

"I have reckoned on that," was the cool reply.

The damages done to the "Sea-wolf" by Harold's shot in the recent engagement had been all repaired by this time, as far as was practicable at sea, and the schooner glided through the water as swiftly as ever.

"Warn the men to show no fights," said Captain Nemo. "We must not alarm the Englishmen."

"They are not so prudent," observed Gabriel. "I can see two lights."

"Where away?"

"Dead ahead."

The captain, resigning the helm to a seaman, looked long and earnestly through his night-glass at the two lights that glittered just above the dashing waves.

"I can make them out!" he exclaimed exultantly. "A sloop and a brigantine. Undoubtedly the 'Hyperion' and the 'Avenger.'"

"Shall we beat to quarters, sir?"

"Not yet. See the barge manned, forty men, ~~well~~ armed," said the pirate.

"What the dickens does he mean to do with the barge?" exclaimed Gabriel to himself, as he obeyed the unexpected order.

"All ready, sir," he reported, after a few minutes.

"Very well. Now send the rest of the men to their posts; but mind, no noise, Gabriel, not a sound. Let the guns on both sides be loaded to the muzzles with grape and canister, and ram chain-shot into the long gun."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

While these commands were being carried out in death-like silence, the schooner dashed swiftly towards her foes, propelled vigorously by the freshening wind of night.

"We are now less than a mile from them," said Captain Nemo, after a long pause. "Gabriel, you will take charge of the barge. When I give the word, you will be launched, and you will row to the sloop and take possession, and if any of our fellows are still there alive you'll release them."

"Yes, sir."

"When you have the sloop, head her for the retreat in the Bahamas."

"And am I to leave you?"

"Yes; I shall engage the brigantine, to give you time to escape. Make the best speed you can, for I am no match at present for the brigantine. I am too short-handed to carry her, unless by a fluke. Besides, that infernal brig is still at hand."

"Shall I go now?"

"At once."

Gabriel stepped into the boat, and the captain gave the word to lower it. Plump went the barge into the water, and the oarsmen commenced pulling rapidly towards the sloop.

The "Sea-wolf" was now within a quarter of a mile of the two ships, and even in the intense gloom the English look-out had discerned her sails.

Harold ordered the light, which was displayed to be a guide to the "Hyperion," to keep the vessels from parting company, to be extinguished, and hailing the sloop, he transmitted the order to Captain Wilcox through his speaking-trumpet. At once the American skipper put out the "glim," which had been a guide to the sea-wolves.

But the moon was now rising, and her light revealed the ships to each other. Harold recognised the Black Pirate, and an exclamation of delight escaped his lips.

"To your posts, men!" he shouted—"to your posts, and look alive!"

With the swift yet orderly activity of well-trained seamen, the British crew prepared for the coming encounter.

The "Sea-wolf," however, was the one to open the ball. Gliding alongside of the "Avenger," she delivered a broadside, which the Englishmen returned, though without the same effect, for the pirate was more prepared for the sudden rencontre, and her guns were loaded to the muzzles. A crashing on the deck and cries of pain told Harold that his vessel was hard hit, but undaunted, he gave orders to continue the battle. The tars worked like giants at the guns, loading and firing with inconceivable rapidity, while the pirates replied with equal ardour. While the two vessels pounded away at each other, cries of alarm emanated from the sloop, which Gabriel and his men had boarded.

Harold was quick to perceive the ruse of which he had been made a victim.

"They are retaking the sloop!" exclaimed the first mate, Lennox.

"Ay!" cried Robin Holt. "Captain, shall we board the 'Sea-wolf'?"

"No," said Harold. "Helmsman, lay us alongside the sloop."

The "Avenger" moved through the waves towards the "Hyperion"; but now the brightening rays of the moon showed that the American vessel was being got under way by the

pirates. The Black Pirate, by a masterly manoeuvre, ran his ship between the Briton and the recaptured sloop, and the English were forced to continue the battle with the pirate ship instead of going to the aid of the American.

"Outwitted!" exclaimed Harold, between his teeth. "Robin, take the helm, and put us alongside that infernal rover. The affair shall be decided hand to hand."

"Then we shall have him," said Griffith, the second mate. "For, as at least half his crew have fallen, he must be short-handed to a terrible extent. One rush, and he is ours!"

Holt steered the brigantine towards the rover, but Captain Nemo avoided closing with the Briton, keeping up the fight at long range. His object was to allow Pietro Gabriel time to escape with the prize.

"He means to cut us off from the sloop," said Holt, as he endeavoured time after time to get to windward of the "Sea-wolf." "And it really does seem that he is going to be successful."

"But if they get away with the 'Hyperion,'" said Lennox, "we shall at least take the Black Pirate."

The seaman shook his head in doubt.

"I reckon the cuss means to slip away in the dark, when the moon goes down agin, and I don't see how we are to prevent him."

"If we can settle a few of his spars he is a goner," observed Griffith.

"Yes; but it is so hard to hit a target in this light."

