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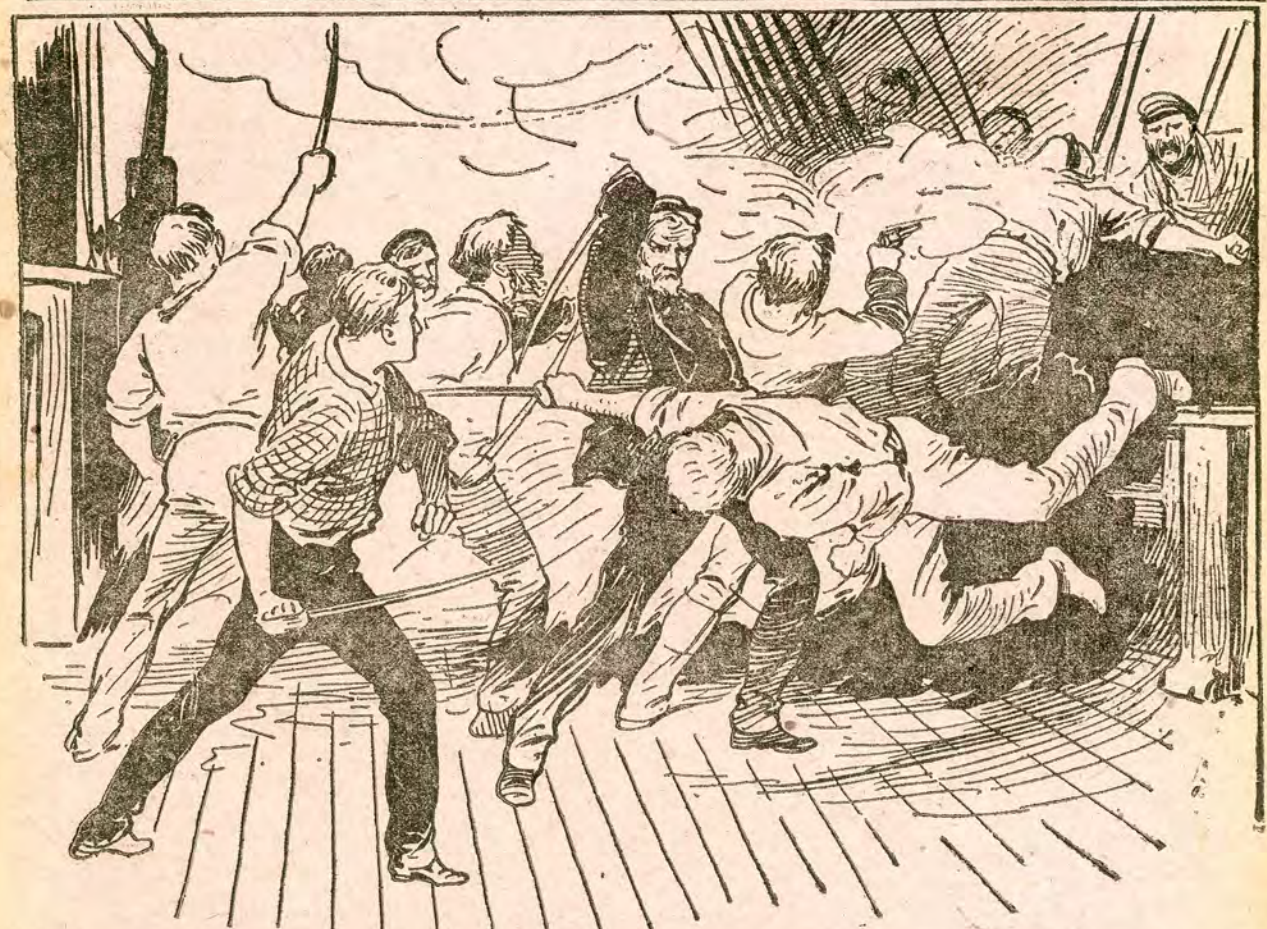
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'TWIXT YANKEE AND DON.



As the first Spaniard sprang on the deck, Munro's sword cut him down. The crew of the "Matanan" fought desperately.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY.

No. 217.

'TWIXT YANKEE AND DON.

CHAPTER 1.

A BAD START.

Harry Leonard leaned over the bulwarks of the "Matapan," and gloomily gazed at the frothing track in the good ship's wake. He was almost repenting of having run away to sea; but then, with a rush, a vivid recollection of the false charge made against him at Parkhurst College, and the scorn on the school-master's face, and worst of all on his father's came to him—and his face became scarlet at the very memory of how he passed out of school. No, after all, he was better at sea. Still, he was nothing but a common sailor-boy, and his ignorance of everything that belonged to the ship made him the butt of the crew when good-humoured, and a long-suffering victim when ill-humoured.

He resented their rough jokes and spite, and in consequence they took the more delight in annoying him.

What disappointed him greatly was the little notice that the captain, Mr. George Bentham, took of him. The difference between the free-and-easy life at Parkhurst and the hard knocks and rough food on board ship filled him with bitter thoughts. The result was, he did the very worst thing a man or boy can do at sea—he sulked.

At once everybody's hand was against him, and especially that of Mr. Munro the first mate. Munro was a smart sailor, but had a detestable temper. His quick eye soon spotted Harry going slowly about his work, and one evening, when they had been at sea about a fortnight, he walked up to the lad in a towering passion, and asked to know what he meant by crawling like a snail about the deck.

"What's the good of you?" he roared.

"What's the good of you? Move quicker, d'ye hear?"

"Yes, I hear," returned Harry sullenly.

"Confound it, you lazy, landlubberly rascal, don't give me any of your cheek! I'll teach you to be smart!" And he followed this promise with a kick, which sent Harry flying across the deck. The boy's blood was up in an instant. He had never been one to take a licking quietly. He rushed at the mate, and landed a swinging left-hander right between his tormentor's eyes.

It was a terrible mistake in more senses than one. Munro was a sturdy fellow, as hard as nails. The blow had little apparent effect upon him, and in retaliation he sent Harry reeling to the deck.

"You darn young catfish! Show fight, do you? Come on, then, and take your gruel. Stand up!"

It was an unnecessary command. Harry was already on his feet, and ready for a fresh attack. Whatever other faults he had, lack of pluck was not one of them. Had he been cool, he might have made matters very uncomfortable for Mr. Munro; but he completely lost control of himself. Full of burning thoughts, he was in a small way at war with the world, and he cared little what happened.

He succeeded in reaching the mate's nose, but in turn received a smashing blow on the temple, which nearly knocked him senseless. The next thing he heard was the clear voice of Captain Bentham, asking angrily what was the cause of the disturbance.

"I've just given this idle young cub a lesson, sir!" said the mate, panting. "I caught him skulking, and directly I was down upon him, he jawed me."

Captain Bentham's expression became very stern.

"Is this true, Leonard?" he asked, with a searching glance.

"Yes, sir; I dare say it is." His fiery spirit was quelled under the influence of Captain Bentham's voice.

"Leonard, you have committed two grievous offences. You have disobeyed your superior officer, and followed it up by striking him," said Captain Bentham gravely. "I shall consider what I shall do. Take him away and lock him up. Mr. Munro, will you come aft, I want to speak to you." And without bestowing another look on Harry, the captain turned on his heel.

By this time the sailors had gathered round, and under the direction of the second mate, Harry was taken towards the steerage, and thrust, not over tenderly, into a dark, cupboard-like caboose, so low that he could hardly stand upright.

Here he was left, feeling more wretched than even when he was falsely accused of stealing in front of all his school-fellows. Besides, he could not escape here; the broad Atlantic surrounded him.

He had not been in the place more than a few minutes before he became conscious that someone else was there also. Then he recollected that a ne'er-do-well, Bill Mullins by name, an evil-looking scoundrel, had been locked up that morning for stealing a bottle of rum and rendering himself incapable. His snoring rivalled a bassoon's wailings.

Harry felt terribly degraded. All through his rashness and troubles, he had never had an experience that touched him so sorely as this.



A cloak shot over his head, and was drawn tightly over his face before he could utter a cry.

After some time the snorer aroused himself, and inquired, with an accompaniment of oaths, where he was. When he stretched his legs he came in contact with Harry, and, sitting up, he inquired who was his messmate. He was so repugnant to Harry that the latter did not answer.

"Are you dumb?" said the rascal, "or 'orty? Who are you?"

"Harry Leonard"—feeling that he must tell his fellow-prisoner.

"Oh! the greenhorn! Socks! I allays thought as to how you'd get into a row. We're pals in misfortune. But what are ye run in for?"

"I got into a bother with Mr. Munro, and struck him."

"Struck old wheelbarrow! Come, hand us yer paw. That makes us pals! I hate that Munro!" Harry did so with a sense of loathing. "You're one of my sort, youngster. We could pull together if you liked. I could tell you a great secret, if I were sure you wouldn't split."

"I am not at all anxious to hear it!" rejoined Harry curtly.

"Oh, you are not, aren't you? Well, you may some day. Secrets can keep!" And, curling himself up on the seat, he went off to sleep again.

Twenty-four hours' confinement in the "Black Hole," as the men called it, gave Harry plenty of time for reflection and repentance. He knew that he had shirked his work, and that he had acted most wrongly in striking the first officer of the ship. A voice within urged him to turn over a new leaf, and put forth all the energy he possessed. So, when he was liberated, he went aft to the captain, and in a rather unsteady voice apologised for his breaches of discipline, and promised to work hard in the future. But the captain took little notice of him; he was looking out for performances rather than promises.

They were now passing through the Indian Ocean, to call at Singapore before proceeding to their destination at Manila. Captain Bentham was a third-part owner of the "Matapan," and he had a large consignment of goods for Singapore merchants. This would leave a considerable space in his vessel, but whether he would be able to get another cargo he could not tell. Rumours of war between the United States and Spain were bruited abroad before the "Matapan" left London, and had been confirmed both at Suez and Aden. Consequently the arrival at Singapore was awaited with great anxiety.

It was a lovely morning early, when they caught sight of the distant port, towards which they steamed at full speed. As they drew near a cruiser, which had been gaining rapidly on the "Matapan," suddenly fired a gun across the latter's bows, and ran up the Stars and Stripes. Captain Bentham at once dropped to half-speed, and hoisted the Union Jack. Then a boat put out from the American ship in charge of an officer.

"What ship is that?" he cried, when within hailing distance.

"The English steamer 'Matapan,' from London to Manila."

"I must tell you war has been declared against Spain by the United States, and the Philippines are effectively blockaded by our fleet."

"I am bound first to Singapore," said the captain, when the officer reached the deck, and produced his papers.

"And there, I guess, ye'll have to stay!" said the American rudely.

"Confound the war!" muttered Captain Bentham, as he leaped over the taffrail to watch the retreating boat. "Just my luck; but I will not give up all hopes of carrying out my intentions." He turned his head, and caught sight of Harry, who was gazing with sparkling eyes and rapt attention at the picturesque harbour, where the English flag proudly floats above the flags of all the other nations of the maritime world.

"He is a plucky lad," mused the captain, "and I feel sure he will turn out right after all. He'll never forget the lesson he's had. Leonard!" he cried suddenly.

"Yes, sir"—hurrying up with alacrity.

"I'm going to give you another chance. If you had not conquered yourself I should have sent you ashore at Singapore. I have been watching you lately, ever since your imprisonment. Now, stick to your work, especially to your navigation, and in a short time I will make you third mate."

But Harry Leonard did not become an officer on the "Matapan"—why the story will tell. The lad saluted and turned away, while the captain looked after him critically yet smilingly.

"That's the sort of lad I want with me, if we are to try that little expedition up the Candava Lake to the temple on El Zak island. I wonder how long this war will last? and whether it will really be impossible to run the blockade? Surely the Yankees cannot with their few ships shut up the whole coast of Luzon? I think the Britisher will have to show them how to 'run the gauntlet.'" He winked to himself, and went below to his cabin.

From a locker he took out a small brass-bound desk of antique manufacture. He opened it, and, by moving one of the divisions slightly, a portion of the front part underneath

the places for the inkbottle and pen flew back, revealing a secret drawer.

From this drawer he took out a sheet of yellow crumpled paper, scrawled all over with almost illegible writing.

"Poor fellow. One of the best that ever lived was Peter Robinson," the captain went on to himself. "And he never got to El Zak island after all, though he swore that there were buried diamonds there. I wonder if that fatal row was got up for the purpose of getting rid of Pete."

The captain's eyes grew dim as he thought of his dear old colleague. Once more he saw him lying in the hospital at Singapore, where he died about an hour after being admitted, with three knife-wounds in the region of the heart. The murdered man could only jerk out in a husky voice: "El Zak. I went there. You'll find the diamonds in—"
His lips moved, but George Bentham heard no more, for life ebbed fast away.

As he had been often requested by his comrade, directly Robinson died, Bentham drove down to the harbour and put off to the "Matapan" to take possession of his belongings, in particular, of the little brass-bound desk.

When he got on board, he found that the ship's doctor, a Spaniard named Bermejo, was in the captain's cabin. This man disputed Bentham's right to come into the cabin of the deceased man; but the Englishman would not give way, and worked the vessel back to Southampton.

George Bentham, for the twentieth time, held the paper up to the light, and read:

"Dear Bentham,—If I am not spared to do the work myself, I beg you to take it up. If that be impossible, pass this letter on to your best friend, and let him, or them that come after him, accomplish it. Whoever values his life at a very high price had better not venture it."

"On the Island of El Zak, in the lake of Candava, twenty-five miles up river from Manila, will be found the diamonds taken by the Spanish pirate Garcia from a ship bound from Lima to Ferol. The pirates attacked her, and murdered every soul on board. The prize was a rich one, but only Garcia knew how rich. He found the diamonds, and never said a word to his crew. Some weeks after their arrival at Mindero, their isle of refuge from cruisers and tempests, they discovered that he had kept most of the plunder himself, and he fled to a haunt of his—El Zak, in Luzon. His men followed him and killed him on the island, but the diamonds were never found."

"I heard this story twenty years ago, and once in company with one man rowed up from Manila and landed on the island. We made our way into a temple, and saw the diamonds stuck about the chief idol. The natives caught sight of us, and we had to run for our lives to the boats, with a flight of arrows and spears after us."

"My companion was spared through and through, so that I am the only man alive who knows the whereabouts of these aforesaid diamonds."

PETER ROBINSON.

"May 1st, 1897."

CHAPTER 2.

SPANISH WILES.

All and everybody were in a state of nothing excitement at the English port, owing to the declaration of war. All sorts of wild rumours passed from lip to lip. The "Matapan's" captain was strongly advised to sell all his cargo in Singapore or Hong Kong, for though the blockade of the Spanish islands could not be at once effective, it would be in less than a fortnight's time. However, Captain Bentham gave ear to every man, but made up his mind himself.

