

FOR BRITAIN AND THE RIGHT! A STIRRING WAR STORY.

(SEE INSIDE.)

THE UNION JACK

PUBLISHED
EVERY FRIDAY.

A LONG, COMPLETE NOVEL.

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ONE AGAINST THIRTY!

A LONG STORY,
COMPLETE IN
THIS NUMBER.



Jim Desmond's ruse succeeded. The supposed dying captain played his part well; and at the right moment the blow of vengeance fell, and the remorseless pirate and murderer paid the long reckoning of his many crimes.

No. 294.

One Against Thirty!

A Story of Peril and Adventure Afloat and Ashore.

Specially told for "Union Jack" readers by CHARLES HAMILTON, Author of "Bold British Boys," "An Ocean Tragedy," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

A Dry in the Night—The Search on the Sea—A Man with a Woman's Hair—At the Last Moment.

"Hark! Did you hear that?" Eight bells had just struck on board the ship "Kangaroo," three days out from Melbourne. It was twelve o'clock, and a clear, starry night. To starboard the watch could see dimly the line of the Australian coast. To port the great Southern

caller for help. The keen-eyed lad scanned the sea in search of him. Fortunately the weather was calm, and the sea smooth, otherwise the quest would have been hopeless.

At a short distance from the ship Captain Desmond made the oarsmen a sign to cease rowing. The boat drifted. Then Desmond hailed the stranger.

"Aho, there! Where are you?"

"Help!"

Faintly came the reply, from right ahead of the boat. The oars played again; forward they went. Then the captain shouted again. No answer. Again and again. Still no response.

"Can't you see him, Jim?" cried the skipper, pale with anxiety. "Good heavens! is the poor fellow to drown within a few fathoms of our boat?"

"There's nothing here, sir," said his nephew doubtfully. "Ah—by George!"

He dropped the lantern and sprang into the sea. He had seen something that looked like floating seaweed, but the next moment he saw a pale, anguished face glimmering through it, and knew that it was human hair. Here, then, was the poor fellow who had at last given himself up for lost. Jim sprang instantly to save him.

The man was insensible, and Jim was glad of it, for it spared him the frantic struggles of a drowning man, always difficult to master. He took a firm grip upon the long, floating hair, and, with a jerk, brought up the pale face that was sinking beneath the surface.

"Help here, messmates!" cried Jim lustily. The boat glided by, and the strong hand of the skipper grasped his collar.

"Got him, my boy?"

"Yes, safe and sound; but he's pretty far gone!"

"In with him, lads! Pull for the ship!" The drowning man was pulled aboard, and Jim climbed in. The boat made for the "Kangaroo." Captain Desmond and Jim attended to the castaway; he was not dead, but evidently in a state of extreme exhaustion. As soon as he could be got on board the "Kangaroo," restoratives were applied, and at last he opened his eyes.

The boat had been slung up to the davits, and the whole crew collected round the castaway, at a respectful distance, and looked on with intense interest.

"How do you feel now, my poor fellow?" asked the skipper, as the rescued man stared about him with lack-lustre eyes.

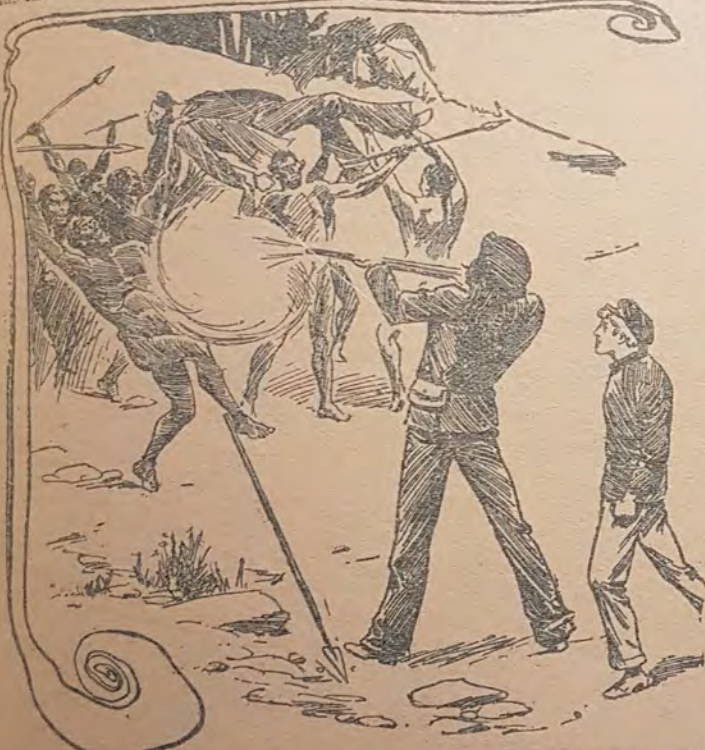
"Where—where am I?"

"Safe on board a British ship."

The man gave a wild stare around, and a look of terror swept over his face. He made a feeble effort to see.

"Lie still," said Captain Desmond. "I tell you, you are safe now; no one can harm you here."

The terror died away from the man's eyes. He appeared to be striving to collect himself and recover his faculties. He was of a somewhat peculiar appearance, this castaway. He was of powerful build, evidently possessing immense strength when in a normal state of health. His form, though so sturdy, was lithe and active, and his feet and hands small. His dusky face and cast of features showed him to be of Southern race, probably a native of Spain. He was dressed in ordinary seaman's clothes, but wore gold earrings and a massive ring upon his finger. What was strangest was that he wore his hair long, like a woman's. A mass of curling hair of deepest black hung half-way to his waist. He might have been called handsome, but there was a certain air of reckless bravado about his bold features that did not favourably impress Captain Desmond.



Jim Desmond, when he faced round, saw a sight that chilled the blood in his veins. The savages were in hot pursuit, and borne above their heads as a trophy on the points of twenty spears was the dead body of Malcolm. . . . The fatal fire of the Californian made the natives halt.

Ocean stretched away to the South Pole. And suddenly, from the semi-darkness around the ship, a piercing cry was flung from the bosom of the heaving waters.

"Did you hear that?" cried the officer of the watch, who happened to be the chief mate of the "Kangaroo," Mr. Malcolm.

"It's a man drowning, sir!" exclaimed the second mate, who was just coming on deck to relieve him.

"You're right, Kingston. Call the captain."

While the second mate did so, the "Kangaroo" rounded to; and when Captain Desmond appeared all was ready for a boat to be lowered. The skipper at once gave the order.

"Lower away!" shouted the captain. And the port quarter-boat plumped into the water, the captain himself taking command of it.

In the bow of the boat Jim Desmond, the captain's nephew, stood, waving a lantern to catch the eye of the unknown

HAVE YOU JOINED THE "UNION JACK" ARMY? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

"Not many, I'm afraid," the skipper answered carelessly. "You've seen the Lee-Metford in my cabin, and I have a six-shooter in my locker. There is a fowling-piece hanging up in Mr. Malcolm's cabin, also."

"And are there no other firearms at all on board?"

"He has a particular reason for wishing to know that," Jim answered to himself. "What can his motive be?"

"No others," Captain Desmond answered. "On a voyage like ours arms are not needed, and I never anticipated shooting any."

"Still, with those you mention, much execution may be done amongst the wildfowl," Parma said lightly.