Harold had now, with his own hand, loaded and sighted the long gun forward, and after taking the best aim he could in the uncertain moonlight, he discharged the piece. The ball struck the "Sea-wolf's" mainyard, and the British sailors saw the mainsail of the pirate hang loosely.

"Hard hit, by thunder!" cried Robin Holt.

The injury done to the yard left the "Sea-wolf" for a minute at the mercy of her foe. Harold poured in a fearful broadside at close range, sweeping the rover's decks clear, and then laid the brigantine alongside, and called for boarders. Springing into the chains of the Black Pirate, he leaped thence to the deck, laying about him with his cutlass. Nemo, brandishing his long blade, rushed to dislodge him; but the instant their steel met, the pirate chief started back with a loud, thrilling cry:

"Good Heaven! John Kenyon!"

"Surrender!" said Harold, forbearing from a merciful impulse to run his sword through his adversary's heart, as he might easily have done in the unguarded agitation of the captain.

"Never!" shouted Captain Nemo, attacking him with renewed fury, his eyes gleaming with rage and hatred. "One of us will not survive this night!"

"So be it!" said Harold, giving blow for blow.

"Cut them down!" shouted Robin Holt, backing up the young commander with a score of his shipmates. "Down with the black flag!"

Suddenly Harold's foot slipped on the deck, which was slippery with blood, and he nearly fell. With a grim laugh, the pirate lunged at his throat, but Griffith rushed in and parried the thrust. Robin made a cut at Captain Nemo at the same moment, but a rush from the buccaneers separated them. The helmsman of the "Sea-wolf" had steered the schooner away from her adversary, and only a score of the English were opposed to the buccaneer crew, who now numbered twice as many.

"Sweep them into the sea!" roared the Black Pirate, after signalling to the helmsman to keep the schooner before the wind. The "Sea-wolf" was now in full flight, but the English ship was keeping pace with her, pouring volley after volley into her hull, avoiding the upper deck, where the boarders were maintaining a desperate stand.

Captain Nemo withdrew from the fight, and, hastening to one of the forward guns, exerted his great strength, and slewed it round, turning the mouth upon the combatants.

"Down, men—down on your faces!" he yelled, applying the match to the touchhole.

The buccaneers mechanically obeyed the order, and the contents of the gun passed over them harmlessly; but the English were not prepared for the sudden device, and before they could make a movement to avoid the volley the leaden hail swept through their ranks. Harold glanced round, and saw only four of his men still standing.

"My poor fellows!" he murmured, with a shudder. Then he shouted: "Ho, the 'Avenger'! Boarders—boarders!"

An answering shout came from his own vessel, and he saw Lennox at the wheel trying to run alongside the "Sea-wolf." But the helmsman of the pirate was too successful in navigating the schooner to allow the Britons to come to the rescue of the hard-pressed boarders.

"Rush them!" shouted the Black Pirate. "Into the sea with them!"

The rovers made a desperate dash, and the weight of numbers forced the Britons over the side. Harold ran his cutlass through

the throat of one of his assailants, and the next moment received a crashing blow on the head from the staff of a boarding-pike.

With his senses reeling from the violent concussion, he tumbled into the water, narrowly escaping a vengeful slash Captain Nemo made at him.

Robin Holt, heedless of all but Harold's safety, sprang into the sea to save him, and supported the fainting youth in his sturdy arms. Without his timely aid Harold would assuredly have gone to the bottom like a plummet.

Griffith, seeing that all was lost, threw himself into the sea, followed by the other two sailors who still lived.

"All hands make sail!" cried the buccaneer commander. "Up with you!"

The schooner, under every sail that could be set, flew before the breeze, leaving the "Avenger," which had stayed to pick up her men, hopelessly in the rear.

Harold, coming to his senses, found himself lying in a boat, which had been lowered from the "Avenger" to pick him up.

"The Black Pirate—where is he?" cried the young captain, starting up and looking round wildly.

"Gone," replied Robin Holt soothingly. "But he is a'most knocked to splinters, so we're bound to find him in the morning. He can't go far."

"And the sloop?"

"Vanished half an hour ago."

"Hang the luck! But give orders to pursue the 'Sea-wolf' immediately."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The rescued men went aboard the brigantine, and the "Avenger" stood after the "Sea-wolf."

When the wounded had been attended to Harold counted up his losses. There were ten wounded, ten killed, and thirty missing.

"Ten was aboard the 'Hyperion,' sir," said Robin Holt, "so only twenty was killed on the 'Sea-wolf.'"

"My brave comrades!" said Harold, with tears in his eyes. "Tis a terrible loss; but they died doing their duty!"

"And the pirates must have lost twice or thrice the number," Robin Holt added consolingly.

The men of the brigantine set to work repairing the injury done by the "Sea-wolf's" shot during the engagement. Fortunately none of the masts were touched, though the bulwarks were broken down, and the decks torn up in places. The blue-jackets were busy splicing the torn rigging and repairing other damages, when the look-out shouted:

"Sail ho!"

"Where?" cried Harold, seizing his telescope.