Before the donkey-engine had begun to unload with its rattling chains, the captain received a long communication that utterly flabbergasted him. Turning to Harry, he said:

"Leonard, what do you think of this? It is a regular knock-down blow. My partners, who were to find the necessary capital for working this ship, have got into difficulties, and have sold their share to a man who has come out with the same mail as the letter to take command of the vessel!"

"Is this man a sailor?" Harry managed to falter out, too surprised to collect his wits all at once.

"I suppose so. He is a Captain Olney. I don't know the fellow—never heard of him, in fact. But I will see him further and warmer before I willingly give up my ship. There must be a proper dissolution of partnership. They had no power to act without me. I suppose they thought I was green. But they'll find out their mistake. I will have nothing to do with Olney. I do not recognise him as having the least claim to the 'Matapan.'"

"I should be sorry to see anyone but yourself in command, sir; and so, too, would the rest of the crew."

"I am not so sure of that!" returned the captain doubtfully.

"The majority of the men would, I dare say; but there are

two or three I cordially mistrust—they will sell themselves to the highest bidder."

At that moment a boat shot alongside, and hailed the "Matapan."

"By Jove!" It is Captain Olney in the flesh! Harry, come with me down to the cabin, where I will receive the visitor."

Soda-water, brandy, and cigars were put on the table, and then Captain Olney came down the companion-way. He wore a peaked yachting-cap on his head, striped grey flannels, and a brilliant crimson kummersbund, while his boots were of patent leather. He was quite a dandy. He looked more like a tennis-player out of the "Gaiety Girl" chorus than a man to take command of a ship.

"I presume that you have received a communication from Messrs. Jackson and Steel in relation thereto, and I have called upon you so soon as you came into port."

"Well, sir, whatever you have to say, sir, say quickly!"

The captain of the "Matapan" stood square and uncompromising, his steady eye fixed on the visitor in a way that made him feel very uncomfortable.

Olney took a brandy-and-soda, and then toyed some time with a cigar before he began:

"Do you think the arrangement fair and reasonable?"

"I think it neither one nor the other!"

"Then you are not prepared to give up the command of the 'Matapan' to me, notwithstanding that I own two-thirds and you only one-third!"

"That is it! My agreement with Jackson and Steel is perfectly clear. We are to run the 'Matapan' for four years, and at the end of that time the agreement can either be renewed or a fresh one entered into. If one of the partners in the meantime sells his share, the purchaser is bound by all the clauses of the agreement. I suppose you have not bought a pig in a poke?"

"Certainly not! The agreement is all right, and I don't expect you to be otherwise than independent; but let us drop this view of the matter. I want to settle everything peaceably, and in a manner satisfactory to yourself. I am prepared to buy your share in the 'Matapan.' Will you name a price?"

Captain Bentham started. He had not expected this proposition. He was not ready with an immediate answer. He wanted time to think.

"I know how much money there is in this ship of yours," said Olney, as Bentham did not answer. "You put £4,000 into the syndicate. I will give you five thousand for your share. You're not likely to make a thousand out of trading, now that the war has broken out."

This was true, but if the times were bad for him, so also would they be for anybody else. Why should this Captain Olney be so very anxious to buy him out?

As Captain Bentham still maintained silence, the other continued:

"I will be perfectly frank with you, Captain Bentham. I am commissioned by a party of Spanish gentlemen to purchase a fast boat to carry over assistance to their fellow-countrymen in the Philippines."

"Oh! that's the game is it? Have another brandy-and-soda, Captain Olney. I'll just call in Munro, and hear what he has to say."

Directly Bentham left the cabin, the visitor turned sharply round to Harry, and said in a low voice:

"You seem to have influence with the captain. Just back up my proposition, and I'll give you a hundred pounds."

Harry had not time to reply before the captain came back with the mate.

"Now, I have my two most trustworthy men on board, and I shall abide by their decision. If they disagree, you shall buy me out." He then told the mate of Olney's proposal.

"What do you say, Mr. Munro?"

"I hardly know, sir. The offer seems fair, but ask Leonard first."

"Stick to the ship, sir! Stick to the ship!"

"And I'm with him!" said Munro, Harry's decisiveness having helped him to make up his mind.

Captain Olney turned white with passion, as his rival coldly and cuttingly observed:

"You see what my colleagues think. The matter is decided. I shall still retain the ship."

"You infernal young scoundrel!" said the stranger, shaking his fingers menacingly at Harry, who smiled serenely. "I'll pay you out for this, with interest. As for you, Captain Bentham, I'll get even with you some day, mark my words!" And he rushed on deck in a tempest of fury.

"Phew! What a dandy tiger! In spite of his rig, he is an evil-evil boulder!" said the mate.

"There is something more behind this apparently generous offer," said the captain thoughtfully.

"Yes, sir," said Harry, "or he would not have offered me a hundred pounds to support his proposal!"

"A hundred pounds!" gasped the captain. "Well, you are a brick to have stuck out for me as you did, Harry. I shall not forget this in a hurry. Now listen to me. It seems a good chance of running quietly to Luzon, and going up the Manila river to El Zak, if we can dodge the Yankee fleet. The war will enable us to carry out the search for the diamonds quietly, and without any chance of interruption, while the cargo on board will be at least double the price by the time we get to Manila. Nobody else on the ship knows about the concealed gems, and you had better keep the object of the search secret. We must get away stealthily to-night, if possible, at one o'clock. So, Mr. Munro, you had better give no shore-leave to-night, and tell the men there will be double wages this journey."

"Ay, ay, sir! But I have given eternal leave to Bill Mullins."

"That's right! I should have sent him ashore myself had you not done so. But what about his pay?"

"Oh! he'll come aboard for that, sir, you bet, towards evening."

"Harry," said Captain Bentham an hour later, after they had dined, "will you run ashore for me and take this letter to the British Consul? You must go to his private house, as he has met with an accident."

"Certainly, sir!"

Shortly afterwards Harry started for the town. Very handsome did he look in his blue suit and gold-braided cap, his blue eyes dancing in the sunshine, and his cheeks radiant with the bloom of health and the tan of the sea. At least, a lady, evidently a Spaniard, thought so, as she stepped up to the lad and inquired the way to a certain street.

"I do not know. I am a stranger, senorita," said Harry with raised cap and a graceful bow.

"You are from England, are you not?"

"Yes, senorita."

"Ah! I am fond of England. You English are so brave."

Now, everybody likes flattery, though many are they who pretend to despise it. Harry was pleased, the more so as the sugar was administered with ravishing smiles and languishing glances.

"Not braver than the people of Spain," said Harry gallantly. He chatted a little longer with her. So fascinated was he that he almost forgot the importance of time. He recollected mundane things with a start.

"Pardon me, senorita, I must leave you. My captain is expecting me."

"Do not go away yet. There is my husband yonder," indicating a young man talking to two others about a hundred yards off. "Let me introduce you?" And she laid an exquisitely shaped hand on his arm.

It was difficult to escape, but Harry did it. He made his bow, and hurried away. To get to the dock-side, he had to go by the three men, and as he did so he hurriedly stole a glance at them, and saw that one was Captain Olney.

This chance encounter he felt boded no good, if not to him personally, it might do to the captain and crew of the "Matapan." Many grim things are done under the grim visage of war. The afternoon was intensely hot, and the streets were deserted, it being the time of the inhabitants' siesta. He quickened his pace to a trot.

He was turning a corner sharply when suddenly a cloak shot over his head, and was drawn tightly over his face before he could utter a cry. At the same time his arms were pinioned tightly, and a voice whispered:

"You are quite safe, if you do not resist." There was no alternative. He had to submit, and he was hurried away to an adjacent house. He was conscious of turning down several streets, and at last felt himself being carried up a number of steps. Then he was marched along several passages until he heard a handle turned, and he was led into a room and the cloak removed.

When his dazed eyes recovered their power of vision, he saw that he was in an old oak-panelled room, all the furniture being of that wood. There were four men present, the lady's husband he had seen in the street, Captain Olney, and, to his intense surprise, Bill Mullins, the "Matapan's" discharged blackleg. The proprietor or lessee of the place evidently was Dr. Garcia, whose sinister look made Harry shiver, but not a sign of fear did he betray. With flashing eyes and burning cheeks, Harry turned on his captors.

"What means this daring outrage, and why am I kept here a prisoner?" he demanded hotly.

"Keep cool!" said Dr. Garcia, with a sarcastic smile. "You are employed in Captain Bentham's cabin, I believe?"

Harry was on his guard in a moment.

"Am I?"

"So I am informed."

"Why don't you come to the point? You will gain nothing by beating about the bush."

The doctor looked at his nails, rolled a cigarette, lighted it, and drew several puffs before he resumed.

"Look here, young man, you have the freedom of the captain's cabin. At one end is a locker, in which is kept an old-fashioned, brass-bound mahogany desk. We want that desk, and, if you will get it for us, you shall have a thousand pounds."

"What? Steal my chief's private desk?"

"Pooh! It is not stealing at all. We simply want the loan of it for five minutes, and then you can restore it to its place. For this little bit of trouble you shall have, think, a thousand golden sovereigns!"

Harry determined to get hold of as much of the plot as he could.

"But how can I—"

The doctor interrupted him, waving his hand as if in triumph, thinking that Harry was yielding.

"In this little bottle you will find a very strong narcotic. One drop in the captain's coffee will send him to sleep for twelve hours. Then you can borrow his keys, unlock the locker, hand the desk to a man waiting in a boat below, and put it snugly back before the captain wakes up. You see, it is quite simple and without risk, and as a reward for your skill in carrying it out, a thousand golden sovereigns."

"And if I refuse?"

"Well, of course, there is that alternative. A couple of drops of another liquid, just as tasteless and odourless as this narcotic, will send you—you will cease from troubling this world at any rate. But you are young and strong, why should you die?"

Harry felt very faint and sick, as was natural. His thoughts rushed homewards. Oh, that he might be cleared and reconciled with his father before he died! The look on these men's faces showed that they would not stick at murder. The world seemed to grow dark before him, but not a trace of this appeared in his attitude or manner. He faced his foes resolutely.

"We cannot do anything with this fellow!" Captain Olney said savagely.

A violent knocking at the door interrupted further conversation, and a telegram was brought to the doctor. The latter read it, and then said some words in Spanish, a command evidently connected with the disposal of their prisoner, for the three men suddenly threw themselves on Harry, who vainly resisted their attack. They bore him out of the room, half-stunned and bleeding from a wound on the temple to an apartment which once had evidently served as an oratory.

"We don't do things by half measures!" said Mullins brutally, as he turned the lad over with his foot. "Perhaps the night's reflection will bring you to your senses!"

Harry groaned as the three scoundrels left him alone, locking and barring the heavy door. The night, alas! would see the "Matapan" far away, and with it all hope of rescue. He was surely doomed, and the only bright lining to the thick cloud was that Captain Bentham would get safely away.

Harry, however, was not one to give way to utter despair for long. Hope dies hard in the human breast at eighteen. He jumped to his feet, and hastily examined his prison. There was no window, but a heavy grating, which admitted a dim light. It was hopeless to try to move that heavily-riveted ironwork. The walls were covered with a coarse, faded tapestry, concealing the solid stone walls.

"There must have been another entrance for the priest!" murmured Harry to himself, as he tapped every square inch of wall within reach. He came to the recess where once the crucifix had hung, and moved aside the heavy curtain that separated it from the rest of the chambers. He saw only a faded gilt reredos of worm-eaten wood, and in his disappointment caught hold of one end and gave it a vigorous push. The whole thing came clattering down on the top of him with terrific noise, and half-choking him with the dust of years. He stumbled to his feet, and listened to see if the crash had alarmed his captors; but they made no sound, the thick walls and door had stifled the noise.

Then he turned his attention to the ruin he had caused, and uttered a cry of joy as he saw an opening behind the reredos, which in bygone days evidently had been movable—a secret entrance to the oratory. He slipped through the opening, but could only distinguish some dust-covered steps, leading into darkness. He ran back to the door, and pushed two heavy bolts into their sockets, giving a little chuckle:

"They little thought the prisoner would lock himself in!" he said, and made for the stairs. Down, down, he plunged into the darkness, his footfalls rendered noiseless by the dust. He reached the last step, and found himself in a vault or cellar. There was a squeak or two, and the patter of scampering feet. His eyes searched in vain for a glimmer of light; but the air seemed to come in a fresh current from one quarter, and he

had just made out its direction, when he heard a terrific noise behind.

His captors were thundering at the door of the oratory. Fear leant wings to his feet, and Providence guided them aright. He rushed through the darkness, bumping himself against the walls of a passage he had entered. On, on, until, with a feverish gasp of delight, he came out on a ledge directly overhanging the sea.

He sat down to recover his breath from that mad rush through the dust and darkness, and then removed his clothes. "I shall be captured again, if I go down to the harbour," he thought, and plunged headlong into the sea. He was a bold swimmer, and the fear of the Spaniard renewed his strength. The "Matapan" was half a mile away, but he knew exactly where she lay. As he turned the corner by the lighthouse, he could see her lights, and he swam on with renewed courage. Half a mile is a good distance for the strongest swimmer in a sea that is never still; but the cross currents on that coast are deep and retarded him but little, while wind and tide were in his favour. Nevertheless, he was almost fagged out when he got near enough to shout:

"Ship, ahoy!"

"Ay, ay!" said the watch; "who's there?"

"Harry Leonard! A rope, quick!"

"Good heavens! what is the meaning of this?" cried the astonished captain, as Harry, dripping and naked, climbed over the taffrail.

"I—I—have been captured by—" But exhaustion overcame him, and he reeled to the deck.

A vigorous rub down, and a strong dose of brandy, followed by some hot coffee, soon pulled him round. After telling his story, the captain tumbled up all the crew. Every light was covered, so that the American and Spanish ships might not see them move, and exactly an hour before midnight the "Matapan" glided slowly from her moorings.

CHAPTER 3.

SHOT AND SHELL.

The Pearl of the Ocean, as the Spaniards call the Philippines, came slowly into view, Captain Bentham carefully swept the horizon for the sign of a ship. He ran a double risk. He was setting at defiance the Yankee declaration of the blockade, and therefore liable to be captured by the cruisers of Uncle Sam, while as he wanted to sell his cargo to the rebels, he was liable to be shot if captured by the Spanish. But underneath the captain's bronze skin there beat as nobly an adventurous heart as did ever Drake or Raleigh possess. He was an Englishman, and was resolved at all hazards to make a successful voyage, Yankee and Spaniard notwithstanding.