No more was said upon the subject then. But Jim, following his policy of keeping an eye upon the third mate, more than once saw him smile in sinister fashion, as if some dark purpose he had planned were now fairly on its way towards accomplishment.

The hurricane was violent; but the "Kangaroo" was protected from everything but the rain, which did her no harm.

It was not until noon of the following day that the sky cleared, and sunshine once more warmed the chilled crew of the "Kangaroo." The southern sun speedily wiped out the traces of the storm; the afternoon was dry and fine. Captain Desmond consented to let the first and third mates go upon a hunting excursion, intending to weigh anchor the following morning.

Just before the hunters set out, Jim asked to be allowed to accompany them, partly from a wish to run ashore, but mainly from his resolves to keep the Californian under surveillance. Parma assented, of course, being unable to refuse; but he did not like it.

They set out, Jim carrying the bag which was to hold their game, when shot. Parma soon proved that he knew the country well. In half an hour they were traversing the shadowy, sweet-scented woods. Around them innumerable birds made the air ring with melody.

"A pleasant change, after the ship," Juan Parma observed. "But I don't see any game," replied Mr. Malcolm.

"We shall see some soon enough, señor. Ah, look!" The Californian raised his rifle, and fired. A little animal, like a pig, but smaller, rolled almost at his feet, with a shrill squeal.

"You are a good shot, Parma," Mr. Malcolm said, observing that Juan's bullet had gone fairly into the skull of the luckless animal.

"I've practised. Now, try your fowling-piece, señor, and see what success you will have."

Malcolm was about to do so, when a fearful yell rang in the ears of the trio, and in a moment the wood seemed fairly alive with dusky demons. Juan Parma's shot had brought a hornet's-nest about their ears. On every side gleamed the spears and rolling eyes of a horde of savages.

CHAPTER 3.

The Fatal Fight—Parma's Pluck—Jim's Suspensions are Strengthened—A Crisis.

"Back to the beach!" shouted the Californian. And, catching Jim by the arm, he made a desperate rush. He had slung the rifle over his shoulders, and grasped the six-shooter in his hand. The crack-crack of the rapid, ringing shots, the fatal effect of the bullets, made the startled savages open a path for Parma, who went flying madly towards the beach, dragging Jim after him at a breakneck speed.

Our hero was naturally, for the first minute or two, startled out of his self-possession, and engrossed by his own deadly peril. But when the ring of savages broke, and he went leaping seaward with Parma, he thought of Mr. Malcolm.

"Stop!" he gasped. "Parma, stop! Mr. Malcolm will be murdered!"

"He must look out for himself."

Jim resolutely jerked his arm out of the Californian's grasp. It went against the British grain to desert a comrade in distress. Jim had no weapon but a clasp-knife; he opened it, and faced round.

Jim Desmond, when he faced round, saw a sight that chilled the blood in his veins. The savages were in hot pursuit, and, borne above their heads as a trophy, on the points of twenty spears, was the dead body of Malcolm, whose blood dripped down upon the faces of his slayers. As the boy stood paralysed, Juan Parma gripped his arm again, and, side by side, they raced to the beach, hotly pursued by the blacks, brandishing their blood-stained spears, and uttering discordant yells.

The men of the "Kangaroo" saw them coming. The gig flew shoreward to receive them. Faster, faster, they ran. But the blacks, unrecommenced with clothing, ran faster. Behind the fugitives gleamed threatening spears.

"Run on, Jim!" cried Parma. "I will stop these imps!"

Jim obeyed, and in a minute or two reached the boat. Every eye, on both the boat and the ship, was now fixed upon the Californian. Juan Parma showed himself to be a man of

splendid courage and iron nerve. Like a statue he stood, facing the onrushing savages, his rifle at a level, firing with the calm precision of an automaton.

"What nerve!" Captain Desmond exclaimed, in admiration. "And what marvellous skill!" ejaculated Kingston.

The fatal fire of the Californian made the natives halt, in spite of their frantic fury. In ten seconds eight of them had dropped, mortally wounded. He seemed to them more like an angel of destruction than a common mortal.

They stopped, wavered, fled.

Then from every man on the vessel burst a ringing shout; a deafening cheer showed the British appreciation of Parma's dauntless pluck. As he heard it the Californian smiled—a strange, inscrutable smile. He was, perhaps, laughing in his sleeve at the Englishmen who honoured him.

When the boat pulled off, the savages plucked up courage to make a rush, intending to hurl their spears at the seamen. Again the deadly rifle was brought into requisition, and dead bodies dotted the rocks. Only one spear fell into the boat, and that Jim took on board the "Kangaroo" as a trophy or memento of the conflict.

When Juan Parma stepped on the "Kangaroo's" deck Captain Desmond gave him a hearty grip of the hand. Parma was a hero to the crew. But he put on an expression of remorseful regret.

"Mr. Malcolm has been killed, sir!" he said, with an air of contrition that made the open-hearted Irish skipper feel deeply for him.

"It is a terrible misfortune; but you have nothing to reproach yourself with, Parma."

"It was I who led him to his death. I ought to have known better than to trust to the peaceful appearance of the country. But then, I have never seen natives in the vicinity of this cove before."

"No more, Parma. I say you are not to blame; or, if you had been, your splendid pluck would atone for it. You saved my nephew's life, that is certain. And I am grateful to you for that."

The Californian brightened up, apparently much comforted by the captain's kind words. Jim, in the first flush of gratitude—for there could not be the slightest doubt that Parma had saved him from a horrible death—thanked his preserver with heartfelt words. That part of the affair the Californian passed off lightly, saying that one good turn deserved another.

But afterwards, calmly reflecting over the affair, Jim's haunting suspicions returned. Why had not Parma used the rifle at the first onset of the savages, when Mr. Malcolm's life might have been saved by it? Why? There were many questions which puzzled the young sailor. He tried to dismiss the whole matter from his mind, without much success.

During the ensuing night a careful watch was kept, in case the savages should attempt an attack, but nothing of the kind occurred. Probably they had no canoes at hand, or perhaps the Californian's fatal rifle-fire had cowed them. At the earliest gleam of daylight the "Kangaroo" weighed anchor and stood out to sea.

Naturally, the loss of Mr. Malcolm necessitated a change in the rank of the other officers. Kingston became a chief mate, and Parma second. The "Kangaroo" was again without a third mate.

Jim's distrust of the Californian was strengthened by something which occurred a week after the burial of Mr. Malcolm.

Jim and Parma occupied the same cabin, fitted with two bunks. Jim did not belong to any regular watch; his position on board the "Kangaroo" was like that of an apprentice or midshipman. He messed with the officers, but worked with the sailors when there was occasion, and learned his profession from his uncle and the boatswain, Johnson. His duty, like the boatswain's, began at dawn and ended at night.

The Californian came down, after keeping the middle watch, which ends at four o'clock in the morning. Jim was in his bunk; but it chanced that a touch of toothache had kept him awake. He was usually a sound sleeper, and it never struck Parma that his cabin-mate might be wakeful for once. Jim idly cast his eyes towards Juan, and, to his surprise, saw him draw a long poniard from his bosom, and run his nail along the edge to test its keenness.

"Santa Maria, sharp enough! And the Lee-Metford and the revolver to back it up! Juan, you are playing a desperate game, but you must win. If you don't, you'll do some dancing on nothing before you're much older!"

Jim heard the words, muttered half-aloud. Closing his eyes, he affected sleep, in case Parma should glance in his direction. He remembered the poniard; Juan had worn it the night he was picked up by the "Kangaroo" off the Australian coast. To what use could he intend to put it?