"South, and by east!"

Looking in that direction, Harold saw the brig he had seen several times before, the ubiquitous "Hunter."

"She's bound to turn up," observed Robin Holt.

"Brig heading this way!" sang out the watchman.

"Let her come," said Harold. "She is plainly an enemy to the Black Pirate, and therefore a friend to us. But we can't slacken speed to accommodate her. If she wants our company she'll have to overtake us."

The "Avenger" after the battle was not in such good condition as before, and so the brig had no difficulty in getting alongside her.

After hailing the brigantine, the stranger asked leave to come aboard to communicate with the captain. Harold assented, but declared that he could not stop to wait for a boat.

"That is unnecessary," came back through the speaking-trumpet of the stranger.

The next moment the brig touched with her yards the stern of the brigantine, and as the spar projected a few feet over the battered deck of the "Avenger" the captain of the brig ran along the yard, and leaped to the deck beside the English officers, who had watched the proceeding in astonishment.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COMPACT—THE PURSUIT OF THE PIRATE.

The English officers saw a man about fifty years of age, dressed in the uniform of the British Navy—a portly, imposing officer, who had just given proof of an agility unusual in one of his years. He bowed to the captain of the brigantine and his companions gravely, without appearing to notice their smiles at his informal manner of coming aboard.

"Allow me to introduce myself," he said suavely. "My name is John Kenyon, and I hold the rank of captain in the English Navy."

"John Kenyon?" ejaculated Harold, remembering the name uttered by the Black Pirate.

"Yes. What is there to cause you surprise in that?"

"An hour ago I boarded the 'Sea-wolf,' and when I met the pirate captain face to face he called me by that name, which I had never heard before," explained Harold.

"Perhaps, in the uncertain light, he mistook you for me,"



The door opened hastily and the tall, black-robed figure of the pirate chief appeared before them.

said the stranger. "He knows that I am on his track, and will follow him to the death!"

"You are, then, a foe to the Black Pirate?"

"I am, for sufficient reasons. He murdered my wife and child," said the stranger in a husky voice. "For nearly fifteen years have I pursued him in every sea, and till now he has escaped me. My purpose in coming here was to seek your co-operation, if, as I think, you also are in the same business. You seek the Black Pirate, do you not?"

"Yes," said Harold, his sympathy awakened by the stranger's words. "Let us act in concert, if that be possible."

"It is the best thing for us both. But first tell me, are you commissioned by the Admiralty for this work, or are you acting in a private capacity, like myself?"

"I pursue the Black Pirate on my own account."

"He has, then, done you an injury?"

"Yes. My mother met her death at his hands," answered Harold quietly.

"I feel for you," said Kenyon. "You have as much cause to seek vengeance as I. But let us discuss the subject I came to see you about. What is the condition of the Black Pirate—is he damaged much?"

"Yes. He is in far worse condition than we are, though my vessel is considerably knocked about."

"We put a dozen broadsides into her hull," said Lennox.

"And I think she can't have more than forty men aboard," added Griffith.

"How many men have you, captain?" asked the commander of the "Hunter."

"More than a hundred."

"And I have two hundred. If we can once get at the rover, there will not be much difficulty in capturing him."

"I am afraid that when the moon goes down he will escape in the darkness," said Harold.

"It is well-known that he has a retreat in the Northern Bahamas," the stranger replied. "Steer in that direction, and it is pretty certain he will be in sight when day dawns."

"That was my intention," answered the young captain. "He can't leave us astern, and it is pretty certain that he will make for his retreat to get repairs done, for we have made almost a wreck of his schooner."

"What has become of the sloop I saw in your company some time ago?"

"She has been captured by the Black Pirate," replied Harold.

And then in a few words he related Captain Nemo's stratagem and the result.

"Yes," replied Harold sadly.

"Heaven help them! But we have a really good chance of bringing the pirates to account to-morrow, and we may be in time to save them."

After a little further conversation the captain of the "Hunter" returned to his vessel. He hailed the brig, which closed up alongside the brigantine, and the captain leaped lightly to her deck.

"He knows how to jump, that feller!" said Robin Holt.

"He will be a good ally," said Griffith. "It is quite possible that if we succeed in tracing the rover to his lair, we shall find he has a consort, or a battery, at hand, and the brig will do good service."

"You are right, Griff," replied Harold. "But there is something about that gentleman which puzzles me. I seem to be familiar with his face, and yet to my knowledge I have never seen him before, and I certainly never heard the name of Kenyon until the pirate spoke it."

"There was one thing about Captain Kenyon which struck me," said Lennox.

"And what was that?"

"His likeness to yourself."

"Is he like me?"

"As like as can be, considering the difference in your ages. Didn't you notice it, Griffith?"

"Yes, I did," assented the Welshman. "He could not be more like if he were your father, Captain Fairfax."

His father! The words struck a hidden chord in the heart of Harold. Who was his father? How often had he asked himself that question, without being able to reply to it.

Could this John Kenyon be a relative of his?