So the "Matapan" held on her way all that Saturday afternoon at full speed, steam being kept up at the highest pressure possible, while every bit of canvas she could carry was set. In this way a speed of twenty to twenty-three knots an hour was obtained. The sun set, and night rushed on with that swiftness peculiar to the region of the equator. The stars came out with surpassing brilliancy, their reflections dancing in the water like will-o'-the-wisps. Then the moon rose, almost full, white and glistening, making the seaboard clear for miles.

All the time the good ship was drawing nearer and nearer to Manila.

"There's a big bird, sir, to starboard!" cried Harry. The captain turned his glasses in that direction.

"A bird I am not anxious to serve as a worm for, lad. It is a Yankee cruiser letting off waste steam. She'll be after us in a minute."

Surely enough the cruiser put about, and made as if to cut off the "Matapan" from Manila. However, that was not their intention. It was simply to get the eye of the wind to make shooting more accurate. Then there curled up skywards a little ring of smoke. A shot plunged into the sea about a quarter of a mile away. It was the first shot fired in the war.

Captain Bentham took no notice, except to call down the tube: "Cram every ounce on you can, Mr. Ellsworth; there is a stern chase before us."

The chief engineer did everything he knew, and eventually got the vessel up to twenty-four knots, while the cruiser dropped behind, not being able to do more than twenty-one knots.

"Munro," said Captain Bentham, "I have been thinking that if we run the Yankees successfully, we shall still have to pass the Spanish ships, and probably not without getting a bit damaged. We have plenty of guns and ammunition on board, what d'ye say to having up four of the machine-guns and mounting them on deck, in case of emergency?"

"Just the thing, sir! If it does nothing else, it will put a bit of pluck into the men. They are not over-pleased at being at the mercy of two squadrons without means of defending themselves against either."

"Very well, then. Got up four guns and cases of cartridges. You and I can work one each, Harry and the chief engineer the other two, if necessary."

Harry and the mate hurried off to accomplish the work, being eagerly assisted by the crew, who, directly they found they had something to fight with, became as merry as porpoises. But the captain was puzzled, as well as anxious. He had sighted three other vessels, each of which must be a part of the blockading squadron. He believed he could outstrip them all, but would his engines maintain the pressure? Each warship, on coming within the range of a mile, had a shot at him, but not one fell within two hundred yards of the "Matapan."

When midnight struck, there were no less than five vessels, all apparently going at full speed for Manila. Five American eagles swooping down upon one poor little swallow!

The chase went on, Luzon became nearer, its white beach and black rocks being clearly visible in the moonlight. Every man on board the "Matapan" was on deck. They were fully aware of their peril, and watched the American squadron closing in with varied feelings—if the English sailor does not love the Yankee, he hates the Spaniard the more.

As Captain Bentham had foreseen, the Spanish vessels had not ventured out of Manila Bay, where they lay under the

The cruiser "Santa Lucia" fired the first shot, but the shell went harmlessly overhead, falling into the sea without exploding. She then came up to port and fired her small guns, which did some damage, but not so much as the machine-guns worked by Harry and Mr. Ellsworth. These two, or the ship for them, just found the range of the "Santa Lucia's" decks at the right moment. A great yell of agony and rage went up from the crowds of men that were mowed down as cleanly as grass with a scythe. Nearer and nearer the vessels drew to each other. Captain Bentham cried loudly and strongly:

"Stand by to repel boarders!"

The crew rushed to their cutlasses and revolvers. On swept the "Matapan," not swerving an inch from her course. A large body of men, both soldiers and sailors, stood on her fore'sle ready to leap aboard.

"You must drive those fellows back!" cried Frank Munro. "Come on, my lads!" said he, to such men as were near him, among whom was Harry.

Just as the first Spaniard sprang on the English deck, Munro's sword cut him down. Others followed, but the crew of the "Matapan" fought desperately. Though the enemy came rushing on board, not an inch of ground did they gain.

Presently a big fellow—the boatswain apparently, from his rig—joined his comrades and attacked Frank Munro. He

raised his pistol and aimed at the first mate's head, when Harry rushed forward and knocked it up just as it exploded, and the next moment dealt the Spaniard a blow on the sword-arm, which saved Munro's life. In turn, Ellsworth saved Harry's life from the up-raised cutlass of the Spanish giant, bringing him to the deck with a tremendous back-hander. Fortunately the gunboat had sheered off, thinking the English steamer was already in the possession of the "Santa Lucia." All this time the Spaniards had kept up a withering fire from their own decks, and several of the crew were wounded and two killed.

Again and again the Spaniards attempted to gain a footing on the "Matapan's" deck, some springing from the rigging, others climbing up from the fore-castle, and all the time the guns roaring and rattling, revolvers cracking, cutlasses clashing, the crews shouting and shrieking, while the ships surged against one another with tremendous crashes, many of the Spaniards who were driven overboard being crushed to death between them.

Harry was fully alive to the desperateness of their situation, and, seizing his opportunity, ran down the companion-way to the locker, where explosives were stored. He knew where to find what he wanted, for all the ship's papers, bills, and invoices had been through his hands. He dragged out a box of grenades, put one in each pocket, and carrying another in his hand he ran up on deck and swarmed up the rigging until he reached a cross-tree that was well over the enemy's deck. He was only just in time, for the vastly superior numbers of the Spaniards were telling against the little exhausted band of Britishers. He hurled a grenade with all his force where the seniors were thickest. The dynamite exploded with terrific effect, human fragments, mingled with dust and scraps of iron, being scattered all over the deck. The next grenade fell into the amidships companion-way, and exploding near some petroleum, set the ship on fire.

Every effort to extinguish the fire was in vain, and the crew eventually had to take to their boats. Taking advantage of the confusion aboard the "Santa Lucia," the "Matapan" drew clear, and started ahead at full speed, the firing generally by this time having slackened.

Both Captain Bentham and Munro had a very narrow escape as they were trying to manœuvre the vessel into the direct Manila channel. A shell from an eight-inch gun fell between them as they stood on the bridge, taking off on its journey Mr. Munro's little finger, stretched out on the speaking-tube. The missile passed through the deck and lodged in a bundle of clothes without exploding. Had it done so, the "Matapan" would have gone to the bottom in three minutes or less.



The whole thing came clattering down upon him with a terrific noise.

partial shelter of the fort guns. As the "Matapan" showed no flag, and was able to keep up so high a speed, the American commander imagined she must be a despatch boat, and consequently made every effort to catch her.

Day broke before the Americans saw exactly how they were situated. Then they found themselves inside the harbour-line, and under the guns of Cavite and the Manila forts. It was a splendid opportunity, and the American admiral took instant advantage of it. He signalled a general engagement, and the bombardment of the forts simultaneously. The fort guns began to boom out. The Spanish fleet, taken by surprise, had to cut their cables as the speediest way of getting into position. Then the ships exchanged shots, until the wreathed smoke shut out the sunlight, and the crash of shot and shell, coupled with the reverberations from the hills, sounded like the din of a distant inferno.

And among this tempest of bullets and balls the "Matapan" kept on at a slightly reduced pace. They had escaped the Yankee, only to fall into the midst of the Spanish fleet. A rift came in the veil of smoke, and a wooden cruiser and a small gunboat were coming straight down on the "Matapan."

"Lads!" cried Captain Bentham in a ringing voice, that could be heard above the rattle and roar, "we shall have to fight! Remember that no mercy will be shown us by the Spaniards, even if we surrender, and if we can break through under cover of this smoke we shall be safe."

A few minutes later firing ceased, as if by mutual consent; and as the smoke-clouds drifted asunder some idea of the damage done to each fleet could be gathered. The Spaniards had evidently been outclassed, their numerical superiority being more than equalled by the more heavily-armoured and armed vessels of the United States.

Two Spanish cruisers had been burned to the water's edge; two gunboats had been sunk by the enemy's fire, and two others were sunk rather than that they should fall into the Americans' hands. The ships of both sides were badly damaged by shot and shell, while the decks presented a most revolting and pitiable sight, being covered with wreckage, dead bodies, fragments of limbs, blood, and charred wood.

One feature was noticeable on board every ship, viz., that shell-fire had set alight and burned up the wood on armoured and belted ships, leaving only the shell of steel or iron. The combatants seemed to take no notice of the "Matapan," which steamed steadily into the inner harbour, and ran alongside the quay.

Though the Spaniards have not, during the present war, displayed a remarkable amount of affection towards England, yet they gave the captain and crew of the "Matapan" quite an ovation on the successful running of the blockade, in the midst of the first engagement of the war. Of course, the people did not know the "Matapan" had sent one of their cherished old wooden cruisers to the bottom.

It was not long before the vessel was being unloaded by as many men as could find room.

Before dinner the fight in the bay was resumed, but so quickly did the smoke rise that it completely shut out any view of the opposing squadrons—even the forts could not be distinguished after a few rounds had been fired.

"We must unload sharply, Harry," said Captain Bentham to his youngest officer, "or else we shall not get clear again before somebody finds out that we are responsible for the destruction of the 'Santa Lucia.' But for your resourcefulness, my lad, we should not have reached here at all. Another eight-inch shell would have sunk us, or another five minutes' fighting would have demolished the remnant of my crew. Harry Leonard, I am proud of you. It is of such stuff that heroes are made!"

The boy went aft, his heart too full for words. He had done his duty, and done it well; and he felt how much better it was to take his share of the work than shirk it. If only his father could know that he was winning the goodwill and opinions of his superior officers, he would be quite content with his lot.

All that day the combat raged, and just as the dock labourers and sailors were knocking off at sunset, the prospect was an appalling one. The smoke lay heavy over the city, several parts of which were blazing with great fury. Two vessels, ablaze from stem to stern, were drifting helplessly about the bay, lost beyond hope of saving. All the Spanish gunboats had been sunk either by the American guns or by order of Admiral Montojo, to prevent them falling into the enemy's hands. In fact, there was no Spanish fleet left, so decisive and complete had been the Yankees' victory. Of course, the fleet of the United States had not come out scatheless; some of the ships were drifting about at the mercy of wind and tide, but the damage was being rapidly repaired.

The forts at Cavite had been reduced to heaps of crumbling ruins, not one stone being left upon another, or one cannon left undismounted. Firing the city seemed an act of mere wanton destruction, as there were no guns mounted on the tumbledown ramparts, the flames crackling and roaring above the noise of the panic-stricken city, like a fiend wrestling with a new victim.

"I am afraid we shall have to fight the Yankees in the morning, sir," said Harry, his eyes ranging over the bay.

"No, no, my boy!" said the captain, with a gloomy smile. "We must bolt to-night, or there will be no journey to El Zak for us."

CHAPTER 4.

EL ZAK.

All the world of Manila and its wife had gone to the fires or gathered what news they could of the result of the battle or subsequent actions of the enemy and the governor of the Philippines. Consequently no one noticed the natty "Matapan," get up steam, go round the north-west end of the harbour, and head straight up the river. Had she tried to get out of the harbour, the Americans undoubtedly would have seen her, but most improbably been able to stop, much less to overhaul her.

Before morning the ship steamed up the twenty-five miles to the spot where the Candava river enters the main river—the Peleg. The Candava river, connecting the lake and the Peleg, is about five miles long, and too narrow to allow the

passage of a ship. Accordingly, leaving Munro and a few men in charge of the "Matapan," Bentham took a couple of the steamer's boats and divided his party into two crews. He took the command of one himself, and placed Harry in charge of the second. Harry was, of course, very proud of his new position. Provisions for ten days were taken, though it was expected that a sufficiently thorough search could be made in one day; but in the wild parts of the earth the unexpected happens, the more especially when the country is in the throes of violent revolution within, and a struggle with a foreign foe without.

The start was made soon after sunrise, so as to take advantage of the coolest part of the day. The rowers were too eager to get through without attracting the Luzonians' attention to make any noise, so the journey was a very quiet one.

The captain had brought with him Peter Robinson's leaf from the old logbook, together with a few other notes of the locality, though he left the old brass-bound box at home.

The journey up the river was typical of that volcanic region. The bed of the Candava was rocky—a channel worn out of the heart of the rock. On either hand the rocks rose to heights varying from two hundred feet to two thousand, and crowned with clumps of the thornapple-tree. The current ran very strongly between the frowning crags, and it was five hours' steady pulling before they debouched on to the placid bosom of the lake.

The contrast was most dazzling. The roughest old salt of the crew could not withhold a cry of wonder as the beauty of the scene burst upon him after the gloom of the rock-girded river.

Brilliant sunshine poured down upon the waters of a great lake, the surface of which was gently rippled by the wind. On the broad expanse floated innumerable swans, clad in dazzling white, while thousands of the scarlet-eyed, blue-necked duck whirled in the air or dived in the water. Near the island were numerous water-lilies, filling the air with perfume. Among the trees flitted and screamed birds of Paradise—one of the few spots left in the world where bird-life has not yet been sacrificed to gratify woman's barbaric taste.

"Though it appears so fairy-like and innocent," said Bentham to Harry, "I think it would be well to reconnoitre the ground first. Keep a sharp look-out while I see whether there are any Luzonians on the island. They think all white men are Spaniards, and we should have a short shrift at their hands if they caught us."

So far as he could judge, the island was about a mile in circumference, and was certainly used for purposes of worship. He saw a temple in the distance, but found no signs of any attendant priests or any other inhabitants of the island. It was dark when the captain returned and gave his report to the men.

Not one of the little band slept much. Each hoped to find himself a rich man the next day. When they did doze, it was to dream of gold and diamonds.

At the first blush of dawn every man jumped ashore, burning with the fever of adventure. An almost absolute silence prevailed. Even the swans still kept their heads tucked under their wings.

"Keep your eyes about you!" said the captain, striking out at their head. He was followed by Harry, and the rest trailed after in Indian file.

Within half an hour they came in sight of the red granite walls of the temple, here and there splashed with a little piece of green moss or yellow lichen. A few minutes would decide whether any resistance would be offered to their search, and they firmly gripped their cutlasses and revolvers.

Passing round the precincts, strewn with the wonderful feathers of the Bird of Paradise, they discovered the entrance, which was in ruins. There was nothing to prevent their entrance; the roof was partly demolished, and some noisome fungi were poking their way through crevices between the flagstones of the floor.

The captain's hopes vanished. It did not look like a place where a highly-venerated idol was kept. It was evident that no worship had taken place there for many years.

He stepped carefully among the ruins, and was suddenly brought up sharp by an object laying prone in the dust. It was, without doubt, the idol. The image lay on its back, with its eyeless sockets staring straight up to heaven. It was grotesque and hideous. The captain turned away with a badly-suppressed groan of bitter disappointment. The leaf of the old logbook said that each eye of the idol consisted of an enormous diamond, while smaller diamonds were used for the two rows of teeth.

This fallen mightiness had neither eyes nor teeth. There had been once a necklace of wondrous rubies and sapphires, besides earrings, rings, armlets, wristlets. There was no trace of them anywhere.