The Californian replaced the weapon, smiling darkly, and soon after got into bed. Jim heard him mutter one word, an expressive one: "Foola!"

Our hero slept little that night. He was certain that Parma

meditated some act of treachery towards the men of the "Kangaroo." But what act? What could be his motive, or his object? The boy could not guess. But upon one thing he was resolved now. He would make his suspicions known. Not to the captain, for Desmond would question Parma, who would thus be put upon his guard, and who would easily satisfy the honest Irish skipper. The boatswain should be his confidant.

Bill Johnson was a "youngish" man, sharp and intelligent, and only an unfortunate lack of education prevented him from rising higher in his profession. As a boatswain he was incomparable, and Captain Desmond knew himself to be fortunate in possessing such a one. He was a sturdy, hearty Liverpool man, and attached to our hero, who was a "likeable" lad in every way. Jim relied upon his good judgment; and, besides, it happened that Bill Johnson had never quite taken to all Californians. He had a somewhat prejudiced dislike of all "Dagoes," under which title he included nearly all the southern Spanish descent—came under this category.

Jim always turned out at dawn; and at the first streak, on this particular morning, he was on deck. He found Johnson setting some hands to work scraping out the longboat. As soon as the boat was free to go to his breakfast, Jim joined him, and said, in a low voice, that he had something important to communicate privately. Johnson, notwithstanding his natural surprise at the lad's air of secrecy, gave him immediate attention.

Then young Desmond poured out the whole story—his long suspicions of the Californian, the incident of last night, and his fear that Juan Parma did not mean honestly by his shipmates. Johnson listened in attentive silence, without interrupting him once, but a thoughtful frown came over his brow.

"Do you consider that I ought to make any mention of it to my uncle, sir?"

"I am pretty sure that he'll only laugh at you if you do, Jim. Better keep your head shut for a while, and see how the wind blows."

Jim Desmond took the boat's advice, and kept his secret, but the vigilance towards the Californian grew keener than ever. Parma sometimes looked sharply at Jim, and it seemed to the boy that he knew himself to be under suspicion. He betrayed no uneasiness, however. There was about this

strange man, as was afterwards seen, an almost superhuman daring and coolness, a total insensibility to any kind of fear. Nothing ever shook his nerve, or cowed his intrepid spirit. Jim, while he distrusted, could not help admiring him.

A few days after Jim's confidential talk with the boatswain the crisis came. At last the Californian threw off the mask, and showed that a fiend lay hid behind the smooth, smiling, handsome face.

A sudden squall, which took Captain Desmond, splendid seaman as he was, unawares, swooped down upon the "Kangaroo." Inky blackness covered sea and sky, relieved only by the white gleam of the wildly-tearing wave-crown. The foretopsail was blown to ribbons, the force of the wind tearing the ship bowsprit under. The foretop-gallant sail held; but if it was not cut away immediately the crew knew that the wind would carry it off, and the mast with it. As for furling it, that was impossible.

The captain shouted orders. Up the weather shrouds like monkeys went the "hands," led by Kingston and Juan Parma. Jim Desmond joined them, and they were working frantically at the ropes which held the sail. A few cuts the wind did the rest. With a loud cracking and snapping the sail flew off, borne high in the darkness like a huge white bird by the furious blast. Relieved of the strain—for only the foremast sails had been set when the squall burst—the "Kangaroo" ceased to pitch and quiver. The sea descended, exposed to frightful peril upon the storm-swept rigging.

Jim Desmond reached the foretop and crouched there, holding tight, waiting for the wind to lull before finishing his descent. After he had been there a few minutes, he became conscious that two human forms were struggling upon the shrouds close to him. The wind blew from them towards Jim, and enabled him to distinctly hear their panting breath and their ejaculations.

"Juan Parma, you cursed villain, release me!" It was the voice of second-mate Kingston, now chief mate, and it was gasping and exhausted.

"I am sorry, senior; but it is imperatively necessary that you should follow Malcolm," replied the silky tones of the Californian drawlingly.

The next moment a body went shooting downward, and the horrified Jim saw it whirling over and over in the fierce blast.

NEW COMPETITION.

FOR READERS
OF THE
"UNION JACK"

FIRST PRIZE.

50

Consolation Prizes of Footballs,
Watches, Penknives, &c.

£5

FIRST PRIZE.

50

Consolation Prizes of Footballs,
Watches, Penknives, &c.

If no one is absolutely correct, the £5 prize will be offered again in a new competition; but in that event a **Special Cash Prize of 10s.** will be given to the competitor who sends in the most correct words.

These Puzzle-Words are simple English words with the letters jumbled up. Can you put them straight again? Write your solutions on the dotted lines underneath the words.

THIRD SET OF WORDS.

No. 13: E F M O R R

(13)

No. 14: A D N W

(14)

No. 15: I K E T C N E

(15)

No. 16: E B W O L

(16)

No. 17: I R L G N U

(17)

No. 18: A E I G N N R

(18)

One more set of words (the last) will appear in next Friday's UNION JACK.

Don't send in your solutions till we tell you.

and caught the gleam of the splashing spray as it slid into the ocean. And a flash of lightning showed him the white face of the Californian, a cruel, cynical smile wreathing the clear-cut lips.

"Murderer!" shrieked Jim, beside himself. The Californian, by the same flash, saw Jim. He had deemed himself and Kingston alone in the foretop shrouds, and the shock of seeing himself discovered red-handed made him give a violent start. But his good sense made him aware that the boy must be silenced. In an instant he was beside Jim, gripping his throat with throttling fingers.

CHAPTER 4.

Tried Up—After the Squall—A Tableau—One Against Thirty!

"Keep still, senorito!" hissed Parma, relaxing his grasp upon Jim's throat as he saw that the boy was choking—"keep quiet!"

"You assassin! You vile scoundrel!" gasped Jim, as soon as he got his breath. "You infernal, cowardly villain! What a madman I was to save you from drowning!"

"Not at all," replied the Californian, his lips close to the boy's ear, to make his voice heard in the roar of the storm—"not at all, senorito, for it is but the remembrance of that which restrains me from flinging you into the sea. As for the epithets you apply to me, hard words don't break bones. It is my trade to be a villain, just as it is yours to be honest, and I flatter myself that at my trade I am unequalled. Before I am finished, I shall have deluged this ship with blood probably, but I shall not shed one drop needlessly. I have a plan which I must carry out, and to carry it out I am prepared to wade through slaughter. Think of my actions what you will, but do me the justice to believe that nothing will turn me from my purpose. Your life I am inclined to spare, even at some risk to myself. But you must be careful not to provoke me too far!"

"What do you intend to do, you fiend?" gasped Jim. Juan Parma did not trouble to reply. Drawing a stout cord from his pocket, he bound Jim securely to the ratlines of the weather shrouds, so that he could not move a limb, but taking care not to pinch or hurt him in any way that could be helped. In accomplishing this task, in the teeth of a thundering gale, Parma showed wonderful activity and nerve. When finished, he gagged him with his own handkerchief. It was true that at present Jim's loudest shout could not reach the deck, but the gale might abate, and Juan Parma was not a man to run the slightest risk if he could avoid it.

"You shall be released as soon as possible," he said, ere he descended.

The consideration of this mysterious scoundrel was his strangest trait. He would not have hurt a fly wantonly. But no villainy was too black for him when he could serve a purpose by it.