Buried in reflection, he forgot the chase upon which he was engaged in speculations about his family. The two mates soon quitted him to attend to their duty in another part of the vessel, and then Robin Holt spoke upon the subject he knew was agitating the mind of his young commander.

"Captain," he began.

"Well, Robin, what is it?" asked the young man, arousing himself from his reverie at the sound of the sailor's voice.

"You heard what Mr. Griffith said?"

"Yes, Robin. What of it?"

"Don't you think there may be suthin' in it?"

"Why, Robin, do you think I have found my father already?" said Harold, with a faint smile.

"I shouldn't be surprised," replied Robin. "But what I really think is that he may be a relation of your dad, and may be able to help you find him. You are as like as two peas, and such resemblances are not often found except between persons of the same blood."

"It must have been his likeness to myself that struck me, though I did not realise it just then," observed Harold musingly.

"Reckon so. But there is one thing which seems to have escaped your recollection, lad."

"To what do you allude, Robin?"

"To the initials of the jewels, and on the clothes you wore

when you were brought ashore from the "Water-bird," answered Holt.

"The letters were 'J. K.'"

"Yes, and they would stand for John Kenyon, wouldn't they?" said the observant seaman.

"By the Lord Harry, so they would!"

"I really reckon you're on the right track," said Holt. "You must try to pump Kenyon. If at first you don't succeed, try again. Time works wonders, and the end crowns all. A stitch in time saves nine."

"Your proverbs aren't very relevant," said Harold, smiling at the quaint conceit of the seaman. "But there is good sense in what you advise. I'll do as you say; pump the captain of the 'Hunter.'"

"Yes, talk to him like a Dutch uncle, and get out of him all the perticlers," continued the boatswain. "I'll be a gran' thing if you find your father a capting in ther Royal Navy."

During this conversation the moon had disappeared, and the pirate vanished into the gloom. Both the pursuers kept on their way, however, and all through the dark night the pursuit of the pirate was kept up.

"I hope we are not deceived by the report that the pirate has his headquarters in the Bahamas," said Harold to his officers just before dawn. "For if he doesn't make for the islands we shall have lost him."

"In his crippled condition the rascal will be certain to seek his hole, like a wounded rat," answered Griffith.

"Ees," said Lennox, "t' Plack Pirate, ess not in a state t' prave t' elements now, with a dozen shot-holes 'tween wind and water."

"That is my idea," returned Harold. "Desire the watch to keep a sharp look-out. Ten guineas to the man who sights the 'Sea-wolf.'"

Morning came, bright and fresh, and the vast ocean smiled beneath the rays of the sun. Eagerly did the seamen of the "Avenger" scan the watery waste in search of the sails of the schooner.

"Sail on the port bow!" suddenly sang out a sailor, who was perched on the cross-trees with a telescope.

Harold scanned the horizon with his glass, and discerned the sail, just showing above the line, almost lost in the haze of dawn.

"It may be the schooner, or it may not," he said. "But as it is the only sail in sight, we'll stand in that direction. Signal to the brig, Holt, so that Captain Kenyon may know what we are about."

This was done, and the brig's commander signalled in return that he was ready to follow the lead of the "Avenger."

Harold headed for the distant sail, and when the ship was flying before the breeze, he called to the sailor who had sighted the vessel, and gave him the promised reward. The two ships drew nearer the strange sail; but so slowly that it was plain that the other was attempting to escape. But as the sun rose higher, and cleared away the mists from the horizon, the stranger came into full view, and Harold recognised the "Sea-wolf."

"Hurrah!" he cried. "There she is again!"

"And we are gaining on her, too," said Lennox with satisfaction.

"She is making for the islands," observed Robin Holt. "The Caicos are dead astern now, and she is heading for the islets atween Acklin and Long Island. Reckin the Black Pirate is run to earth at last. Well, all is well that ends well."

The "Sea-wolf" was threatening a tortuous passage among the reefs that shut in the Bahamas from the ocean.

"We need a skilful pilot to follow in his wake," observed Lennox.

"We have one," replied Harold. "Holt here knows these mazes of channels like a book."

"You bet I do," assented the sturdy mariner. "Shall I take the helm, sir?"

"Yes, Robin."

The boatswain took the wheel, and the "Avenger," directed by his skilful hand, glided unharmed among the sunken rocks and dangerous coral formations. In her wake followed the "Hunter," and slowly but surely both vessels drew nearer and nearer to the devoted "Sea-wolf."

CHAPTER VII.

A RASCAL'S RETROSPECTION—HUNTED TO HIS HOLE.

After the battle in the night, Captain Nemo crowded on every sail his weakened spars could carry, and ran before the wind, gaining a long start before the brigantine could follow on his track. When the "Avenger" had picked up her men, who had been thrown into the sea from the rover's deck, she stood after the "Sea-wolf"; but Captain Nemo felt that he could hold his own in a stern chase, and the pursuit of the brigantine did not frighten him. Resigning the helm to one

of his men—an experienced seaman, well acquainted with the intricate passages of the Bahama chain—the corsair captain descended to his cabin, where he passed the night in gloomy meditation.