"My lads!" said the captain, looking as mournful as a mute at a funeral, "I am afraid I have brought you out on a useless expedition. I can't think my old friend and messmate for so many years would have played me a trick. Someone has been here before us. Every gem has been taken."

The men were flabbergasted; while Harry could not help pitying the kind-hearted captain, so bitterly disappointed did he seem.

"Perhaps the idol was thrown down by violence," suggested Harry, "and the stones have dropped out."

"I am afraid not," said the captain doubtfully. "But we will search."

And they set to work diligently for several hours. They cleared a large space around the idol, and sifted the mould most carefully, but with no success.

"Further searching is useless," said the captain. "They were taken before the idol was dethroned. I am very sorry, not only for myself, but for your sakes. It is a great disappointment. Let us return."

The return was effected in spirits very different to the start, and a gentle gloom descended on all and stilled their tongues. The only noise seemed to be the crush of the underwood under their heavy boots. They reached the shore.

"We must have taken the wrong direction!" exclaimed Bentham. "The boats are not here!"

"I think it was a bit 'igher up," said one of the men. "But we can soon decide if the island is only a mile round."

"I'm sure the boats were tied up to that tree! Why, look! There are our footmarks where we jumped ashore."

"By Jupiter! you are right, Harry. But what on earth has become of the boats?"

That the boats had not been fastened properly and drifted down the stream was not any explanation at all. A sailer that could not knot a rope properly had never been on board the "Matapan" under Bentham's government.

The captain thought a moment, and then said:

"Lads, we must look matters straight in the face. Those boats have not drifted away. Someone, whether Spaniard or Luzonian, I cannot say, has unfastened the boats and gone off with them."

The men were dumbfounded, and stared hopelessly at the water, which rushed to get out through the rocky river-bed up which they had come. Harry was about to propose that they should swim from the island to the mainland, when something whizzed through the air and fell just at the back of his heels. It was an arrow. Two inches nearer, and it would have pierced the brain several inches. The escape was almost a miracle.

"Back, all of you!" cried the captain. "We offer an easy target for them!"

They sought the shelter of some large trees, whence they endeavoured to ascertain from what quarter the arrows had come. Captain Bentham had a small binocular with him, and scanned the banks of the lake.

"The scoundrels!" he muttered as he turned his glass to the right bank of the lake. "Two, three, five, six, and heaven knows how many more in hiding. Lads, these beggars mean mischief! Luckily we're all armed, though we haven't too many cartridges; so if they attack us, we can give them a pretty warm reception. But remember this—not a shot must be wasted!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" rejoined the boatswain. "But I fear something else besides Indians. There were provisions in the boat, and now we have starvation staring us in the face!"

"When Munro finds out we do not return, he will come in search of us—say, in two days from now. We can find enough to keep us alive until then, surely?"

"But, sir, he might not be able to leave the ship. These niggers might also cut off any approach to us," continued the boatswain, an old tar who had sailed thirty years with Captain Bentham, and was a privileged grumbler. A second arrow, that buried itself in a tree a few inches from the boatswain's left ear, effectively stopped further criticism, and drove the little band into shelter.

"Those rascals are getting our range too accurately!" said the captain angrily.

"Yes, sir. But if you will permit me, I should like to have a pop at them. They will be more frightened at our rifle-fire than we are of their arrows. They evidently are not well supplied with guns themselves."

"If you think you are a champion marksman, you can try; but we must save our cartridges as much as possible, remember."

"I am not a champion shot, and I promise not to use more than one cartridge," said Harry, who, at Rowton Chase, had bowled over many a hocketing pheasant and tumbling snipe. A lad who can grass a snipe may be relied upon to bring down a nigger. Throwing himself on his face, he began to wriggle through the thick undergrowth which bordered the island,

and singling out one man he could just see moving about in the shadow, took careful aim.

However, he was in no hurry, and with his finger on the trigger waited until he saw the man stop, take an arrow from a quiver on his back, and begin fitting it to his bow. That arrow found no billet, for as the Luzonian fastened the arrow on the string, there was a flash, a puff of blue smoke, and a scream of agony from the lake-bank, where a dark body crashed heavily to the ground. Then there arose a wild yell from the natives, who could be seen hurrying away. The mysterious death of their comrade, struck by an invisible hand, had frightened them terribly.

It was generally agreed by all hands that it would be safer to occupy the temple, and hold it as a fort in view of a native attack.

"Depend upon it, the loss of one man won't scare them away. They know we can only be a small party, and no doubt will return in overwhelming numbers. See, there are dusky forms all round the lake, except at one spot—where the nigger fell," said Captain Bentham, still searching the banks with his glasses.

The little band returned to the temple, and immediately set to work to put it into a state of defence.

The ruined entrance was filled with large stones piled one on another, while the rest of the walls were loopholed. If they only had provisions, they might have held out for a long time.

At Harry's suggestion two men were told off to lay lines in the water, while he himself set snares for birds in the woods. Both expedients were successful, the fish biting very freely, and quite a pile were landed; birds, too, of the turkey type exhibited great curiosity at Harry's device, and put their necks readily into the noose. By sundown there was ready a great feast, young palms supplying sago that served for bread and vegetables, while water was carried to the temple in gourds hollowed out by the ship's carpenter.

To give light as well as to keep at bay the blood-sucking insects of evening, a large fire of wood and moss was kept up, and around it the men sat smoking, most of them keeping silence as they brooded over their disappointment and the discomforts of their situation. Like Tommy Atkins, Jack would rather rush a battery than lose his dinner, and makeshifts are regarded as worse than starvation. Harry was younger, and his elastic spirits soon recovered.

He strolled out of the temple and sat on the island bank, well hidden from unfriendly eyes by sheltering scrub, and watched the moon come up above the tree tops. Suddenly an idea struck him, and he strolled back to the fort, singing as merrily as he did in the old days at school—days that seemed so far away in that firefly-lighted island—that grand old song of the landlubber:

"For I ain't no sailor bold,

And I never was upon the sea,

If I chanced to foller in, it's a fact I couldn't swim,

At the bottom I should surely be.

"Then give three hearty cheers——"

"Stow that, youngster!" growled one of the men, forgetting for the moment that Harry was now an officer; "there ain't much cheer about just now." And he pulled viciously at his pipe. Harry did not deign to take the slightest notice, but addressed himself to the captain.

"If we want to get away, sir, I think an effort should be made to communicate with Mr. Munro. If all attempted to swim across, the natives would be sure to attack, and most probably all would be killed. I thought that alone I might be able to reach the bank without being perceived, and then make my way down the Candava river bank to the anchorage of the 'Matapan.'"

The men muttered their approval of the plan. It was quite hopeless for the whole party to try to get past the native spies; besides, though sailors, not all of them could swim—paradoxical but true—a fact which is the great blot on the mercantile service of England.

"You will run a very great risk, Leonard," rejoined the captain. "I do not think one so young should undertake this thing. Still, you are in the prime of activity, and will cover the ground between us and the ship more quickly than anyone else. So I cannot refuse your noble and generous offer. May Heaven favour you and bring you safe through! Good-bye!"

Accompanied by the hearty good wishes of his mates, Harry Leonard a few hours later once more betook himself to the island shore. The moon had sunk behind the lofty mountains, bathing the lake in inky blackness, while the sky was clear and light. He undressed, made his clothes up into a bundle, and tied them on his head. Then he walked into the water, doing so to keep his luggage dry, and struck out for the mainland. Lying rather deep, and using the breast-stroke, he managed to proceed without the least noise, and there was no light to show his head or the ripples he left behind.



The door opened, and a man appeared. Harry recognised him as the husband of the lady he had met at Singapore.

Without any mishap, he reached his destination unseen, and drew himself up on to the bank with a cry of joy at his preliminary success. A large handkerchief served him for a towel, and he was soon ready to commence his journey. Steadily he turned his back on the lake and moved towards the mountains, whence he might get a prospect of the surrounding country. His progress was necessarily slow, for the way was not only rugged, but the possibility of meeting the enemy was very great.

When the sun rose, he clambered on to a ridge which was on a level with the rocky banks of the river. The landscape spread out before him was magnificent, yet so silent and strange that for a few minutes he fell into a reverie. He was aroused therefrom by a column of blue smoke that curled gently up skywards. Undoubtedly the natives had camped there. As his eyes grew accustomed to the perspective, he could distinguish individual figures round the fire. There were not many, but casting his eyes further afield, he saw that there were many pillars of smoke. The situation of his mates was precarious. He and he alone could save them. Then, keeping out of sight of those keen-eyed warriors, he set out along the Candaya river.

CHAPTER 5.

IN A TIGHT PLACE.

When the sun was fairly up, Captain Bentham first of all sent out the men to replenish the gourds of water, and then posted sentinels to watch for signs of the enemy. The morning passed without their peace being disturbed, and the hottest part of the day had come, when suddenly from the northern banks of the lake came a regular fleet of canoes making straight for the island. There was no doubt that an attack was imminent. The banks of the island were too extensive to be efficiently defended, so the little band of Englishmen withdrew to the temple and calmly awaited the issue of events.

There was a shrill cry—a signal for the attack—and a number of dark figures appeared before the walls of the temple as suddenly as if they had sprung out of the earth. The sharp crack of Captain Bentham's revolver followed, and then from every loophole came the rapid crack of the sailors' heavy bolts. Their leader uttered a loud cry, and his men withdrew into the shelter of the woods, leaving five dead on the field, while more than a dozen were dragged away wounded.

"Capital!" exclaimed the captain, wishing to encourage the defenders; "it is very plain they cannot get in here until the cartridges give out, and long before that Mr. Munro will be here to help us."

The natives did not attempt another rush, but contented themselves with firing shots and arrows occasionally at the loopholes. This, however, was but to conceal their real design.

"Sir!" cried the boatswain later, "the rascals have lighted a fire in the woods."

Captain Bentham hurried to the loophole from which he had been hailed. Now the explanation of the Luzonians' retreat was manifest. Not daring to face the white men's guns, they had resolved to roast them inside the temple, or shoot them down if they should make any attempt to escape. Fire after fire was started in the teeth of the wind, so that the flames might hurry on their prey.

"We had better make a dash for it!" exclaimed the men in terror.

"No, no!" said Captain Bentham; "we shall be killed to a man if we do, if there are no boats there. We may be nearly suffocated, but the flames will not burn us through these thick walls. The flames will have swept over the place in two hours; the natives will think we are dead, and we can wait then, without fear, for the return of Harry."

The flames, fanned by the wind, rolled on. The hissing, roaring, and crackling grew terrific. The flames, catching the light, feathery trees, seemed to devour them with the suddenness of a wild beast devouring its prey. It was curious to see all the smaller branches and leaves of a monster tree licked up by a tongue of flame that passed on, leaving the trunk and larger branches untouched but skeleton-like. Every loophole was stopped and every large crevice, so that very little smoke drifted into the temple-fortress.

For two hours the fire continued, extending the area of its ravages and driving the natives to take to their canoes. All danger of being burned to death had passed, and the men eagerly awaited the appearance of Munro.

The sun had set some time, though the darkness was scattered by the still blazing trees and bushes, when a shout came ringing through the air. Helter-skelter the men rushed from the temple, over the still glowing ashes, over the heaped ground. Little they recked of burnt shoes and blisters provided they could get out of that unfortunate island of El Zak. They expected to see the chief mate with some of his crew; but they sent up a mighty cheer when they perceived it was Harry bringing back the two lost boats. The boats were heavy and not over-lightly laden, so that it had been a most severe task to get both boats up against tide and stream.

The sailors ran down to the lake shore and awaited his coming. Too impatient to permit him to run the boat ashore, two or three waded down the sloping bank breast-high, and, seizing the stern of the foremost boat, while Harry unshipped his oars, guided it to the bank and moored it safely.

"My lad," said Captain Bentham, grasping his hand, "we did not expect you back so quickly. Why did not Mr. Munro and a few of the men on the 'Matapan' come with you?"

"I was not able to reach the 'Matapan,' sir. After going down the right hand bend of the river about a mile, I was checked by a huge crevasse at least 120 feet wide. Its sides were too steep either to climb down or ascend. Just a bottomless split in the earth caused by an earthquake, that extended as far as the eye could reach. I was forced to turn back, and as I did so, struck a path that led to the foot of the cliffs. To my great astonishment and still greater joy, on turning a corner, I came suddenly upon the two missing boats, in the same state in which they were when taken from us. Only a boy was keeping ward over them, and he ran away directly I pointed my revolver at him. Then I unlocked the ropes and well—here I am."

The first thing to do was to have a good meal, the banqueting table being lighted by the burning trees of the island. The men recovered their good spirits at once, and Harry's health was drunk most heartily before turning-in time, which was eleven, the captain wishing to start with the dawn next morning.

Punctually the men were at their posts, and before the sun's rays had come up above the horizon the two boats were on their way, leaving behind them an island of desolation, in harmony with the bitter disappointment at the disappearance of the jewels. They rushed down stream as if on a water-

chute, and about ten o'clock caught sight of the red and white funnel of the "Matapan," riding at anchor easily and with all her canvas stowed, which was dead against Captain Bentham's orders. Harry's boat was in front, and he was holding the tiller-lines, when suddenly the report of a rifle rang out, and he felt the wind of the bullet as it whizzed by his cheek.

The bullet came from the steamer. What did it mean? Had Mr. Munro mistaken them for pirates? The men rested on their oars for a moment, and looked round in amazement. Then the captain's boat pulled alongside.

"Anybody hurt?" asked Captain Bentham.

"No, sir," answered Harry; "but a bullet went very near my head. There's something wrong aboard the steamer. Ah, that accounts for it!"

The Spanish flag was run slowly up, after the Union Jack had been hauled down.

"Those rascally Spaniards!" exclaimed the captain, in a towering rage, "have seized my vessel and probably killed our comrades. Look to your revolvers, lads, and draw your cutlasses. A man's head appeared over the bulwarks. Harry threw up his rifle and fired. A storm of curses showed that the bullet had found its billet.

Harry's shot was followed by another, which, oddly enough, though on the steamer, was not directed at them. The black and smoke indicated that it was fired from stem to stern.

"I'll bet a shiner to a pea that was Mr. Munro's rifle. I could tell its sound among a hundred!"

"Then," exclaimed Harry vehemently, "I can tell exactly what has happened. The Spaniards have boarded the vessel, but the crew, or some of them, are making some sort of a defence."

"Now's the time!" cried the captain interrupting, "to show 'em some boarding work. Make for the stern, Leonard, and I'll go for the bows, so that we can get them between two fires. Quick about it, or they will be turning the machine-guns on us!"