With an almost monkey-like nimbleness, Parma cleared the rigging and reached the deck, and returned aft. At once the anxious skipper asked him if he had seen Mr. Kingston, for in the darkness no one had seen the murdered man drop into the sea. As for Jim, the skipper was not disquieted about him, for the impetuous lad had gone aloft against orders, and Desmond was under the impression that he was at this precise moment tucked up in his bunk below.

"Has not Senor Kingston come down?" exclaimed Parma, simulating surprise. "Surely he cannot have met with an accident aloft?"

"Hardly: he is a sure hand in the ropes. But I can't see what he should remain aloft for."

"Perhaps he's biding his time until there's a lull, sir," the boatswain suggested.

"That's it," agreed the Californian. "I myself had to crouch in the foretop for five minutes before I ventured upon the lower shrouds."

Captain Desmond was only half satisfied, but it was clearly impossible to investigate now, so he was forced to be content. The matter-of-fact manner of the Californian was well calculated to ward off suspicion. He stood near Desmond, with his long ringlets blowing out in the breeze, perfectly self-possessioned.

The squall was violent, but, after the cutting away of the foretop-gallantail, the "Kangaroo" was not in danger. There was ample sea room, and the ship was a splendid sailer, and well-handled. At midnight the wind and waves were thundering their maddest, but at six bells, in the middle watch, a lull was perceptible. The watches, of course, were not regularly changed during the squall, the whole crew remaining on deck until the danger was past. When the lull came, Captain Desmond sent some below, but himself remained on duty till the weather cleared, at about six in the morning.

His anxiety for Kingston had greatly increased, and he

could hardly doubt now that the mate had fallen overboard during the squall. As soon as dawn showed gray in the sky, he ordered several men aloft to search the rigging with a faint hope that Kingston might be found entangled in some part of it. As soon as Juan Parma heard the order given, he slipped below, and secured the magazine rifle, ammunition, and the revolver from the captain's cabin. The discovery of his villainy by Jim Desmond had hastened the climax, but he was perfectly prepared for a bold game.

Dawn brightened with the swiftest customary near the equator, and but a few minutes after the first streak of light the ocean was flooded with joyous sunshine. All traces of the tropical squall vanished, save for the uneasy swell of the sea. The "Kangaroo" had a somewhat worn and washed appearance, but she was taut and trim enough, and in the hot sun everything assumed a cheerful aspect.

Owing to the way Juan Parma had bound Jim, he could not be seen from the deck, so Captain Desmond did not know the cause of the cry of surprise the seamen gave when they found him. He had fainted, and the astonished tars made haste to cut him loose and lower him to the deck, where Captain Desmond, amazed at the sight of him, soon brought him to his senses. Jim started up, very weak and pale, crying incoherently: "The Californian!"

"What of him, lad?" asked the skipper. "He has murdered Kingston, and he tied me up so that I could not betray him until he was prepared!"

Captain Desmond stared at him speechlessly. "We found him tied up and gagged, sir," one of the seamen said.

"This must be looked into." And the skipper's brow contracted. "I can hardly credit such an accusation against Mr. Parma. Where is he?"

"He went below, sir," said Johnson. "Shall I call him?"

"No need to do so, seniors, I am here." The cool, half-drawling voice of the Californian spoke. He stepped on deck, walked to the mizzenmast, and leaned idly against it. He wore a belt, in which were his poniard and the captain's revolver, and in his right hand he carelessly balanced the magazine-rifle, with which he had done such fearful execution among the natives of the Westralian coast. He was icily tranquil, and actually held a cigarette in his lips, composedly smoking.

"You desire to hold a discussion with me, senor el capitano, do you not?" he asked nonchalantly.

"I desire to hear your answer to my nephew's charge!" Captain Desmond replied sternly.

The Californian flicked some ash from his cigarette before replying. His prominent weapons, his cynical smile, his air of reckless daring, made him look more than ever like a pirate, and so thought the men of the "Kangaroo" as they looked at him. The loud voices on deck had called up those who had gone below to rest, and the whole crew were now again on deck, even to the cook and the sailmaker. Captain Desmond, seeing the culprit armed to the teeth, thought that he intended to resist arrest. But, glancing round at his crew—thirty sturdy British Jack-tars—he smiled at the idea.

"Your answer, Parma!" he said sharply. "Speak!"

"I have nothing particular to say," answered Juan, yawning. "The senorito is correct when he says that I killed Kingston. I was sorry for the poor fellow; he was a fine sailor, and so young. But it was strictly necessary."

The consummate audacity of the Californian fairly stupefied both captain and crew. They stared at him as they would have stared at some supernatural monster.

"Do you confess to the murder, Juan Parma?"

He gave a nod.

"And your motive, scoundrel—what was your motive?"

"The same motive as that which made me compass the death of Mr. Malcolm."

"Inhuman wretch, do you dare to boast of your crimes?"

"Far from it. I hate bloodshed," the Californian declared, with an air of charming candour. "During a career of piracy I have spared at least a score of lives when, strictly speaking, it was necessary to take them to secure my safety. This was a weakness, I grant you. But who is without some weakness?"

The usually sardonic Irish skipper grew crimson with rage, and a violent oath escaped his lips.

"You bound! You confess to murder and piracy! By the skies above us, your punishment shall be suited to your crimes! You think I shall carry you to port for trial, and that in the interval you will contrive to escape! Nothing of the kind! May I never see Ireland again if I don't hang you from my own yardarm! Men, seize him!"

The tars, as enraged as the skipper by the confession of Juan Parma that he had pitilessly assassinated the mate, willingly rushed forward to lay their grasp upon him. Parma threw the rido to a level, and stood as firm as a rock.

"I shall fire, if you come nearer!" he said composedly.

It was plain that he was in deadly earnest. And the seamen,

had course, placidly forging ahead through the swelling waters, to the hot equatorial sunshine. The sky was now blue and bright, with fleecy clouds drifting across the azure expanse. All Nature was beautiful; but on board the calmly sailing vessel there was a different scene. No calm was among the men there. Hate, rage, grief, revenge—all passions were aroused; grief for murdered shipmates, hatred all the fiercer because it had to be endured. If the demoniacal Californian fell into the power of these men by any lucky chance, the seamen would not leave them to his limbs holding together! And he knew it, and knew two of his limbs holding together upon him. Yet he was cool that accident might turn the tables upon him. He was cool and collected. Pirate, assassin, double-dyed criminal as he was, he was a man of rare courage.

Jim tore open the coat and shirt of the skipper to find his wound. It was merely a superficial one; but a great deal of blood had been lost, causing poor Desmond to swoon. The pirate had spoken the truth; he had only "winged" the Irish skipper, to put him out of the conflict. Jim was a handy lad; he soon had the wound washed and bandaged. The bullet had passed out between two of Desmond's ribs, so there was no extracting to be done. Johnson, the boatswain, helped Jim to attend to his uncle; and, when all was done, Desmond was carried to his cabin, and placed in his bunk. Parma did not interfere; he was sincere in his desire that Captain Desmond should survive.

The sailors, in gloomy silence, went to the fore-castle to breakfast. Whatever happened, it was necessary to eat and drink. Meanwhile, Parma said, in his silkiest tone, to the helmsman:

"Will you have the kindness to steer west-south-west?"