When morning came, he went on deck, and to his rage found both the "Avenger" and the "Hunter" in sight, pursuing the schooner with undeviating pertinacity through the Bahama inlets.

"It is of no use!" muttered the enraged rover. "I cannot shake them off, they will dog me to the death. Better have a final struggle, and sink or swim, than to lead the life of a hunted dog. If I could tackle them one at a time I would not care; but now I am bound to be defeated. Ah, John Kenyon, you have your revenge now!"

The schooner sailed on, with the pursuers in her wake, until she entered a small bay enclosed by high cliffs, which concealed the harbour from the outer ocean. The approach to this secret haven was so narrow and dangerous, that none but a man intimately acquainted with the locality could have steered a vessel in safety to the refuge.

Within this land-locked bay the "Hyperion" already lay at anchor, and the "Sea-wolf" came to anchor beside the sloop.

Captain Nemo at once went to the sloop, where he found Manuel Garcias, who had been released by Pietro Gabriel.

"Garcias," said the Black Pirate, "we are hunted to our hole at last."

"The brigantine has not followed us here, has she?" exclaimed the mate.

"Yes; the 'Avenger' and the 'Hunter' are both within six miles."

"That's serious, capitano," said the Biscayan.

"Extremely so. Preparations for defence must be at once made."

"We are in a hole," observed Gabriel. "In the event of defeat we have no retreat."

"We must not think of retreat. We shall either win or die!"

"We have not much chance, one against two, short-handed as we are now as well."

With the men on shore, we can muster a hundred and fifty. But where are the prisoners?"

"There are twelve sailors, an old Jamaican planter, and his two womenkind—wife and daughter. They're stowed away in the hold of this vessel, except the ladies, who have been taken on shore to one of the huts."

"Good. The prisoners can be left where they are; they can form targets for the bullets of their own friends."

"Have you formed a plan of action, sir?"

"Yes. This sloop will be armed with guns from the shore, and anchored at the entrance to the bay. With her we will fight the Englishmen, as long as two timbers hold together. When she is about to sink, we will retreat from her in boats to the 'Sea-wolf,' and hold her against all-comers. A battery can also be erected among the cliffs, to fire on the English when they have entered the bay."

"We ought to be able to make a stout fight for it, captain."

"Ay, we can, and we will! If we fail, our enemies fall with us!"

The little bay was the spot where the pirates stored their plunder and stores of all kinds. On the beach were several huts of wood, occupied by those of the outlaw band who did not accompany the chief in his marauding expeditions. These men were gathered aboard the "Sea-wolf," and a hundred men were placed in the sloop. The latter was placed under the command of Pietro Gabriel, who accepted the post rather reluctantly, but who did not dare to thwart the will of the merciless chief. On shore were stored a score of guns, taken from various vessels captured by the outlaws of the ocean, and these were now brought aboard the sloop, her own little brass cannonades being thrown into the bay.

When the "Hyperion" had taken her station, the pirate chief prepared his own schooner for the inevitable conflict. Nettings were fastened up to baffle boarders, and all the guns were loaded so heavily that there was danger of their bursting. Among the rocks on the east side of the bay a battery of six thirty-pounders was erected, with a breastwork of rocks to shield the gunners from the English cannon.

When all was prepared, the Black Pirate went ashore, and sought the hut where Gabriel had placed Una Anderson and her mother.

The two ladies were weeping in each other's arms, when the door of the cabin opened hastily, and the tall, black-robed figure of the pirate-chief appeared before them. The elder lady uttered a scream; but Una rose and faced the intruder undauntedly.

"What seek you here?" she exclaimed imperiously.

"I came to take a look at my captives," replied the pirate, fixing his black eyes on the girl, the malignancy of his expression causing a cold shiver to creep through her frame.

"Where is my father?" said Una, filial solicitude overcoming her repugnance to speak to the chief of the sea-wolves.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS

"In the sloop."

"You have not harmed him?"

"No," answered the rover, with a grim smile.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Anderson, raising her head from her hands, where it had hitherto rested. Then, as her eyes fell upon the dark visage of the pirate, her face, already pale, became paler, and a tremor shook her limbs.

"Good heavens! It is Robert Kenyon!"

"How know you my name?" cried the Black Pirate, grasping her wrist.

"I am Margaret Anderson—once Margaret Hillton, sister of Lenore."

"Lenore!" gasped the pirate, reeling back as though she had struck him.

"Yes, Lenore, my poor murdered sister, Lenore!" shrieked she, rising and facing him without a trace of fear now.

"Wretch, what have you done with Lenore?"

"She is dead!" muttered the pirate.

"Lenore dead! And her child?"

"Dead also."

"Monster! You killed them!"

Notwithstanding his bravado, the hardened ruffian shrank before the grief-stricken woman. Una threw her arm round her mother, and supported the almost fainting woman. Mrs. Anderson sobbed hysterically in her daughter's arms, while the girl tried in vain to soothe her.