He did not know that the first mate had all the cartridges for the guns under his control, where the Spaniards would have to fight to get them. The men went to their oars, and

in a few moments Harry's boat was under the stern of the "Matapan." Over the side was hanging a stage, from which the sailors had been painting the ship's side the day before. The wheel served as a rampart. Harry fired one shot at the figures gathered forward. There were no living men on the after deck, for the good reason that Munro held the saloon, and was keeping the enemy at bay. Then the other men swarmed up, and a hot fire was kept up. Nobody noticed the captain's boat approaching the bows.

The Spaniards dared not show themselves. The rifles at the stern of the steamer were too well handled. Just then the captain's crew launched themselves on deck, and fired a volley, bringing several to the deck, while the rest skipped nimbly into the forecabin, from which they could with their rifles command the whole deck.

The captain, seeing how things stood, came round to the stern, and joined Harry, who was at a loss what to do.

"Hoist that painters' stage on deck, lads! Stand it on its side, and, pushing it along, use it as a shield, firing over the top."

The captain's order was obeyed with alacrity. The advance was begun. A man at either end moved it along inch by inch, while the others fired away at the forecabin door. The stage made an admirable shield, the few bullets that struck it from the enemy's rifles doing no, or very little, damage to the seasoned wood. Nearer and nearer came the stage to the cabin. It was absolutely necessary to communicate with Mr. Munro, for their small amount of ammunition was very nearly exhausted.

In a minute or so the cabin was reached, and the boatswain smashed in a window.

"All right, Munro!" cried the captain. "How are you down there?"

"Bad, sir. Thank Heaven you have come. I have all the cartridges safe."

Another window was smashed, and Harry, as being the slimmest figure, was ordered to drop through, which he did immediately. Munro looked frightfully pale. He was in his shirt-sleeves, one of which was stained with blood. There was a bandage round his left arm.

"You are wounded!" exclaimed Harry.

"Only a flesh wound; but I find it difficult to hold a rifle. The deuce! It's not safe to stand in the line of the door."

As he was speaking, a bullet crashed through the fragile shutter, and buried itself in the panels opposite.

While the mate was speaking, he was giving cartridges to Harry, who handed them up to Captain Bentham. After distributing the ammunition, the captain cast his eyes down the river, where he beheld a little steamer at anchor.

"So that is the lady that brought the rascals here! I begin to twig. There is something besides the war fever behind this. I wonder if my old friend Garcia is mixed up with this lot. All his trouble for nothing." And the worthy man chortled, forgetting his own disappointment in the fun of seeing an unscrupulous man dished.

The thieves had cut loopholes in the forecabin door, and as soon as the fresh cartridges were distributed, the captain ordered a constant fusillade to be kept up against these apertures. The bullets began to take effect. Harry was one of those behind the stage, and directly a steel barrel peeped from a hole he banged a bullet into it. The barrel tipped up suddenly, as if the one inside had tumbled down.

"Number one!" cried Frank Munro with glee.

"Stop firing, lads!" yelled the captain in stentorian tones. "I am going to parley with them." And he stepped boldly out of cover into full view of the enemy.

"Will you surrender?" he asked, "and take what the law will allow you, or stay in there to be starved or shot?"

There was a murmur of conversation, and then a cry of "We surrender!"

"Good!" returned Captain Bentham.

He glanced round quickly, and his men surrounded him, their rifles pointed towards the door, to prevent treachery.

The door opened, and a man appeared. Harry recognised him as the husband of the lady he had seen at Singapore. They could see inside the door four men, one of whom was Bill Mullins, while five or six bodies lay on the ground, showing how deadly the fire had been. At the feet of the men who had surrendered were their rifles.

Bentham was about to walk up to the fellows, when Harry saw a revolver's shining barrel slowly come round the corner



There was a flash, a puff of blue smoke, and a scream of agony from the lake bank, where a dark body crashed heavily to the ground.

in the direction of the captain. The lad immediately fired. His shot was immediately followed by the sound of a body falling, accompanied by the crash of wood.

Captain Olney was lying dead within the little slaughter-house, while the man who would have taken George Bentham's life was no other than Dr. Garcia.

Harry found him stretched at full length, with old Peter Robinson's brass-bound desk by his side. Harry's bullet not only pierced the chief villain of the conspiracy, but crashed through the wooden part of the desk, splitting the sides and lid.

Later on they were sitting in the captain's cabin relating their experiences to one another, and when they had been told, the captain wound up by exclaiming bitterly:

"And all for nothing! Poor Peter Robinson never thought his discovery would lead to so much bloodshed and crime. Garcia and his gang might have had the desk and all the papers it contained for any value they possess. It was a fool's errand, Munro. We did not find a trace of anything."

The ill-fated desk was standing on the table before them.

"It's not good for much now, sir," said Harry, looking curiously at the dilapidated box. "Why, you can see right through it, and—" He stopped abruptly, and, leaning down, put his eye close to the crack.

"What is the matter, lad?" asked the captain impatiently.

He was a little ruffled at the untoward trend of things, for Harry seemed overcome with astonishment.

"I can see—the diamonds!" he cried breathlessly. And wrenching off the top part of the desk, revealed the stones they had sought for so diligently. The veriest novice could have told that their value was enormous, so magnificent was the appearance of these blazing stones. They were not only a king's ransom, but the price of a kingdom.

All three sat round the table gasping for breath.

On further investigation, another letter was found, in which Peter Robinson described his second expedition in search of the diamonds, and how he had been successful, the rest of the searchers all dying of fever before he got back to England. Having neither kith nor kin, he had not intended to sell them until he retired, but death claimed him first. Pete was accustomed to talk in his sleep, and after a heavy night ashore used to become delirious, and no doubt it was then that he gave Dr. Garcia some inkling of the hidden treasure, though he must have referred to it always as if it had been at El Zak.

Captain Olney got wind of this from Bill Mullins, who more than once had managed to overhear Captain Bentham reading Pete's leaf from the old log-book, the first letter, and uttering his musings upon it aloud. When war threatened to break out between the United States and Spain, the latter was very deficient in her naval communication, not having a single boat that could outstrip any of the Yankees' squadron. Yet a despatch boat to carry communications between Manila and the other principal towns of the Philippines was absolutely necessary.

The "Matapan" was just then due, and Dr. Garcia proposed to bring her to the Spanish agents at Singapore. It was easy enough to buy the two shares of the bankrupts Jackson and Steel, but as the reader knows, Harry Leonard spoiled the completion of the bargain with Captain Bentham. When Bill Mullins was discharged and sent ashore, he had met Garcia and told him of the treasure, the directions to find which were locked up in a brass-bound box in Captain Bentham's cabin. Then with Captain Olney they resolved to combine patriotism and profit by seizing the "Matapan." How they fared has been told.

The "Matapan" steamed quickly down the Candava, leaving the fire-swept island of El Zak behind. Manila was reached, and, to the surprise of all, the flag of the United States was floating over that scarred but magnificent city. There was a crowd of ships in the inner harbour, and the American fleet was being repaired, with the exception of one second-class cruiser of ancient shape. She challenged the "Matapan" and fired; but Captain Bentham simply laughed, and ordered the crew aloft to spread the sails, and soon was bowling along at twenty-three knots, leaving the feeble Yankee very soon hull down on the horizon.

Having reached Singapore, Captain Bentham sought out the relatives of Captain Olney, and paid over to them the sum paid by him for the two-thirds of the ship.

Thus the "Matapan" became the sole property of Captain George Bentham. The crew received twenty pounds each besides their double wages, so there was much joy and merriment when the ship once more drew into Limehouse Dock. She attracted quite a crowd to see the shot-holes and marks received by her brilliant "running the gauntlet."

Harry Leonard received the pay of a second mate and a third of the diamonds. He protested; but Bentham insisted that but for him they would never have been found, or that

he and the rest would not have been alive, and therefore the treasure would have been useless.

Harry, now a big, well-developed young man, resolved to go home and see if his father would be reconciled. He arrived at Rowton on a day that was ever memorable in his diary. Father and son fell into one another's arms, each acknowledging himself in the wrong. Suspicion had very strongly pointed to Harry, and the boy's hot, rebellious spirit had not only grieved his father, but strengthened the suspicion. However, the discipline on board ship, and the perils he had encountered, had quelled this for ever.

After Harry's disappearance, there was received by the headmaster at Rowton Hall a letter from a departed pupil, which completely exonerated Harry Leonard, and confessed the writer's guilt. The sea experience gained on his first voyage to Manila confirmed Harry's natural love for the sea, and he shipped once again under his excellent friend and captain—George Bentham.

THE END.

HOW OUR MEN-OF-WAR ARE NAMED.

The armoured vessels in the British Navy are close on eighty in number; other ships in commission on home and foreign stations make up a grand total of over two hundred and forty, to which may be added thirty-eight in course of building or equipping, an aggregate of maritime power without a parallel in history.

Of armoured ships more than a score have names derived from Greek or Latin history or mythology. Their designations are thus classical, but many of them are classical in another sense, as being survivals, so far as their names are concerned, of famous fighting ships of former days. In this category come the Achilles, Agamemnon, Ajax, Aurora, Bellerophon (the "Bully Ruffin" of Nelson's tars and of Crimean days), Colossus, Cyclops, Galatea, Glatton, Gorgon, Hecate, Hercules, Hero, Leander, Hydra, Minotaur, Narcissus, Neptune, Orion, Orlando, Penelope, and some others.

Of names commemorating great battles on land or sea we have the Agincourt and the Ramilies, as well as the Camperdown, Nile, and Trafalgar. Other names are of famous admirals whose last fights have long ago been fought: Anson, Benbow, Collingwood, Hood, Howe, Rodney, and Nelson.

Many names in the next class serve to depict at least one of the attributes that one may look for in a line-of-battle ship. Here we find the Audacious, the Inflexible, the Invincible, the Superb, the Terror, and the Undaunted. The Swiftsure, Thunderer, Triumph, Warrior, Warspite, Repulse, Resolution, and Revenge find a place here. There is a Centurion also, and a Royal Oak, the latter name evidently a survival.

Australia, Edinburgh, Northampton, Northumberland, and Shannon each gives its name to a warship, whilst living or historic celebrities give us the Alexandra, the Empress of India, the Victoria, and the Black Prince. To these may be added the Hotspur, Iron Duke, Prince Albert, Royal Sovereign, Rupert, and Sultan.

Names purely French are six in number, but they have been names of English battleships for many generations of ships and men. Originally they belonged to captured ships, which fought against their old comrades without change of name. In the great war which was just beginning a hundred years ago, capture, and re-capture, too, was frequent of French ships, and, let it also in fairness be added, of British ships as well. Sometimes the name was Anglicised or Gallicised, as the case might be, sometimes the old name was retained.

A case in point is that of the old Temeraire, the subject of one of Turner's finest paintings. Captured from the French at the Battle of the Nile, she proved afterwards a doughty foe to her old masters, and earned for herself in the English Navy the sobriquet of the "Fighting Temeraire," a name she worthily upheld at Trafalgar. The French names now on the list are the Belleisle, the Immortalite, the Imperieuse, the Sans Pareil, the Temeraire, and the Barfleur.

To complete the list we have to add the Scorpion, the Viper, the Vixen, and the Wivern, with others still better known: the Conqueror, Monarch, Dreadnought, and Devastation.

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TWO OF A TRADE.

By MARK DARRAN.

Some years ago I was appointed doctor to one of England's large prisons, and while there heard some of the strangest of yarns unprinted; but for cool audacity in execution, the following experience of one of the convicts "in" for burglary is about the best.

I had often urged him to tell me some episode in his professional career; but although not of a taciturn disposition, it was not until I had been able to render him some little service that he consented to tell me this strange experience, which I will put into story form.

Some few years ago (he commenced), I decided, after much planning, to crack a little crib which I knew would give a good return. I had made all my arrangements for a successful entry into the house, and only waited for a good night.

For some time the nights were too light, but at last, after I was almost in despair, a suitable day came, and the night was cloudy but fine.

Having up to the present escaped the eye of Scotland Yard, I managed to reach my destination without being observed about midnight, and at once started business without delay.

The window I had marked for my entry was soon forced, and I found myself standing on the landing of the first floor, in total darkness. Cautiously I turned on my dark-lantern, and seeing that all was apparently secure, made my way down-stairs to where I imagined the plate and valuables were kept.

After searching two of the rooms in vain, I entered a small room resembling a study. Sure enough in the corner stood a medium-sized safe, strong, but of a pattern the experienced housebreaker knows easily how to force.

I soon had my tools ready for use, and was soon busily boring a hole near the lock with a diamond-pointed centrebit. It was a longer job than I expected, and it must have turned one before I was able to swing back the door of the safe.

My mouth fairly watered when I beheld the glistening rows of plate, and I must have feasted my eyes on them for some minutes, before I remembered that dawn would soon be breaking, and I must pack and clear out before then.

One by one each piece of silver found a resting-place in my bag, one by one the pieces of plate grew less in the safe. The little electropate I found I laid aside as useless for the melting-pot.

At last all was over, and I started to carefully shut the door of the safe, so that the robbery should be discovered as late as possible.

Having packed up my tools I turned to make tracks, but I shall never forget the fright I had when I turned towards the door. There, in full evening-dress, stood a gentleman holding in his right hand a revolver, a smile flickering at the corners of his mouth. My hand had gone behind my back for my pistol, but he lifted the pistol till on a level with my head, and sternly ejaculated "Hands up!"

Then he deprived me of my pistol, and bade me sit on a chair hard by. After which he turned to me, and said:

"My man, please pay attention to what I am about to say." He laid the pistol carefully on the table at his right hand and continued:

"You have come here to-night with the evident intention of stealing from me my plate and valuables. My proper course would be to hand you over to the police." Here he paused, while I shivered, and was about to pray for mercy, when he continued: "But before I proceed to do this I should like to offer you one chance of your liberty, a hard chance, no doubt, for one so steeped in crime as yourself."

Hope again began to beat in my breast, and I prayed him to continue.

"Base man!" he went on. "Although you deserve the extreme penalty of the law, I, as the president of the 'Society for Saving Burglars from Sin,' will make you an offer for your liberty. Answer not before you have well considered, for you must take the most solemn oath."

"Oh, kind sir!" I pleaded; "but name your condition, and be it ever so hard, I will swear to keep it!"

"Wait till you have heard it, then promise!" he said, with a stern look on his clean-shaven face. "But first I must ask you a few questions."

"Have you always followed your present nefarious calling? Answer me truthfully, as there is a heaven above."

"Yes, kind sir; but I was brought up to it, taught almost in my cradle to pick pockets."

"You are a most interesting study, my man, of the iniquity of your class, and I must give a detailed account of this pleasant meeting to the learned board of my society."

"Secondly, have you upon you any valuables or money?"