The man obeyed. He would have disregarded Parma; but he could not disregard that terrible rifle. Parma called up some of the crew from their breakfast to man the braces. There was murmuring hesitation, but they came. For they knew that disobedience meant bullets whizzing into the fore-castle in their midst, and they had no protection. Their spirit was not broken, but it was for the time subdued.

The "Kangaroo's" bows were now headed direct for the distant South American coast, where the Californian was to find friends, and man this peaceful ship with a crew of cutthroats, for the purpose of plundering the traders of the La Plata and the Orinoco. Would he succeed? Doubtful, very doubtful, was his success, though, in his almost sublime self-confidence, he felt sure of it.

As the ship sped Argentine-wards; the new commander lounged by the rail, smoking; the dead men lay inert, horrible to look upon, about the deck. Aft, Captain Desmond lay, disabled, in his bed, tended by his devoted nephew. Forward, the crew were eating, from force of habit, and in whispers planning sweeping schemes of vengeance against their oppressor.

Captain Desmond, coming to his senses, found Jim by his side, resting on a chair, for his long exposure in the fore-castle overnight had left him pale and weak. For a minute or two Desmond could not recollect what had taken place. He attempted to rise; but sank back groaning, staring inquiringly at Jim.

"What has happened? Ah, I remember now! Jim, how did it end?"

"The Californian is master of the ship, uncle."

"Is it possible? He surely could not escape, with the whole crew against him?"

"Unluckily, he did. It's that infernal rifle! He has changed the course of the 'Kangaroo' for the coast of Patagonia."

"How many of my poor fellows have fallen, Jim?"

"Nine!" our hero reluctantly replied. He knew it was useless to attempt to conceal the facts from the captain, who would very soon discover the truth.

"Nine? Good heavens!" The captain groaned in bitterness of spirit. Confound the luck that saved him from the ocean. But I must be up and doing. The scoundrel must be circumvented somehow!

"Lie still, uncle! Your wound is not dangerous at present; but, if you move about, it will become so. You must take care of yourself, sir; you are our only hope."

Captain Desmond saw the reasonableness of this, and, being besides a practical man, he remained where he was.

"There is no instant need of action," Jim went on. "It'll be a long voyage to the Argentine coast, and many things may happen before we arrive there. We may take Parma off his guard, or we may fall in with a warship, and signal to her 'contin' on board'."

"An excellent programme!" interrupted the mocking voice of the Californian, who had come down the ladder with cat-like steps, and entered the cabin while Jim was speaking.

The boy started, and looked round with a somewhat scared expression, half expecting a bullet. Juan Parma laughed lightly.

"Don't be afraid, senorito," he said. "It is not my inten-

tion, at present, to harm you. But take care, little senor—take care! I have told you that I am not to be trifled with. You may plot and plan as much as you like; but don't attempt to put your plans into practice, if you value your life. I don't know," he went on reflectively, "whether I ought not to rid it isn't safe to trust!"

He looked, for a moment, inclined to add another murder to his already long list of crimes; but he thought better of it. Taking no further notice of Jim, he turned to Captain Desmond.

"Senor, it is my desire that you keep to your cabin for the future, and never come on deck without my express permission. I now intend to send the crew to your cabin, for you to tell them that they are to obey me as they have hitherto obeyed you. That will, perhaps, prevent the further effusion of blood."

"Very well; send them here," said the captain quietly. The Californian returned to the deck, and called for all hands. Sullenly the seamen obeyed, coming out of the fore-castle with dark faces.

"My lads, the former captain desires your presence in the cabin."

In a minute or two the men, led by Johnson, filed into the captain's cabin. Parma remained on deck, near the cabin skylight, so that he could hear what was said in the apartment underneath.

"My men," Captain Desmond said, in a rather feeble voice, "after what has passed, you understand that Juan Parma must command. Obey him, and do not risk your lives in useless resistance. Make no effort to free yourselves of him, unless you are absolutely sure of getting the upper hand."

"Very good, sir," the boatswain said, saluting. "We will remember your orders, sir."

"The poor fellows who have been murdered must be buried. You will see to that, Johnson?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

And the crew filed out of the cabin as quietly as they had entered it. There was something terrible in the stern-set faces and enforced calmness of these men. Every heart was a smoldering volcano. When the eruption came, Juan Parma would need to look to himself.

"Do you permit me to bury the men you have assassinated, senor?" asked Johnson of the Californian, before setting the sailmaker to work.

Parma scowled. He detected the bitter mockery in the boatswain's speech. His hand played with the trigger of his rifle. But he refrained from shooting Johnson dead, as he was tempted to do. With the crew so greatly reduced in number, further slaughter was to be avoided, for the sake of the ship's safety, and the boatswain certainly was too valuable to be killed.

"Certainly," he answered sharply. "And you need not come to me for orders except in matters that concern the ship."

"Very sorry, sir; but I allus treats my skipper with proper respect!" said the boatswain, with a sneering grin.

"Take care, Johnson; don't provoke me!" the Californian said, frowning. And he walked away aft.

The sailmaker of the "Kangaroo" was soon busy with his needle. The slain seamen were sewed up in their hammocks, with pieces of scrap-iron in the folds, to carry them to the bottom. The boatswain read the service for the burial of the dead at sea, and, as his education was not what it might have been, he stumbled continually over the words.

The Californian offered to relieve him of the task; but such a growl of rage came from the seamen standing by, that the cynical scoundrel deemed it best to take himself off. The number of men to be buried made it necessary to tilt them into the sea, one after another, at the end of the reading, instead of at the proper point.

At last it was over; the last body vanished into the mighty deep, and the men turned away sadly. Nearly a third of the ship's company had there been parted with; it was enough to make the survivors downhearted. It was, however, a relief that the bodies were gone; the sight of them was too harrowing to the feelings of their comrades who yet lived, but who might share the same fate at any moment, at the caprice of the merciless mutiner.

The sorrowful task ended, the seamen set about getting the ship in trim again, after the squall. The accustomed work restored to them something of their habitual cheerfulness. And the brilliant sunny weather, the dancing lights and shadows on the sea, the light breeze that filled out the snowy sails—all these were inspiring to the men, whatever their troubles might be. The brows became less gloomy as the day wore on, and their steps brisker.

Juan Parma, who, strange as it may seem, was perfectly good-natured in his own way, felt quite pleased by this alteration in the feeling of the crew.

"That's right, hombre," he said, during the afternoon. "We are compelled to voyage together for a time; why not do so in peace and quietness? No good can come of scowls and curses!"

The reduction of the number of the crew necessitated an alteration in the watches. The boatswain and his mate became "officers of the watch," as there were no real officers left. The starboard and port watches now consisted of ten men each, instead of fourteen, the carpenter and sailmaker being called upon, as well as the boatswain.

Jim Desmond remained in attendance upon the captain, who was very weak and languid all through that weary day. The Californian took his meals in the cuddy, always with the rifle and revolver ready to his hand, in case of a sudden attack. He was waited upon by the cook, whom he forced to taste everything he ate or drank, in case it should be drugged or poisoned. The idea of poisoning the pirate never occurred to any of the Britons; but Parma was accustomed to allow no peril, however remote, to be unguarded against.

In the second dog-watch he paid another visit to the deposed captain, and showed Jim how to shift the bandage so as to relieve the sufferer. As night drew on he became doubly suspicious and watchful.