"I—I did not kill her!" stammered the abashed pirate—"I did not know she was on the 'Water-bird.' An agent had informed me that my cursed villain of a cousin was proceeding to Jamaica on that schooner, and I laid in wait for her, and attacked her off the Bahamas. That I intended the death of John, I admit, and when the Yankee skipper ran his craft on the reefs rather than surrender, I fired into the wreck, and pounded her to pieces. But I did not know Lenore was to go with John to the island. It was not till we picked up her floating corpse the next day that I knew I had caused the death of the only woman I ever loved."

The head of the pirate captain dropped on his breast, and a great sob shook his stalwart frame. Una, with wonder, saw a single tear stealing down his furrowed cheek. That his sorrow for his deed was real there could be little doubt.

"But Heaven frustrated your wickedness!" said Mrs. Anderson. "John did not die in the American schooner."

"Doth he live?" shouted the pirate, in a terrible voice.

"He lives to hunt you down to your death!"

"He lives! Kenyon—John Kenyon lives!" muttered the buccaneer.

"Yes, he lives!" cried Una's mother defiantly.

"Why did he not take passage on the 'Water-bird'?"

"He was delayed in Baltimore, so that he lost the ship," replied the prisoner. "Lenore did not know he had missed the ship until the schooner had started, and then it was impossible to return. John proceeded to Jamaica on the next vessel that sailed; but when he arrived at Port Royal he found that the 'Water-bird' had not been heard of, nor had anyone news to tell him of Mrs. Fairfax."

"Mrs. Fairfax?"

"Yes. John had insisted upon the name being changed to Fairfax when he took her aboard the American schooner."

"For what reason?"

"Because he knew that you would be on the watch for any vessel he might venture to sea in, and he wanted to throw your spies off the track, and he thought this could be accomplished by the change of name."

"Fool! that caused her death. Had I thought—had I but dreamed that Lenore was there, the ship would have been safe from me. My agent watched John when he made arrangements with the skipper of the 'Water-bird,' and he brought me a list of the passengers' names. Fairfax was among them; but how was I to guess that Mrs. Fairfax was Lenore?"

"Now I know who is the commander of the 'Hunter,' the vessel which has clung to me like a haunting spirit ever since that fearful night," replied the outlaw. "'Tis my cousin and bitter foe, John Kenyon!"

"True; and your executioner, you may add, for such he will be."

"That remains to be seen. 'Twas his fault I killed Lenore and her babe, and for what I have suffered in consequence he shall die!"

"It is possible you are not so guilty as you think," replied the lady. "I have seen a youth, who much resembles Lenore, and who bears the name of Fairfax, who is just the age Lenore's child would be if he still lived."

A sudden light broke over the mind of the corsair.

"You mean the young captain of the 'Avenger'?"

"I do."

"I thought I knew that face. Perhaps," added the rover, with a bitter sneer, "you think 'tis his destiny to be the avenger of his mother?"

"That is my belief."

"Believe it not, for he is dead!"

"Impossible!" cried Mrs. Anderson, while Una became as pale as death.

"With these eyes I saw him fall into the sea," said the pirate; and then, without another word, he quitted the cabin, leaving the two women overwhelmed with grief and despair. The sudden intelligence of Harold's supposed death revealed to Una the love which had been growing up in her heart since her first meeting with the handsome young sailor, and she realised that Harold was the one man who was all in all to her.

Locked in each other's embrace, mother and daughter wept long and bitterly, while Captain Nemo, recking little the pain he had inflicted upon two gentle hearts, walked away to the beach.

"You look pale, captain," said Manuel Garcias, as he met his leader on the deck of the "Sea-wolf." "Have you seen a ghost?" he added jestingly.

"Something worse," said the pirate, heaving a deep sigh.

"The deuce! What's happened?"

"You know my history, Manuel?"

"Ay, 'twould be queer if I did not, seeing that I was your bosom friend long before you raised the black flag, and became the Buccaneer of the Bahamas," replied the lieutenant.

"You know," continued Captain Nemo, speaking to himself rather than to his companion—"you know how I was all but engaged to Lenore Hillson, and how I lost her?"

"Ay, her parents heard some tales about your wild doings, and told you never to dare to address her again."

"That was the excuse!" cried the pirate fiercely. "They were attracted by the wealth of my rival, and Lenore deserted me for him. I thought I had had vengeance on my supplanter—"

"Yes, we sank him in the 'Water-bird.'"

"We were mistaken; he still lives!"

"How did he escape the storm, then?"

"He was not aboard the Yankee; he was left behind by mistake."

"What infernal luck!"

"Yes. It is not a pleasant retrospect when I look back upon my life. I was a wild young scamp, was jilted for the sake of my virtuous cousin—hang his virtue!—became a pirate, dyed my soul in crime, and after all was baffled of my vengeance. A nice retrospection, truly."

"Well, captain, you may yet find means to reach your enemy."

"He commands the 'Hunter' brig," said Captain Nemo abruptly.