With shaking hands I produced all my money—some pounds—and also several valuable rings, part of the proceeds of my last burglary. These I placed on the table.

"These," he said, "shall be returned to their owners, and the money given to some poor person who has been robbed."

"Now," he continued, "I will tell you the condition on which you may go free."

"This felonious act of to-night must be the last in your career; you must throw over your old companions, your old haunts, and lead an honest life. I know that it would be impossible for you to do this in this country; but I am prepared, for the sake of the putting down of vice and crime, to pay your passage to America or Australia. You will apply to me for the necessary money in the morning, and I shall commission someone to see that you carry out my wishes and those of the society."

Overwhelmed with gratitude, I flung myself at his feet, and prayed that I might take the oath.

Solemnly he picked up a Bible from a shelf near by, and in a voice seemingly husky with emotion, prepared to administer the oath:

"I hereby swear, by all I hold sacred, to keep the oath I am about to take. I swear that I will lead an honest life, and keep 'my hands from picking and stealing,' and my tongue from 'lying and slandering.' Also to try and rescue from darkness into light any man I may find erring in his duty; and I will pray for the advancement of the Society for Saving Burglars from Sin."

My captor then passed me the Bible, and I repeated after him the words of the oath, and solemnly kissed the Book.

"Now, my man," he said, when I had taken the oath, "there is nothing to keep you here now. Be sure and call on me in the morning for your passage-money."

Gratefully I rose, and prepared to make my departure, pouring blessings on the head of my captor; but unconsciously my hand took up the bag of plate.

"You will oblige me by emptying that bag!" he said. "But stop—no, leave it as a souvenir of your redemption."

"Good-bye, my man," he continued, "and may luck go with you!"

Tears filled his eyes, and I pressed his hand and left, thoroughly repentant.

At about four o'clock I arrived home, and at once started writing notes to the owners of all the stolen property I had on hand, and begging their forgiveness, as I was leaving the country to lead a better life.

All this done, I lay down, and slept in a very peaceful state of mind. It was nearly eleven when I awoke, so I at once started to see my benefactor of the night before.

As I passed a newsagent's shop, I noticed on all the posters of the evening papers the notice of a burglary at Hampstead. Being not yet weaned of my interest in crime, I bought a copy.

It was a good thing for me there was not a policeman by, or he would certainly have arrested me on suspicion. I cursed everybody and everything in language loud and strong, for there, staring me in the face, was the following notice:

"Last night Mr. Barker's house at Hampstead was broken into, and all his plate and valuables stolen. From the style of work, it is thought that 'Gentleman Jim' is the culprit. Steps are being taken for his arrest."

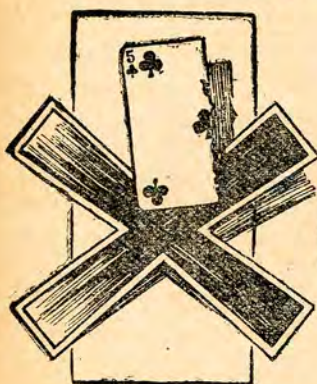
"There, you can draw your own conclusions," said the convict, turning to me; but if I ever meet my benefactor of that night, I shan't be answerable for the consequences."

THE PHANTOM
RIDER.

See next Friday's

UNION JACK.

YOU CAN BEGIN THIS TO-DAY,



THE SIGN OF THE SCARLET CROSS

By CLAUD HEATHCOTE,

Author of "Four British Boys," "Val the Boy Acrobat," "Roy Royal or St. Miriam's," "The Red Light," "Dick Danvers," &c.

READ THIS FIRST.

The story opens on Harry's fifteenth birthday. Harry and Pierre Evison, whose son Harry thinks he is, are about to have tea, when Harry's great chum, Shaggy, a newsboy, enters, and tells them that a body has been dragged from the Thames at Limehouse, and that on the breast of the dead man is a strange tattoo—a scarlet cross, and half of the five of clubs.

On hearing this, Pierre Evison turns deadly pale. Harry asks Shaggy to tea. The newsboy tells his chum that he has a few papers to sell first, and goes out.

He does not return, and Harry sets out in search of him. In the street he meets Paul Lamaret, who asks if he knows where Pierre Evison lives. Harry directs him to their home, and goes on his way.

A few moments later, Paul Lamaret enters. "Pierre Evison, otherwise Pierre Gourbet, I salute you!" he says. And tells him that he has come to take his life because he has not killed one Horace Temple as he promised to do. The pair fight with rapiers, and Pierre is mortally wounded. The murderer escapes. Harry, meanwhile, goes to where Shaggy lives. He is out. Harry is about to leave, when he sees a rat gnawing a paper. He takes it from the animal, and discovers it to be a letter half eaten away. He puts it into his pocket and goes home. He discovers Pierre dying, and is told by him that he is not his son; that his family name is Temple; and that he must beware of the Lamarets, all of whom are marked on the breast with the scarlet cross and the half of the five of clubs. Then he falls back dead.

Mawker, a crafty old lodger in the house and the father of a fair girl, Angela, enters the dead man's room at night-time for the purpose of searching for a note Harry, whom he has drugged, has in his pocket. While engaged in this search, he hears some one enter the room. It is in perfect darkness, so Mawker cannot see the man's face. But when the latter leaves the room, Mawker finds that a dagger has been plunged into the bed where Harry had been lying.

Through the craftiness of Mawker, Harry is next day arrested on a charge of theft. But he escapes from the policeman, for the purpose of placing some mementoes on the breast of Pierre. To accomplish this, he is compelled to visit the mortuary at midnight, and while discharging this sacred duty, a lady (whose face he cannot see) enters and places a bunch of flowers on the shroud. Harry afterwards overhears a conversation between this mysterious lady and the organist of the church. Then, having fulfilled his duty, he voluntarily gives himself up to the police.

He is tried, and sentenced to be sent to a reformatory for a year. He escapes in company with a lad called Probyn. They are heard by Merrick, the reformatory bully, who arouses the officials. Probyn stays behind.

CHAPTER 21 (continued).

As Probyn had said, there was no time to lose, so he again quickened his pace into a run, and presently reached the hedge bounding the rear part of the reformatory grounds.

He had not great difficulty in forcing his way through the hedge, and now found himself on a wide, expansive common, covered for the most part with furze and blackberry bushes.

He stopped and listened. Were they following him? The lights of the reformatory were still visible in the distance. Around it was nothing but bleakness and darkness.

Harry pushed on, often stumbling amongst the bracken. The thorns stuck into his flesh. He could feel acutely, though there was little to be seen.

And yet he had reason to be thankful for the darkness. If it

prevented him from seeing very clearly the way before him, it acted also as a cloak which would shield him from others.

The events of the last few hours had been so rapid that he only now began to fully realise the perils of his situation. He had not a farthing of money in his pocket; he was fifty or sixty miles from London; he was worn out and bruised; and, worse than all, so soon as daylight came people would at once discover by his clothes that he was a runaway from the reformatory.

Then he would be handed over to the nearest police-constable, who would in turn take him back to the schools, where he would be received with the jeers of his associates and severely punished.

Such was the position in which Harry was placed. The more he looked at it, the less he liked it. If it had only been possible for him to reach Shaggy all might have been well; but it was clearly impossible—for that night at any rate.

At each step he took fatigue grew upon him. The sleep that he had in vain wooed while he was in the dark cell seemed pressing with iron hand upon his lids.

Still he struggled on.

With a sense of satisfaction he at length reached the limits of the common over which he had been so wearily floundering.

He was now in the main road—the long Portsmouth Road, which led to that well known harbour on the one hand, and London on the other.

Which way should he turn? For the moment Harry stood in the road undecided how to act. He was at the parting of the ways. If he pressed on to Portsmouth he might stand a better chance of escape. He might then get employment on an outward bound ship; or, failing that, obtain a passage out to some distant port as a stowaway.

On the other hand, inclination as well as duty told him that whatever might be his ultimate destination, his first object must be to reach London.

There only could he possess himself of those clues which were to aid him in his search for his father; there only could he find the magic keys which were to open the lock, if it ever were to be opened, of his strange destiny; there only could he find the chum who would stand by his side and help him, foul weather or fair, in his perilous undertaking.

So Harry took the long, lonely road that led to London.

He had tramped a distance of two or three miles without meeting anyone—a circumstance for which he was extremely thankful.

Now, however, he caught the sound of horses' hoofs on the hard road.

He stood still with beating heart. Who were the horsemen?

The horns of the crescent moon had vexatiously pushed themselves through the clouds at this moment, and Harry saw, to his dismay, that the horsemen were a couple of the police patrol.

They would, of course, challenge him. It was suspicious, to say the least of it, for a youth to be wandering along a lonely country road at the dead of night in reformatory clothes.

Thus they would be sure to question him, and what possible answer could he make to their inquiries? None which would be likely to satisfy them.

His only chance of escape was in hiding. There was a ditch running by the side of the road. It was perfectly dry; so, without a moment's hesitation, Harry lay at full length in the ditch.

The patrol had dropped from a trot to a walking pace. They were conversing. Harry could hear their voices quite clearly as they neared him.

"He must have escaped somewhere down this road," he heard one of them saying; "and you may be sure he's gone London-wards."

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"P'raps so—most likely; but there won't be much chance of nabbing him to-night," said the other. "It's like looking for a needle in a haystack. There's not much chance of his getting away in daylight. His clothes will spoil him, and—"

Harry, who had been listening with his heart thumping loudly against his ribs, heard no further. They had passed out of ear-shot, and in a moment out of sight as well.

A cold sweat broke out on Harry. Had they been speaking of him? Were the sleuthhounds already in pursuit of him? Surely they must have been referring to him?

And yet, how was it possible? Hardly two hours had elapsed since his escape, and how, therefore, had it been possible for the superintendent of the reformatory to communicate with the police?

Had he telephonic communication with the police? Harry had never heard of it; but still he was not acquainted with many of the secrets of the reformatory, as it was just possible that there was some such communication between the authorities of the two places.

"He must have escaped somewhere down this road, and you may be sure he's gone Londonwards!"

These were the words that kept repeating themselves to the weary brain of Harry.

To-morrow they relied on his capture. Well, come what might, he determined to face the situation with freshened energies. To do so, he must snatch a few hours of rest.

Where?
Not very far from where he was standing was an old farmhouse. In the field beside it was a barn. Harry made his way through the hedge to the latter. He found to his delight that the door was only latched.

He opened it, and flung his weary limbs down on the warm hay that was lying on the floor.

Scarcely had he done so than he felt himself in contact with the flesh of a human being. In the darkness he could see little, but he could feel upon his face another's breath.

With a startled cry, Harry realised that someone else was in that barn beside himself.

CHAPTER 22.

"EXCHANGE IS NO ROBBERY"—ON THE ROAD— "OPEN, OPEN!"

Harry had not time to recover from his astonishment at the startling discovery made by him, when his bedfellow leapt from the hay and cried: "Stand off!"

Now Harry recognised, standing against the dark background of the barn, a young sailor, about his own age and height. It was impossible to make anything clearly of his features.

"I beg pardon," said Harry, rising, "I didn't know anybody was here—I really didn't. I'm sorry I disturbed you."

The sailor had been scrutinising Harry in the semi-obscurity. Evidently satisfied with his scrutiny, he came nearer and asked:

"What brought you in here, shipmate?"

"I've been tramping some distance, and was dead-beat. I wanted to snatch just a couple of hours' rest, and then get on with my journey."

"Homeward bound?"

"Yes."

"To what port?"

"London."

The sailor seemed to think for a couple of moments, and then he said:

"Well, you startled me a bit at first, I can tell you."

"Not more than you startled me," laughed Harry, in spite of himself.

"S'pose not; but if you don't mind me for a berth-mate, we'll turn in once more together."

"Not at all!" laughed Harry. "Pleased to make your acquaintance."

Harry had nothing to lose; and the idea had come to him that he might be able to make use of this sailor in some way to aid his escape.

So the two once more lay down on their bed.

"You won't kick me out of my bunk, shipmate?"

"No fear!" yawned Harry. "If you should be inclined that way, let me down gently, please."

The sailor laughed.

"Whichever wakes first will call the other, eh?"

"Yes," assented Harry. "Good-night."

"Good-night."

In spite of his strange bedfellow, Harry was soon sound asleep—the sleep of utter weariness that knows no dreams.

He seemed to have been asleep only a few minutes, when he heard the voice of his companion crying:

"Hi! wake up, or we shall be kicked out of this presently."

Harry woke up, and found that the light of morning was just beginning to steal into the barn. He could now plainly see the features of his companion.

They were not very prepossessing. Though only about Harry's age, he seemed to have been indulging in a night or two's dissipation, from which he was only just recovering. What gave to him a particularly sinister appearance was that he had a couple of black eyes. But the first words of his companion made him sharply conscious of the mistake of judging others without first of all looking at one's self.

"I say, shipmate," said the youth, "you're no beauty. Where did you pick up that full suit of mourning?"

Thus Harry became aware that his fight with Merrick had left him precisely with the same adornment as that possessed by the sailor.

"I expect we both bought our colours at the same shop," he said lightly, in the hope of turning the conversation from a disagreeable subject.

"Good!" laughed the sailor—"the shop kept by Mr. Knuckledown, eh? But—how about the reefing-sails?"

He significantly indicated the reformatory clothes worn by Harry. Harry turned scarlet. What explanation could he give? There was none.

The sailor saved any reply he might make by promptly adding:

"There; you needn't trouble to hatch up any lie. I understand. You've bolted from the reformatory."

"What if I have?" demanded Harry fiercely.

"Oh, you needn't get into a paddy," said the sailor. "I'm not blaming you. Before I took up with my present profession I did a bit of bolting—ran away from school and home—and now I'm just going back."

"Home?"

"Yes, home. But it's just occurred to me, shipmate, that I might work up a little surprise for the old man, and help you at the same time."

"Help me! How?" asked Harry eagerly.

"By changing toggery. Come, what do you say?"

Harry's heart gave a big bound. The very thing he would have asked had come to pass without a word from him to indicate his wishes.

"Do you really mean it?"

"I was never more serious in my life."

Harry, looking into the sailor's face, could see that he meant it—could see that he was just as eager for the exchange as he was himself.

Without more ado the two stripped themselves, and exchanged clothes. As previously remarked, they were as nearly as possible of the same breadth and height, so they had no difficulty as to fit.

"You make a lovely sailor!" grinned the erstwhile sailor.

"And you make a splendid—ahem!—civilian!" laughed Harry. "What name am I to sail under—you see, I'm getting up my nautical language already?"

"Bob Ayres; and my name?"

"Harry Evison."

"Right! Well, you'd better sail off as quickly as possible now you've got the toggery. Mind you don't steer into the wrong port again."