Darkness was what the crew ardently longed for. In the dark the rifle of the desperado would not be so accurate. An

Only just in time. A jagged lump of iron crashed upon the deck, just where he had been standing. A gleam of fire blazed in his dark eyes as he threw up his rifle, covering the dimly visible form of the sailor in the mizen-shrouds.

Crack!

The sailor, with a piercing cry, lost his hold, and fell backwards into the sea.

CHAPTER 6.

A Hopeless Revolt—Parma's Watch Below—A Sail in Sight.

Had the missile aimed at him reached the Californian, he would have been felled to the deck, and a rush of the waiting seamen would have prevented him from ever rising again. But, with his usual cunning, he had detected the rather clumsy plot, with the result we have seen.

The report of the rifle, the death-cry of the man in the shrouds, brought the crew towards Juan Parma with a rush. "Stand back, you dogs!" he cried threateningly.

But their blood was up. The off-duty watch came bundling hastily out of the forecabin; the whole crew sprang towards Parma, like bloodhounds freed from the leash.

"Down with the murderer, lads!" shouted Johnson.

The rifle began to crack. Jim Desmond, brought out of the captain's cabin by the disturbance, saw the Californian firing. The boy had snatched up a stool for a weapon. Quick as thought he hurled it at Parma. The pirate was not prepared for this; the heavy stool struck him upon the shoulder, and he reeled. Before he could recover his balance, Johnson's clenched fist smote him on the mouth, and he fell.

An almost demoniac yell of exultation burst from the seamen. They had the upper hand at last!

But no! The lithe Californian was on his feet in a second, bounding down to the main deck.

"After him!" was the cry.

Like a pack of wolves they chased him. Nimbly he sprang into the mainmast weather-shrouds, clambering high out of their reach. Then, holding on with his legs, he recommenced firing with the rifle.

Even in the gloom he could see the sailors distinctly enough to make targets of them. Three had already been shot. Now a loud shriek told the fate of a fourth.

Johnson seized a handspike, and sent it flying through the air at the Californian above. He could not avoid it; he warded it off with his rifle, and the shock struck the weapon from his hand. Handspike and rifle together whirled downward, and splashed into the sea. The pirate's most terrible weapon was gone for ever. The crew cheered with delight as soon as they saw what had taken place, and several of them commenced climbing into the rigging, with their knives between their teeth, to get at close quarters with Parma.

But his revolver still remained, as he soon showed. Three seamen had climbed into the rigging. With three rapid shots he sent them, one after another, tumbling into the sea.

"Come on, if you dare!" he shouted, his face aglow, his eyes blazing, as he hurled his defiance at the seamen below.

But they had already seen that the conflict was hopeless. If only the revolver had followed the rifle! But it had not. The Californian still possessed a firearm, the crew had none, and so he was master of the situation. This attempt had failed; the surviving seamen must wait for a more favourable opportunity for resuming the conflict.

"Are you agreeable to a truce?" asked Johnson, forcing himself to speak the hateful words.

The Californian laughed mockingly.

"So you are cowed, are you? How many of you are gone under?"

"Seven!" replied the boatswain, with a curse.

"Are you willing to knuckle under, all of you?"

"We will let things go on as before."

"All of you but four, then, to the fore-cabin. Of the four, three must stay on the main-deck, only the helmsman aft. I do not intend to run any risks."

The crew slowly and reluctantly dispersed. Juan Parma then descended to the deck. He was secretly as glad of the peace



The Californian fired calmly, precisely, and with terrible skill. The outstretched fists of the sailors never touched him; the rapidity of his fire was as marvellous as its accuracy. Captain Desmond reeled and fell back at the first report, then five seamen dropped like logs.

attack then might have better success than the previous one. Juan, of course, guessed the aims and hopes of the oppressed seamen, and he was on his guard. It soon became plain that he did not intend to sleep. He did not mean to remain below, either, for if he did the crew might sight a vessel, and signal to her for help. The Californian's position, it will be seen, was utterly insecure, bristling with dangers.

Had not his nerves been of steel he must have sunk beneath the strain. Every man on board was thirsting for his blood, and planning to take him unawares. At any moment there might have in sight a cruiser, whose captain would be only too glad to capture "Captain Tiger." But the pirate-mutineer's nerve remained unshaken.

When night closed in, a man detached himself from the watch on deck, and, in a careless sort of way, approached the weather-shrouds of the mizen-mast. He appeared to see some fault in the ratlines, and climbed the shrouds to examine it the more closely. A strange, slow smile crossed the face of Parma, who stood near the binnacle. He suddenly took two steps aside.

as the waves could be. He might have measured the whole crew if he had chosen; but that would have left the "Kangaroo" unmanned. The first gale would have sent her to the bottom, and him with her. That would not have suited him at all. He had selfish reasons for wishing to avoid further hostilities, and if Johnson had not proffered the olive-branch, Parma himself would have done so.

During the remainder of the night the Californian remained on the poop, watchful as a cat. The crew were in the gloomiest depression. They were in the same plight as Sunday, when that famous voyager had the Old Man of the Sea upon his shoulder. Parma was their Old Man of the Sea. And it really seemed as if they would never rid themselves of him. Was he, then, invincible? they asked themselves savagely. Could anything be done to end this odious tyranny? Were their hundred comrades never to be avenged?

Captain Desmond had been awakened by the firing and shouting, and he eagerly waited for Jim to come back to the cabin and report the result of the result. The lad's downcast face when he entered told all; there was no need of questioning. The skipper turned his face to the wall, and groaned in bitterness of spirit.

At dawn Johnson ordered the burial of the dead men who had not fallen overboard, the ceremony increasing the depression of the crew. When it was over they went about their work dully, without spirit or liveliness. Funeral solemn and sorrow reigned on board the "Kangaroo."

The Californian was not untouched by the prevailing depression. His light carelessness and good-humour were almost overcast by it. He became irritable and unapproachable. Pain, where Johnson had struck him in the thigh, and where the stool hurled by Jim had hit him, added to his ill-temper. He swore at the men when the least thing displeased him, and when Jim came on deck in the morning met him with a savage kick that lifted him fairly off the planks, and sent him rolling into the scuppers.

"Take that!" he snarled. "If I gave you what you deserve, I'd blow your brains out for throwing that stool. I'll teach you, my lad, not to presume too far upon my forbearance!"

Jim was in such a rage at this treatment that he forgot all prudence. A mop, with which a seaman had been swabbing up blood from the deck, stood at hand. He seized it, and swung it at the head of the Californian. Parma eluded it, and the next moment his six-shooter was out and levelled at Jim. The lad turned cold all over; but he would not ask for mercy, and it seemed all over with him, when the boatwain ran up and placed himself in front of him.

"Hold your fire, Mister Parma!" said the boatwain. "Me an' my mates hev sworn that if you shoots another we won't touch a rope again, an' you can git the ship along how you please!"

That was a new idea, and the Californian saw the situation from another point of view now, and recognised the need of compromise.

"I think," he observed, "that if you and your mates were obstinate, I could bring you to your senses by shooting one or two more of you."

"Try it!" said Johnson. "Even now the ship's short-headed, and would be in danger if another gale came on."

Juan Parma restored the pistol to his belt.

"What you say is true enough, sencer. I will not fire another shot unless you force me to it."

"I don't say," the boatwain replied candidly, "that we shan't try to run foul of you, if we can. You wouldn't believe me, if I did."

"You are right there. But no more; I will not harm the boy."