"That's lucky. A chance shot, or a sure stroke, and you are rid of him for ever."

"Brig and brigantine bearing into the bay!" shouted a watchman on the cliffs at this moment.

"There they are!" said the Black Pirate, with a bitter smile, as his eyes rested on the white sails of the two vessels, as they came sweeping majestically into the little bay. "I am hunted to my hole at last!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A DESPERATE BATTLE—FATHER AND SON—THE LAST OF THE BLACK PIRATE.

Side by side the two vessels came into the bay, and the instant they made their appearance a broadside was fired from the "Hyperion" by the pirates who manned her, doing considerable execution aboard the two English ships. Then the new-comers opened fire, and commenced the combat with a manœuvre that caused Captain Nemo, who was watching the conflict from the poop of the "Sea-wolf," to grind his teeth with anger. He had intended that the "Hyperion" should bear the brunt of the battle, and when she sunk he would attack the English with his fresh force in the schooner. But the skilful Harold outwitted him. After returning the fire of the sloop, the "Avenger" passed her, and came alongside on the inner side, the one facing the schooner, while the "Hunter" lay beside the sloop on the outer side. The "Hyperion" was thus between two fires, each of which was greater than her own. The dismayed crew of the sloop worked like demons at the guns; but from each side came pouring in the English grapeshot, sweeping away the crew like chaff before the wind.

Pietro Gabriel, frantic with rage and fear, shouted encouragingly to his men, and as fast as the gunners fell at their posts, others rushed to take their places; but the British fire decimated the crew so rapidly that in five minutes there were too few pirates to man the guns. Still the English broadsides rattled through the sloop, tearing away planks and spars, guns, and seamen.

"We surrender!" shouted some of the pirates, terrified by the deadly fire.

"Dogs!" cried Gabriel. "Will you surrender and be hanged?"

But now the men of the "Hunter" came swarming over the bulwarks, led by their captain, and Gabriel, fighting desperately to the end, fell beneath the sword of Captain Kenyon.

Captain Nemo had watched the success of the English with bitter fury in his heart, and he now steered to engage the "Avenger." Harold, seeing the pirate chief leave his moorings, abandoned the "Hyperion" to his consort, and made for the schooner.

The pirates stationed at the battery of six guns ashore now opened fire on the "Avenger." Captain Kenyon, having left a prize crew aboard the sloop, ran his vessel close in shore, and engaged the battery with such effect that in five minutes the gunners abandoned their ordnance, and took to their heels.

Laying his vessel alongside the Black Pirate, Harold engaged her, and the two ships poured heavy shot into each other at such close range, that the missiles went through and through the devoted craft. The Black Pirate animated his men by word and deed, and the struggle continued, maintained on either side with undaunted courage.

But the odds were against Captain Nemo, and he was not slow to perceive that he was getting the worst of it. The "Hunter," having silenced the battery, ranged alongside the "Sea-wolf," which was now assailed as the "Hyperion" had been, by two broadsides at once. The ceaseless volleys wrought frightful havoc in the schooner. Her decks were torn up, her masts went by the board, and the water was now rushing into her hold through the holes made by Harold's guns. Still, worked up almost to a pitch of madness by the excitement of battle, and liberal draughts of rum, the pirates continued to fight fiercely. One by one the guns were broken or upset, and lower settled the sinking schooner in the waters of the bay. The shattered vessel was encumbered with corpses, and riddled with shot, and still from each side thundered the remorseless hail of lead and iron.

"They are going to board, captain," said Manual Garcias suddenly, as he observed a stir aboard the "Avenger," and a partial cessation of her fire.

"I see it, Manual. When they board, I shall drop into the sea, and turn tail—swim ashore, Manual. You had better follow me."

"With all my heart."

Over the side poured the British bluejackets, cutlass in hand, and the feeble remnant of the buccaneer crew scattered before their assault.

A few showed fight, and were cut down, and the rest sprang into the sea, and attempted to swim ashore.

"The Black Pirate is in the water!" shouted Robin Holt, as he saw the robber chief and his lieutenant plunge into the bay. As he spoke, the boatswain levelled his pistol and fired at the fugitive. Captain Nemo gave a spring in the water, and was evidently hard hit, for he left a trail of blood behind him as he swam on; but he managed to reach the shore and drag himself upon the sand.

Harold and half a dozen seamen lowered a skiff, and pulled for the shore, reaching it a couple of minutes after the Black Pirate and his companion. Manual Garcias ran for the woods in the interior of the isle, while the wounded chief staggered towards the cottage of the prisoners.

"Halt!" shouted Harold, springing ashore, and raising his pistol. Neither of the fugitives heeded him, and without delay he fired at the lieutenant. Garcias uttered a yell, and tottered; he was struck in the left leg.

"Secure him, Robin," said Harold; and throwing down the empty pistol, he bounded after the Black Pirate, who had nearly reached the hut. The villain intended to murder his prisoners as a final blow at his foes; but Harold was too quick for him. Just as he pushed open the door, the young avenger reached him.