"Avast!" laughed Harry, whose spirits had risen now that this chance of escape had so opportunely presented itself, "I'll try to steer clear of rocks, reefs, and pirates, and anchor safely in the right port at last. The anchor's weighed—good-bye and good luck!"

He shook hands with the sailor, and struck once more into the main road. It was still early morning, and he struck out briskly on his long walk.

He continued plodding along till midday. He was thirsty and hungry, and had not a single penny to buy a piece of bread with.

He at last made up his mind to enter a wayside inn and ask for a drink of water.

The compartment in which he entered was empty. There was a good-natured looking landlady in the bar, but she appeared to be startled on seeing Harry.

"Can you give me a drink of water, please; I'm famished?"

She leaned across the bar, and asked in a whisper:

"What's your name?"

"Bob Ayres."

"Bob Ayres of the 'Ajax. Well, you'd better get along as soon as possible. The police are after you. Drink this."

She gave him a glass of ale. Harry had never tasted ale in his life; but he drank it up eagerly.

He feebly thanked the landlady, and staggered out of the inn. The police after him! Now he could understand the sailor's eagerness to change clothes with him. He was evidently a runaway like himself.

The police patrol he had heard speaking the previous night were not speaking, as he had imagined, of him. They were speaking of the sailor. He recalled their words:

"He must have escaped somewhere down this road, and you may be sure he's gone Londonwards. . . . There won't be much chance of nabbing him to-night. It's like looking for a

needle in a haystack. There's not much chance of his getting away in daylight. His clothes will spoil him."

Yes; clearly it was the sailor the police were after—not him. Harry laughed bitterly to himself. How he had been hoodwinked and outwitted. "Fool! Fool!" he cried, in bitterness of spirit.

And then, as he remembered the youth's sinister countenance, he thought it just possible that he was not merely a runaway from his ship, but that he was guilty of a more heinous crime. Still he had avoided detection thus far, and it was just possible that he might escape it to the end.

He steered clear of the main road as far as possible. As the afternoon approached he turned down a solitary lane leading to a village called Merrow.

In a field on his left there was a broken-down, dilapidated shed. It occurred to Harry that if it were possible for him to hide himself and rest in this shed during daylight, he might be able to press on the rest of his journey with greater security through the night.

So he made his way into the shed. It was stored with fagots and broken hurdles. Closing the door behind him, Harry pulled down some of the bundles of fagots, and cleared a space in the corner of the shed.

Then he piled up the fagots before him until he was completely hidden. It was very possible that someone would visit the shed during the afternoon; but with the precautions Harry had taken, he was secure from detection.

The time passed slowly. One hour seemed the length of a day. The only diversion to break the weary monotony was that made by a mouse. It scampered up to him, and then scampered away again.

Harry began to feel very much as Alexander Selkirk felt on his desolate island—with this great difference, that he could not call himself "monarch of all he surveyed."

Added to this weary sense of monotony came the gnawing pangs of hunger. He had the hearty appetite of a boy. Yet he had not been able to satisfy it for hours; and it seemed highly probable that many more must elapse before he had any prospect of satisfying it.

The clock of the village church chimed the hour of five. Harry listened to it gladly. Another hour of weary bondage had passed. Three more remained. He could not safely venture forth until the hour of eight.

Ten minutes must have elapsed, when he caught the sound of a soft footstep on the grass outside.

It drew nearer the shed, and presently the door was opened. From between the bundles of fagots, Harry caught a glimpse of his visitor.

It was an elderly woman, with furrowed brow and wrinkled cheeks. She had a hard yet soft face—hard with the toil and moil of the fields; soft, with a tender memory garnered away somewhere in her woman's heart, and suffusing its light upward, until it took away the harshness of those rigid lines which labour and poverty had left there.

She lifted some of the fagots and took them away in her arms; then all was still again.

Harry was thankful for this brief break in the weary monotony of waiting. He speculated as to whom the woman was; where she lived; how she lived. One thing he knew—that she was a widow, for she wore a widow's cap.

At length the long-looked-for hour arrived. The distant clock chimed eight—eight o'clock!

He quickly hauled down the fagots, and emerged from his hiding-place. The twilight had deepened into night; but to Harry's great regret the moon was shining in a clear expanse of heaven, void of cloud.

For once he did not look with any sympathy at the moon. He felt so savage with it that he almost felt inclined to shake his fist at the man in it, who, adding insult to injury, seemed to be winking maliciously at him.

But that was not the worst difficulty Harry had to cope with. It was his hunger. If he could only have got a hard crust of bread, he would have been devoutly thankful.

Beyond the field was a thatched cottage. That evidently was where the woman lived who had taken away the fagots. Would it be possible for him to get something to eat?

He made his way to the cottage, which fronted on to the road. The shutters were not yet closed, and Harry peeped through the window.

There was no one at that moment in the room, but presently the woman he had seen in the shed entered it, and lit a paraffin-lamp. Harry was just in time to dodge away from the window as she came towards it and pulled down the blind.

Should he knock, or should he push on his weary journey, famished as he was?

He determined to take all risks, and boldly knocked. The woman came to the door and opened it.

"Pardon me for intruding," said Harry politely, "but I've wandered a bit out of my track. I've had no food for several

hours, and I haven't the money to get any. If you could give me just a crust of bread I should be thankful."

The woman eyed him sternly for a moment or two. Harry thought that she would close the door in his face. But evidently satisfied with the scrutiny, the stern lines relaxed, and she made him enter.

"I haven't money to give," she said, "nor much food; but what there is you're welcome to."

She threw a cloth across one end of the table, and, going to the larder, brought out some boiled ham (home-cured), a large piece of cheese, and a home-made loaf.

Never had the sight of food been so satisfying to Harry, and never had it tasted so sweet.

The woman asked him a few questions while he was eating, busying herself about the room, and occasionally stealing a glance at him to see how he was faring.

When he had nearly finished, she began to question him about his ship and his life at sea. Now, as Harry had had little acquaintance with the sea, and what little he knew of it had been gleaned from books, he made very lame answers to her questions.

While he was in the midst of one of these answers, he suddenly paused. His ears had caught the sound of horse's hoofs on the road outside.

The woman had noticed the sudden pallor of his face.

"Don't be alarmed—it's only the patrol!"

Only the patrol! Harry knew not by what instinct, but he divined that that was another of the patrol in search of the youth with whom he had exchanged clothes, and that he would inevitably call at that cottage.

If he was to escape, there was not a moment to lose. It would be useless attempting to escape by the front door, and he shrank from rushing off from the woman who had shown him so much kindness without in some way expressing his gratitude.

He determined, therefore, to throw himself on her mercy.

"That patrol is after me, ma'am!" he cried, rising from his seat. "He is after me for a crime I have never committed. I swear it, as there is a heaven above me. Hide me until he has gone, and you will earn my lifelong gratitude."

The woman did not answer. Her face hardened.

"You have a son, perhaps," pleaded Harry. "How would you like to know that he was being hunted down for a deed committed by another? What would you think of the mother who refused to shield him? Have pity, for mercy's sake."

At the mention of the word "son" the woman's face again softened. She scrutinised swiftly once more Harry's face.

At that moment there came a loud knock at the door.

"You swear you are guilty of no crime?" she asked.

"As Heaven is my witness!"

"Come!"

In a recess at the back of the room was a large, very old grandfather's clock, with a massive oak door.

This she opened.

"Hide in there!" she cried.

Harry stepped inside the case.

CHAPTER 23.

INSIDE THE COTTAGE—THE INCRIMINATING CAP—

"HE'S MY PRISONER, DEAD OR ALIVE!"

"Coming! Coming!" cried the woman, turning to the door the moment Harry was concealed. "Who is it making all that noise?"

She flung open the door as he spoke. There stood a patrol—one of the two Harry had seen on the previous night. He had dismounted from his horse, and hitched the reins to the palings.

"Sorry to disturb you, Mrs. Evans; but we've been in search of a boy sailor, who's a disgrace to his profession, and we can't get hold of him."

Harry's ears tingled with shame. A disgrace to his profession! He began to understand more and more Bob Ayres's anxiety to change garments with him, and began also to feel more and more uncomfortable in his borrowed plumes. Would the woman stand by him, or would she give him up?

"Oh!" said Mrs. Evans. "What's he been doing?"

"Ran away from his ship a week ago, with ten pounds in money belonging to the captain and a gold watch. A good part of this money he dissipated in a couple of nights, and then, after a drunken bout, had a fight with one of the blackguards he had made his companions."

Harry felt ready to sink with shame. Fortunately the narrow house in which he was pent would not permit him to indulge in any such weakness. Of a surety Mrs. Evans would give him up.

(To be continued in next Friday's UNION JACK.)

THE AZTEC MUMMY.

By W. SHAW RAE.

One forenoon, in the early spring of 1893, I, Charley Charter, purser of the steamship "Orion," was hurrying down the main street of Villa Rica, the capital of Aristola—one of the most restless little republics of Central America, always in a state of ebullition like a kettle of boiling pitch—when I was hailed by a shore-acquaintance, Tom Macpherson.

"Hallo, Charlie! Heard the latest?"

"No, Tom. What's up? Had another revolution? Has President Garceau—"

"The President is dead, Charley. Shocking affair. Assassinated on the floor of the House of Representatives. Stabbed to the heart in full view of all!"

"Good gracious! The murderer was arrested, I suppose?"

"No; in the confusion he escaped. But he is bound to be caught soon. He is a well-known man, Sangrano by name. All avenues of escape are being closely watched for him. He can never slip through."

"Ah, I suppose not; but it doesn't affect us, save that it will make our skipper more anxious than ever to be off. I must hasten aboard. Ta-ta, Tom."

"Time for a cock-tail, Charley?"

"Not this journey, Tommy. I prefer the wings at present rather than the tail of the bird. I'll have that 'gargle' with you next time we call round, provided you are spared till then by the revolutionists and by 'Yellow Jack.' Au revoir, old man!"

"Ah, Charter, glad you're back," was the skipper's salutation when I got on board. "Got our sailing papers?"

"Yes, sir, here they are; all clear and regular. Good job, too, as there is trouble ashore. President assassinated! Possible revolution!"

"Yes, Charlie. Just heard of it. We will sail as soon as possible, and get clear of all bother. By the way, a funny bit of freight has just been offered. A mummy, no less. See after it, will you. Should you arrange to take it, charge a good stiff rate for it, and ship it quietly. Neither sailors nor passengers like travelling with dead bodies. It's unlucky."

"All right, sir. I'll attend to it now."

The mummy, which lay in a barge alongside, was the property of a middle-aged man, who introduced himself to me as Professor Cantella Bigli. The name sounded Spanish, or Italian; but as the bearer was more like a Yankee in speech and deportment, the appellation was probably an assumed one.

"Fact is, sonny," remarked the professor confidentially, "it's a mummy, as I told the skipper—a most remarkable specimen! It is the preserved body of Huitziton, the man who founded the Aztec nation about the year 1160. When he died, his people embalmed and made a god of his corpse. I found the thing whilst poking around the ruins of Acoelco, amongst the islands of Lake Tezenco; boxed the old chap up, brought him down country, and here he is."

"For there's money in the old coon, you bet."

"I suppose you are aware of the great exhibition to be held this summer at Chicago? Biggest show on earth it is to be. Well, me and 'Old Hughie' (the mummy) are goin' there; and I reckon my show will be the biggest draw of the whole blessed exhibition. There is a gold-mine in that air corpse, sircs, and I mean to work it."

"Now, Mister Purser, I'm a-goin' in this ship, and 'Old Hughie' he goes with me. We sticks together, like them Siamese twins. He travels in my cabin—for, mind you, I don't intend to give my show away by any 'early views.' He travels under my own eye, and no other optic sees him—except perhaps your own, in a friendly way—till he is set on his stand in the exhibition."

"Another reason for his going in my cabin is that I can't afford to have the poor old chap knocked about in the hold. He's a bit frail, you may reckon, being over seven hundred years old, and mummy dust don't count for much as a show. 'Twig the game, sonny?"

I did not much like the job; but return freights were hard to find, and passengers scarce likewise. So, bearing in mind the captain's hint, I agreed to carry the professor and his "luggage"—the one at first saloon fare, the other at double that rate. Professor Bigli made no trouble over money matters, but settled with me in cash on the spot, so I considered I had made a good deal. As for the superstitious side of the question, since "Old Hughie" had been dead for seven hundred years, his spirit was not likely to trouble any mortal.

The mummy was in a stout wooden case, oblong in shape, but not particularly suggestive of a coffin. It was, however, nearly seven feet long, and there would have been some difficulty in getting it into a "tween-deck" cabin; but fortunately the "Orion" possessed two state-rooms on the promenade deck, both vacant at the time. One of these I occupied myself, for

the sake of comfort and coolness; the other I assigned to the professor, with his impedimenta.

With the utmost care the mummy-case was slung on deck, the professor fussing about, as nervous as an old dowager over her jewel-case, insisting constantly upon keeping it "right end up-wards"; then it was slid into the state-room, and set on end in the further corner, its top almost touching the ceiling. It was next firmly secured to the walls by sundry clamps and hooks fixed in the sides of the case, as convenient as though they had been specially prepared for the purpose.

There was another biggish square case, containing, the professor averred, various curiosities and accessories for the mummy; but beyond a few rugs and wraps, the passenger appeared to have no personal luggage whatever; but learned men are often above all thought for personal comfort.

The "Orion" sailed that afternoon; but just before leaving anchor we received another passenger, a Mr. Grieve, who booked for New York.

We carried but few saloon passengers that trip; and, after getting my books and papers straight, I had lots of leisure.

I found the professor a very companionable fellow, a most amusing card; and we rather "cottoned" to one another.

He was intensely jealous of his mummy, however, spending much time in his state-room. When he went to meals he frequently locked the door, and carried the key with him; and if he came on deck for a whiff and a chat, he invariably planted his chair right across the door, completely blocking the way. He even cleaned out his cabin himself, the steward being strictly forbidden to enter it.

As we grew "chummy," however, Professor Bigli made an exception in my favour, and often invited me into his sanctum sanctorum. He even afforded me an "early view," giving me a first peep at the resurrected Emperor Huitziton.

Only the embalmed head was visible; long white drapery concealing the body.

The face showed no sign of decay. It was that of a man of Indian race. In the process of embalming the skin had been stretched smooth as parchment; in colour it was a dull, slaty blue, with here and there little sparkling mica-like points. The features, grim and set, were perfectly expressionless—all save the eyes. These glared with a horrible, stony stare, sometimes seeming to reflect the light. Nay, more than once I fancied I saw them move. They looked so life-like in that death's-head setting, their effect was thrilling.