"Thank you, sir," Jim said to the boatwain as Johnson turned away.

"Don't be afraid, Jim," said Parma, laughing. "I lost my temper; but I will not forget again that you saved my life. You need not fear my pistol; but, mark me, no more of your tricks!"

The success of Johnson's interference was regarded by the crew as a sort of victory; it proved that the Californian was not absolutely master. Parma did not care for that. He had his way; the ship was steadily approaching South America,

and he was in command; that was all he desired, and he was satisfied.

The sailors were curious to know how the Californian meant to rest; if he slept he placed himself at the mercy of his foot. He had not closed his eyes during the night, while the crew slept watch by watch. His own frame was capable of enduring extreme fatigue; but he must give way at last, surely? What could he mean to do?

Perhaps Parma himself was puzzled; but he did not show it. At six bells in the forenoon-watch he went into the cabin and ate a hearty meal; his hungry deeds had not diminished his appetite. He turned up with several glasses of the captain's claret. Then he went to the cabin which he and Jim had formerly occupied, but from which our hero was now excluded. The seamen heard him lock the door upon the inside, and after that no sound showed what his movements were.

Jim went on deck, and joined the crew, when the Californian had been below about half an hour. The men of the "Kangaroo" had collected in a group, and were eagerly discussing plans for taking the tyrant by surprise.

"Seen anything, lad?" asked Johnson. "What's the seelawyer up to?"

"I put my ear to the bulkhead between his cabin and the



Several of the men climbed the rigging in pursuit of the pirate, now clinging to the weather-shrouds by his legs. Juan Parma still had his knife and a revolver, however. "Come on if you dare!" he shouted, his face aglow and his eyes blazing.

captain's," Jim answered. "You know, if you put your ear close to a wall, you can hear what's done on the other side. I read so, somewhere, and I tried it. He moved about a bit, and then got into his bunk. The bulkhead is thin; I even heard his deep breathing. I am sure that he is asleep."

"But he's locked his door," observed the sailmaker, "and there's no skylight over his cabin. How're we to get at him?"

"What about the porthole?" Jim suggested.

The boatwain shook his head.

"Too small," he said. "None of us could crawl through that, even if we could get at it. Besides, he would hear us, and wake. You all know that he's a light sleeper."

"Perhaps we could force the lock of the door."

"He would hear. Ah, if a man-o'-war would only beave in sight! We could get help then, and lay the scoundrel by the heels!"

By sleeping below, it will be seen, Parma exposed himself to this grave risk; but, of course, he was compelled to take his chances. He could not live without sleep. The crew came to the decision to keep a sharp look-out, and signal the first

mail. A man was stationed at the main masthead. For hours he saw nothing. But early in the afternoon he came skimming down the rigging with a face full of excitement, forbearing to call out for fear of alarming the Californian.

"A big vessel; we are making her now; you'll see her from the deck in ten minutes."

All was animation at once. "As soon as she's near I'll get the flag," Johnson said. "And if she can't assist enough I'll signal 'Matiny aboard,' and she may be able to send us. I'll tell her our destination, and she may be the necessary man-of-war after us." And the boatswain went for the necessary flag.

In a few minutes he came back, swearing like a trooper. "What's up?" was the general inquiry. "All the flags are gone, and the signal-book, too! That sea-lawyer must have made away with them!"

This proof of the Californian's sagacity dismayed the crew. Then signals could not be made! A man thoroughly acquainted with the code might have been able to make fresh flags, without the assistance of the book. But Johnson, though he could not signal "Yes" or "No," knew little more. The skipper could have assisted. But he was sound asleep now, and it might be dangerous, in his present state, to awaken him. Besides, the quick-eyed pirate would doubtless be awakened by talking in the adjoining cabin. What was to be done?

"He's one too many for us!" the carpenter said despondently.

"Never mind," said Johnson. "The stranger is coming directly at us; coming from Rio, I suppose. We shall soon be near enough to hail her by word of mouth, and all will be well, unless Parma wakes."

"He must be very fatigued," Jim remarked. "Think how long it is since he's slept! I shouldn't wonder if he doesn't come up before dark."

"Let's hope he won't. This steamer is our last chance, mates. If we don't get help from her, I can't see how we're to save ourselves from being taken to Argentina by that scoundrel! And, when he's got us there, who can say if we shall ever get away with our lives?"

Eagerly the crew watched for the steamer. The smoke rolling into the clouds they could already see. Soon the big, black hull of the vessel was visible to their eyes.

Nearer it crept. Still the Californian slumbered below, unconscious of danger. The "Kangaroo" steered to pass within a biscuit's throw of the stranger's bows. Every eye shone with hope; every heart beat high.

At last she was near enough for a hail. "Steamer ahoy!" Johnson's powerful voice sent the cry far across the shining waters, and, as he watched the steamer, he saw that it had been heard. Several glasses were directed towards the "Kangaroo."

Then a hurried step sounded on the companion-ladder. A savage curse burst from Johnson. It was the Californian!

CHAPTER 7.

Baffled—The Boatswain's Idea—Parma Fails Him—What's to be Done?—Young Jim Desmond Solves the Difficulty—Liberty at Last.

Parma was none too soon! The boatswain was on the point of communicating intelligence of the mutiny to the steamer when the pirate-mutineer made his appearance. Parma's actions were swift and decisive. He had not lost his coolness at this crisis.

"The man who hails yonder vessel receives my first shot!" he cried. And then added to the helmsman: "Hombre, hard-a-starboard! Do you hear?"

With the deadly revolver menacing him the helmsman had no choice but to obey. The "Kangaroo" swerved, and a second sufficed to take her far beyond hearing of any voice from the steamer. Johnson was black with rage. Even if he had resolved to risk the revolver, it was too late now. The Californian had won again!

The movements of the "Kangaroo" no doubt excited much astonishment on board the vessel she had been about to speak. The seamen could see telescopes levelled, and eyes staring from the stranger's deck. The steamer even altered her course, approaching nearer to the "Kangaroo." The hopes of the sailors rose again. But Parma speedily damped them.

"Two points more!" he said to the helmsman, with a threatening movement of the revolver, and the ship swung yet farther away from the steamer. To the Californian's satisfaction, and the chagrin of his victims, the stranger resumed her former course, and steered away eastward. Had she been a man-of-war, her commander would doubtless have considered it his duty to probe into the mystery of the "Kangaroo's" strange actions, and a chase would have taken place. But a merchant captain has no time for minding anyone's business but his own. An investigation would have caused much delay,

and prolonged the steamer's voyage, and owners are not lenient to a captain who wastes time.

The steamer vanished to the eastward, leaving a long track of sable smoke behind her, and curses, not loud but deep, broke from the abandoned sailors. They grieved their teeth as they scowled at Juan Parma. The Californian only smiled in his cynical, sneering way.

"Check!" he said, laughing. "Perhaps the next move will be to your benefit, caballeros. Comrade Johnson, it was fortunate I threw all the signal-bunting overboard, or you would have had me that time."

"We'll have you yet!" cried the exasperated boatswain. "I'll scuttle the 'Kangaroo,' or set her on fire, rather than let you take her to Argentina!"

The threat did not excite the dread of the Californian. "Do so," he said carelessly, "and we will all die together. I'm willing to go to that extreme, if you are. But, if you do such a deed in your madness, I'll take care that you don't escape in the boats!"