"Turn, murderer!" cried the young Englishman—"turn, and defend yourself!"

With a fierce oath, the Black Pirate faced him, and, raising a pistol, fired at his heart. But the water of the bay had wetted the powder, and no report followed the fall of the hammer. Just as the pirate pulled the trigger, Harold lunged at his breast, and his blade pierced the body of the outlaw, stretching him on the sand.

"Mother! thou art avenged!" Harold cried exultantly.

As he spoke, Captain Kenyon, who had hastened on shore in the hope of meeting the buccaneer chief hand to hand, arrived on the spot. He gazed down at the dying rover with a stern smile.

"We meet again, Robert!" he said gloomily.

"Wretch! do you come to gloat over a dying man?" cried the buccaneer.

"Nay, Robert, I have no such thought," said Kenyon. "But there is a subject of great interest to me that I wish to speak of."

"What is it?"

"At Port Royal I heard that the last time the 'Water-bird' was seen was by a Yankee coaster, who saw her pursued by the Black Pirate. I knew you had become a pirate, and, as Cap-

tain Nemo, the Pirate of the Bahamas, were known and dreaded throughout the West Indies. At once I guessed that my wife had fallen into your hands. That is why I pursued you, to demand of you an account of my wife. At first I believed both Lenore and my little Harold had fallen; but since I have thought that you might have spared one or both. Tell me, do they still live?"

"They are dead!" said the pirate, with a fiendish chuckle. In the pain he inflicted on his bereaved cousin he found a consolation for his own doom.

"Stay!" cried Harold excitedly, as he heard Kenyon utter the name of his lost child. "Was the boy named Harold?"

"Yes," returned Kenyon.

"Was the mother known as Mrs. Fairfax aboard the American schooner?"

"Yes. I caused her to change her name from Kenyon to Fairfax, hoping by the alteration to elude the revenge of my cousin Robert, who now lies here. He had been her rejected suitor, and had sworn to take vengeance upon us when Lenore married me. But what do you know of her?" exclaimed Kenyon eagerly.

"Was this the face of the lady?" said Harold, taking from his neck the locket containing the portrait of his mother.

Una and her mother, and Mr. Anderson, who had come ashore from the sloop, having been released with the rest of the prisoners by Kenyon's boarding-party, all gazed at Harold in astonishment as he held out the miniature to the captain.

"My Lenore's face!" cried Kenyon. Then, grasping Harold's arm, and looking into his face, he demanded: "How came this into your possession? How did you find this portrait of my wife?"

"'Tis the portrait of my mother!"

"Your mother!" ejaculated Kenyon.

"Yes, my mother, Mrs. Fairfax, who was killed aboard the 'Water-bird' fifteen years ago, when I was six."

"Then you are, you must be! But it cannot be!"

"Why not?" said honest Robin Holt, coming forward, ready with a proverb as usual. "Truth is stranger than fiction, and every cloud has a silver lining, and all's well that ends well. I was one of the crew of the 'Water-bird,' and can bear witness that this lad is the son of the Mrs. Fairfax, who sailed in the schooner, which was driven to doom on the reefs by the Buccaneer of the Bahamas. I suspected her name wasn't Fairfax, as Harold kin tell you, cause the initials on her jools, which I saved from the sea, and gave to him, were 'J. K.'"

"It must be so!" exclaimed the captain, with emotion.

"My son!—my son!"

"Father!"

The Black Pirate, filled with fury at the happy re-union of father and son, half-rose, shaking his fist at his cousin, and the effort caused the blood to pour in a torrent from his wound. A moan escaped his lips, it was followed by the death-rattle, and he fell back on the sand—dead!

Captain Nemo, the Black Pirate, the dreaded Buccaneer of the Bahamas, was no more.

In due time our friends left the pirate's retreat, and after a short and uneventful voyage, arrived at Port Royal. The captured pirates were delivered over to the tender mercies of the Port-Admiral, and summarily dealt with.

Mr. Anderson returned to his plantation, where Captain Kenyon and his son soon afterwards paid him a visit. The course of true love ran smooth with our hero, for during his stay at the planter's home, he and Una plighted their troth, and as the parents of both parties were pleased with the match, the wedding took place shortly after. A ball was given to celebrate the event, and bluff Robin Holt distinguished himself by getting half-seas over, and dancing a sailor's hornpipe.

The brave old bluejacket stayed with Harold for a time, until the longing to be again upon the salt water seized him, and he went to sea again. Harold now lives on his father's estates in Old England with his beautiful bride, and he is blessed with a fine family, and when Robin pays him a visit, as he always does when he comes ashore, the honest old salt delights to take the little ones on his knees, and tell them tales of the sea, and especially to relate to them the adventures of their father when he sailed the southern seas in quest of the Black Pirate.

THE END.

NEXT FRIDAY.

DEAD

MAN'S

HAND;

Or, The Strange Quest of Sexton Blake, Detective.



Order your copy of to-morrow's "PLUCK" at once, or you won't be able to get one.