Professor Bigli fairly chortled at my shrinking shudder; then he explained that these optics were a little device of his own. They were merely two pieces of lapis-lazuli, which Bigli had found on the banks of the river Gila. He had cut, polished, and fashioned them into pupils, and fitted them into the dead sockets.

Few of the other passengers knew anything about the professor or his ghastly "luggage"; but one of them somehow learned something.

Mr. Grieve, our last-joined one at Villa Rica, betrayed considerable curiosity on the subject, and tried to pump me; but, of course, I was on my guard. I was not going to "give the show away," and simply referred the inquirer to Bigli himself.

So the days slipped by. We had a good run north, and duly made our number at Sandy Hook.

It was about 10 p.m. when we made the signal, and, desiring to carry the welcome news to such passengers as were yet astir, I turned first to the state-room of the professor.

The darkened deck was utterly deserted, but a gleam of light shone across it from the door of Bigli's cabin, slightly ajar.

And, hark! A voice sounded within, not that of the professor, but one more harsh, more menacing in its tones.

Throwing wide the door, I sprang across the threshold—leaped, then halted in amaze.

In the corner on the door side crouched Professor Bigli, cowering under the revolver-barrel of Mr. Grieve.

Neither appeared to notice my entrance.

"Own up, Sam Sloper!" cried Grieve; "you have played your game, and lost. Surrender, or I will bury half an ounce of lead in your brain!"

Then, with the tail of my eye, I caught a flicker in the further corner, and glanced hurriedly, fearfully, at the mummy-case. The door was thrown open, and out glided the corpse—the man who had been with the dead for seven centuries.

His face was calm and impassive still, but his awful eyes rolled with maniac fury, scintillating and flashing like those of a wounded snake.

From throat downwards he was clad in a long, loose shroud; its folds stirred at the shoulder, an arm was slowly upraised, its vengeful hand clutching a blue-veined dagger.

Across the floor glided the fearsome thing, straight towards the menacing Mr. Grieve, whose back was turned towards it. Its arm was further raised, then poised, stiffening for the blow. Another second, and that venomous blade would be plunged in the broad back of the unconscious man.

Then something within me suddenly gave way, and I gave

went to an awful shriek, as weird and blood-curdling as though emitted from the seven-century corpse itself.

Instantly Grieve turned, wheeled sharply as he saw his danger, and, abandoning the cowering professor for the moment, pointed his revolver full at the head of the mummy.

"Drop that knife, Sangrano!" hissed Grieve—"drop it! or I fire at the word 'three.'"

"One!" "Two!"

With a jingling clatter the dagger fell on the floor.

"That's better," continued Grieve, still menacing him; "now let's have a closer look at you." And, swift as a sword-lunge, he flashed out his left hand, and snatched away a close-fitting mask from the mummy-face, disclosing quite other features—a dark, low-browed, saturnine countenance, in which baffled hate struggled with dismay.

"Yes, Luiz Sangrano," continued Grieve, "murderer of President Garceau, now you show your true figurehead! Sit down there—sit down, you dog!" Then, without turning, still covering his captive with his revolver, he added: "Now, Showman Sloper—Professor, if you like—come and take your stand by the side of your companion—your employer, rather—I want you both before me."

Quite meekly the man addressed came from his corner, and took his stand at the place indicated.

"Now we are a complete little party," Grieve remarked, "and a most interesting one. I suppose I need scarcely introduce myself as George Grieve, of the Secret Service Department of the Republic of Aristola; nor need I more than name my errand? Luiz Sangrano, I hold a warrant for your arrest for the murder of President Garceau."

"How—how did you find us out?" stammered the "professor."

"Why, Sam," returned the detective cosely, "you gave the show away yourself. You were too clever by half, Sloper."

"Why did you assume that tell-tale name—Professor Cantella Bigli—Can tell a big lie? That was correct, but indiscreet. I should rather think you could. Ho, ho! It fits your character to a nicety. I spotted you by it at once, Showman Sammy."

"Engaged by our Government to arrest Sangrano, I tracked the assassin to your quarters, then lost the trail. You were gone, nobody knew where; but when I saw the final passenger-list sent ashore by the purser of the 'Orion,' and marked that remarkably well-fitting name, also learned further that the pseudo-professor carried a mummy with him, then I tumbled to the whole game, and here I am."

"Well, Grieve, you can't touch me. I had no hand in the assassination, as you very well know," remarked my late friend the professor. "I only exported a mummy; there's no crime in that. Further, like our young friend the purser here, I took payment for the freight beforehand; you can't touch that either."

Here Sangrano, who had been musing the while, burst in.

"And you can't touch me either, Grieve. I am on board a British ship, under the British flag. Your Aristolian warrant does not run here."

"Good, but not good enough," returned the detective equably. "You are no British subject, Sangrano. You have no standing here. Why, on the ship's manifest you are not a man at all, but a mummy—a mere piece of freight."

"I will appeal to the United States Government on landing!" cried the quick-witted criminal.

"You will find that earth stopped also," returned the detective affably. "The Aristolian Government has telegraphed full details to its Agent-General at Washington. You will find all prepared for you when we land at New York, probably an extradition warrant for your return."

During the discussion I had taken an opportunity to inspect the square box, the professor's only luggage besides the mummy-case.

My word, that part of the joke was as good as the rest. For once Professor "Can tell a big lie" had told the truth. He had averred that the box contained "curiosities and accessories for the mummy."

Well, it actually held tinned provisions, potted meats, and various delicacies; rations for Sangrano on the voyage. "Accessories for the mummy," forsooth. That was distinctly good.

But our captain, whom I had summoned from the bridge, had a word to say about the disposal of the strange trio.

"It's rather a tangled yarn all through," quoth the skipper; "but I don't see how it affects me, or my vessel. Through my purser, I shipped you two as passengers, this—ah—gentleman as freight. With delivery at New York our contract ends."

"I shall signal for the police, and, on arrival, will hand you all over to the American authorities; you can then settle matters amongst yourselves."

Which he did. And when the curiously-assorted trio were marched off, under strong escort, he remarked to me:

"Next time you ship a mummy, Charlie, stick a pin in its legs and watch whether it winks!"

The Editor's Chat with his Readers.



"Blenheim Cottage,
"Maidenhead Road,
"Stratford-on-Avon."

"Dear Mr. Editor,—I had one of your books, the UNION JACK, lent to me by a friend, and I have had them since, and can find no better book for the price. I think everybody could afford one of these books; and I am sure if they once read them they would always want them. I shall do my best to advertise your book in future.—I am, yours, &c.,

"A. J. J. INNES."

That shows that some, at least, of my readers have done what I asked them to do, and given their UNION JACK to a chum when they have read it themselves. I hope you are one of them. If every reader of mine were to give his copy of the UNION JACK to a different person every week, and that cannot be difficult, what a lot of good it would do the paper! If you enjoy the story in this number, repay me by, instead of throwing it away, giving it to your best friend.

It is really quite extraordinary how many lads seem to be marked with unsightly tattooing. Every week at least one writes to me asking how such marks can be removed. I have already given an answer to this question—goodness knows how many times—but here it is again. Cut it out and keep it, all of you.

"To remove tattooings, first of all get a bunch of from eight to ten fine cambric needles, and bind them tightly together with silk thread. Then well wash the tattoo-marks with soap and warm water, dip the points of the needles into a solution of glycerole of papoid, and prick this into the skin over the marks, in the same manner as you would when pricking in Indian ink. Let this dry in, and the marks will be found to be removed. The glycerole of papoid can be obtained from Messrs. Hearon, Squire, and Francis, Southwark Street, London, S.E."

A reader asks me to tell him the meaning of the various badges sewn upon the sleeves of sailors' tunics. I am not able to this week, but in next Friday's number he will find sketches of them, and also what they signify.

I do not think you can do better than use dumb-bells, Harold Tate, or perhaps a "Whiteley's Exerciser." The former can be obtained at most ironmongers' for three-halfpence per pound, the latter from any athletic outfitter.

Does any reader want back numbers of any of our papers? If so, he should write to Mr. H. Flowers, Station Street, Stoney Stanton Road, Foleshill, Coventry, who has a quantity for sale. Mr. Flowers is unfortunately an invalid, so the money will benefit him very much.

The following letter has just reached me from Cape Colony:

"Harbour Board, Port Elizabeth,
"Cape Colony."

"Dear Skipper,—Just a few words to let you know how we like your little journal. It is quite a godsend to me, although we get it three weeks late. I send a set of pictures. I hope I am not too late for a prize.—Yours,

F. W. WRIGHT."

Unfortunately my reader is too late, but I have sent him a pencil-case as a consolation prize.

*Yours sincere friend,
The Skipper*

"THE PHANTOM RIDER."

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

See next Friday's

"UNION JACK." 1d.
2

CHEQUES FOR CLEVER WORKERS

Thousands of Pounds to be paid away to the Public by Cheques on our Bankers.

To Purchasers of Forks solving the following:

1. YREVE DUOLC SAH A REVLIS GNINIL.
2. A HCTITS NI EMIT SEVAS ENIN.
3. A GNILLOR ENOTS SREHTAG ON SSOM.

A Cheque will be sent to every purchaser of our wonderful Nickel Silver Forks who solves **ONE PROVERB**, besides an offer whereby a £2 Silver Watch can be obtained **FOR NOTHING**.

A larger Cheque to every purchaser who solves **TWO PROVERBS**, besides an offer, &c.
For **THREE PROVERBS** a still larger Cheque, &c.

DIRECTIONS.—Re-arrange to represent well-known Proverbs as many of the above lines as you can, and enclose with it 4/6 for one half-dozen Forks, or 8/6 for a dozen. The Forks are full-size Table Forks, and we guarantee fully equal in wear and appearance to solid Sterling Silver Hall-marked, as they are actually manufactured from Solid English Nickel Silver. Also enclose a stamped, directed envelope for us to post you your cheque if correct.

If it takes £5,000 to pay the Prizes we will pay it cheerfully. All depends on the number of successful contestants, and the number of cheques and the amounts of each which we must send, according to our promise in this advertisement. There is no chance, no lottery. Each successful contestant will receive a sure and certain CASH PRIZE by cheque, as well as the Free Silver Watch offer mentioned above.

This offer is good for 30 days from the date of this paper. The cheques for the Prizes will be forwarded immediately, with the Forks ordered, in due turn as received.

The Result of our last Money Prize Distribution was as follows:

A Cheque for £20 was posted to J. A. Turner, Esq. (son of the Premier of British Columbia), 46, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C. A Cheque for £20 was posted to Charles Bailey, Imperial Hotel, Bournemouth; and eighteen other cheques from £10 to £1 each.—Address:

WATCHMAKERS' ALLIANCE, LTD.,
184, OXFORD STREET, LONDON.

Incorporated according to Act of Parliament. Capital £90,000; Reserve Fund, £7,500.



1,000 GOLD
WATCHES
FREE!

To introduce our now celebrated Soap to 1,000 more readers of this paper, we have decided to give away 1,000 GOLD WATCHES ABSOLUTELY FREE OF COST. These Watches are REAL GOLD HALL-MARKED, and at retail would cost upwards of FIVE GUINEAS. If

you want one write to us without delay. With your letter send us 1s. Postal Order, for which we will send you a tablet of Dr. Garland's Facial Soap and our Offer, on complying with which the Watch will be sent free by registered post. We have overwhelming testimony that our Facial Soap is the best ever offered to the British Public, and our idea for giving away the Watches is that you may talk about us

among your friends, and recommend our Soap wherever possible. "The Gold Watch arrived quite safe this morning. I am very pleased with it. Many thanks to you for sending it."—Miss H. Hunt, Potbridge, Odham, Hants.

MAY, GARLAND & CO. (Dept. 70),
Cheltenham House, 15, Mortimer Street, London, W.

PHENOMENAL SUCCESS.

To any person who cuts out this advertisement and sends it to us at once, we hereby guarantee to send, carriage paid, for 20s. only, the

ROYAL AMORETTE

equal in every respect to the four-guinea organs advertised elsewhere. The **ROYAL AMORETTE** is in an handsome black and gold case, has 16 indestructible steel reeds, and will play not dozens, but hundreds of tunes. We sent one to the Editor of "Fashion Novelties" for his inspection, and he replied: "Herewith please send 20s. for the **ROYAL AMORETTE** you sent on approval. I shall purchase several for Christmas presents, and cannot understand how they can be made at the price. It is the best home musical instrument I have ever seen."

The Royal Amorette, including 6 (six) metal tunes and packed in a strong wooden box will be sent only to the readers of the **UNION JACK**, who, in addition to forwarding 20s., cut out this advertisement. Remit by Postal Order to

THE SAXON TRADING COMPANY,
84, Oxford Street, London, W.

A WATCH FOR NOTHING

We are going to give away 1,000 Silver Watches to advertise our Catalogue and our Jewellery. This is no catch, but perfectly genuine. Read our conditions, and then go in and win.

C * * B * * Y * S * C * C * *
T * * * L * S * V * C * * O *
R * * N * * E * S * C * C * *

The words, when filled in, represent the names of three largely advertised articles of food.

DIRECTIONS.

Fill in the missing letters to the above words, and send the answer to us. If correct, we undertake to send you a Solid Silver Watch, a good timekeeper, usually sold by us at £2 2s. Our conditions are that you send us a stamped addressed envelope for us to write and tell you if you are correct; and if you should win the Watch, you purchase one of our Real Silver Chains as per our offer, which we will send you. Write at once, as by delay you may lose the chance.

To convince you of our offer being genuine, we send herewith copies of a few Testimonials which we are daily receiving.

The originals can be seen at our desk on application.

"West End, Hoxton.

"October 15th, 1897.
"Gentlemen,—I received the Watch and Albert safely, and am exceedingly pleased with same. I have shown it to my friends, all of whom are astonished to find it such a genuine bargain. One of my friends wishes to know if he could obtain one in the same manner, or has the time expired? With sincere thanks, I remain, yours truly,
"10, Dean Street, Liskeard.
"November 14th, 1897.

"Dear Sir,—I received the Watch and Chain on Tuesday last, and I am very pleased with them. The Watch is keeping good time.—Yours truly, Miss R. Sweet.

"The Polly, 48, Thurston St., Hertford.

"November 1st, 1897.
"Dear Sir,—I received your Watch and Chain quite safe, and was very well pleased with them; and many thanks for your kindness for sending me one of your catalogues; and perhaps I will have the pleasure of giving you another order before long. I remain yours truly,—Mrs E. GATE.

"New Brancepeth, Durham.

"November 2nd, 1897.
"Dear Sir,—Just a line to say that I received the Watch and Chain which you sent me, and was highly pleased with them. I have shown the Catalogue to many of my friends.—Yours respectfully,
"MISS ADAMSON."

P. GRAHAM & CO.
Wholesale & Retail Jewellers,
277, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.