The mention of the boats gave Johnson a new idea. He said nothing further, turning away with frowning brow. But the momentary brightening of his face, caused by renewed hope, did not escape the long-haired outlaw's observation.

A loud splash startled everyone five minutes later. Keenly Jim guessed the cause at once.

"He's cutting the boats adrift!" he cried.

Johnson uttered an oath as he sprang to the companion-way. All hurried on deck immediately. It was too true. The Californian stood there with a sneer on his lips, a mocking light in his eyes. The longboat was gone; already it looked like a speck, floating far astern.

"You bound!" cried Johnson. "What have you done?"

"Nipped your little game in the bud," replied the Californian coolly. "You see, señor, I guessed it all. I ought to have done this before; but, fortunately, it is not too late."

"Do you intend to cut away the other boats?"

"Diable! you may be sure I do. I will leave nothing but the gig. If you are fools enough to attempt to quit the ship in that, why, have your own way; but you might as well jump overboard at once!"

For a minute the boatswain appeared to be about to spring at the mutineer, who continued to baffle him at every point. If he had done so, the crew would have backed him up without a moment's hesitation. But in the hand of the pirate gleamed the fatal revolver, ready for use. Johnson thought better of it.

"You are master now," he said furiously. "But our turn will come, and then you shall pay for all this!"

Parma bowed with ironical politeness, and, taking no further notice of the exasperated British seamen, proceeded to cut the other boats adrift. Very soon only the gig remained.

The boatswain's plan, to desert the ship and leave the Californian alone on board, at mercy of wind and waves, was effectually knocked upon the head by the precautions of the astute pirate. Henceforth the crew were confined to the ship, whatever happened.

If they were to save themselves from being taken as prisoners to the pirate's lair, their only course was to overcome their tyrant, to kill him or take him prisoner. The latter they were not likely to be contented with, if they had the good fortune to defeat him. He had stained his hands too deeply in their shipmates' blood to deserve the slightest mercy. Death—swift and sure death—would be his portion; he would be pitilessly killed like a mad dog.

Every man on board was cudgelling his brains to find out a way of mastering him. The ill-success of previous attempts discouraged the British, but did not make them despair. Surely, in the long run, the Californian's luck must fail him.

But the rest of that day, and two or three more, passed uneventfully, and no feasible plan had been devised. And, meanwhile, the "Kangaroo" was fast nearing the Argentine coast. The pirate had been a week in command. A few days more would see the ship in sight of his retreat, where he would be joined by a horde of outthrust comrades.

At last, one night, when Johnson came into the cabin to inquire about the skipper, Jim said to him:

"I've hit upon something at last, Mr. Johnson!"

"Eh? What have you hit upon?"

"A plan for getting the better of the Californian!"

Jim's words, spoken in a tone of confidence, made the boatswain look at him attentively. Johnson knew how sharp-witted our hero was, and he knew it was quite possible that the boy had hit upon a solution of the difficulty which baffled all the men on board. He closed the door, sat down, and said:

"Go ahead, lad! What's your plan?"

The captain, who was now almost recovered, sat up in his bunk, and looked at his nephew, who had been sitting still, in deep thought, before the entrance of the boatswain. The skylight was open, and to this Captain Desmond now pointed.

"Close it," he said. "If Parma were playing the spy, he could hear all you said by listening there."

A Rattling Story of the War in next Friday's UNION JACK—"TWIXT BOER AND BASUTO."

"Well thought of, sir!" the boatswain assented. And he carefully closed the cabin skylight, making it impossible for anyone overhead to hear what was said in the cabin.

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"Very well," said Parma, unaffected by the glances of hatred the sailors threw at him, "I will go. I suppose he wants to point out to me the error of my ways. Well, I can listen to a sermon for once, just to please him!"

He followed Jim down to the captain's cabin. Through the skylight the seamen heard him speaking to Desmond. Then Bill Johnson gave a grin.

"Mate," he whispered, "it's a trick! We've trapped him! Get marlin-pikes, captain-hare, anything you can grab, and be ready to follow me when I call!"

The sailors were bewildered; but they understood that a revolt was planned, and they were ready for it. Speedily they armed themselves with bludgeons of various kinds, and stood by Johnson at the opening of the hatchway.

The Californian had entered the cabin quite unsuspectingly. He was about to reap as he had sown.

The captain sat up in his bunk, gasping for breath. Under the blankets his right hand gripped the little axe. Near at hand stood Jim, with a knife in his sleeve, ready to slip into his hand. The captain played his part so well that Parma did not doubt that he was at the point of death.

"Are you there, Parma?" Desmond asked, in a hollow voice.

"Here I am, senor. What would you say to me?"

"You have committed many crimes, Juan Parma."

"I believe I have," the Californian answered, yawning.

"Does not remorse torture your conscience, man?"

"Not a bit of it! I thought you were going to preach to me, senor. Do so. I am perfectly willing to hear you sermonise for, say, ten minutes."

"Your luck will not always hold out. Your punishment will come one day."

"I am ready to take my chances," the Californian replied. "I do not expect to win always. When my hour comes, I shall die game, without repentance. Have you nothing else to say? Carambo!"

The flash of steel, as Desmond lifted his axe, caught his eye, and he started back—too late!

The skipper threw himself forward, and struck with all his strength.

Fairly upon the handsome, cynical face fell the slashing blow, and backwards reeled the Californian, blinded with blood.

He gave a yell, like a fiend from the pit as he fell, and strove to rise again. In a moment he was upon his feet, and the deadly revolver gleamed in his hand.

Jim Desmond saw the Californian gain his feet, and for a moment turned sick with dread. But, summoning all his British pluck, he flung himself upon the pirate. Parma, blinded, fired at random; he missed Jim, who the next moment stabbed him in the breast.

The seamen, headed by Johnson, were now pouring into the cabin, shouting and brandishing their weapons.

Parma had said that he would die game, and he did. He cleared the blood from his eyes with a sweep of his hand, and glared like a tiger upon his foe, as, reeling, he placed his back against a bulkhead for support. The captain's axe, hurled accurately, had struck the pistol from his dying grasp. But, while the chill of death was creeping into his heart, he drew his keen poniard to fight to the last gasp.

The tables were turned now, with a vengeance.

The seamen, so long oppressed and insulted, had their revenge at last. They closed upon the cornered pirate like waves upon a sinking wreck. He struck with his poniard, savagely, and the boatswain staggered back, severely wounded. Then a dozen bludgeons crashed upon the Californian's head, and he went down beneath the trampling feet. There he writhed, while heavy blows from the men his cruelty had made merciless beat out his life.

The long, silky hair was clotted with blood, the dusky face pale with the ghastly pallor of death; but the old, mocking, cynical smile flickered upon his whitening lips.

Juan Parma died as he had lived, cool and reckless—game to the last!

With the death of the merciless mutineer our tale ends. Needless to relate the incidents of the voyage home, of the inquiry at London into the singular affair of a mutiny of one man. But a few words relative to our principal character may not be out of place.

Johnson had been severely wounded by the Californian in his death-fight; but he had completely recovered by the time the "Kangaroo" entered the Thames, and he is still the boatswain of the "Kangaroo."

That gallant vessel voyages still under the command of Captain Desmond, and Jim is second mate.

When the hearty old Irish skipper retires from the sea, it is pretty certain that Jim will succeed him in the command of the "Kangaroo."

THE END.

A Rattling Story of the War in next Friday's UNION JACK—"TWIXT BOER AND BASUTO."