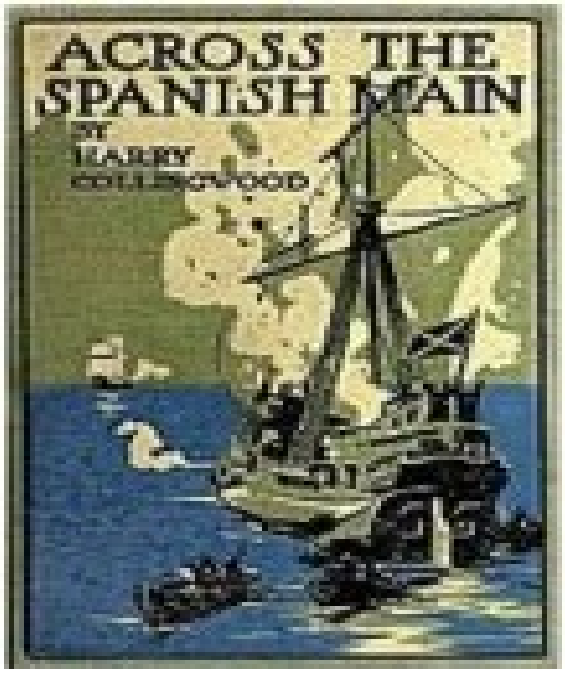

Across the Spanish Main

Harry Collingwood

Blackie

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Across the Spanish Main, by Harry Collingwood.

This book, of average length, is set at the end of the sixteenth century, when the English were in a state of war against the Spanish. The heroes of the story are two boys from Devon, a county in the south-west of England. They set off with a view to repairing the fortunes of the family of one of them, by chasing and capturing Spanish treasure ships.

Their adventures are many and various, and include being captured by a famous pirate. They are also, later on in the book, condemned to be burnt to death by the Inquisition. Luckily they are able to escape this disagreeable outcome.

They also come across a cryptogram, which is rather difficult to solve, but which eventually they manage to decypher, and which leads them to the treasure hoarded by the pirate, who by that time has met his end.

CHAPTER ONE. HOW ROGER TREVOSE AND HARRY EDGWYTH MADE A CERTAIN COMPACT.

“Now now, Roger, my lad; what are you thinking of?” These words were addressed to a tall, fair young man of about eighteen or nineteen years of age, who was standing on Plymouth Hoe, gazing earnestly at the Sound and the evolutions of certain vessels which had just entered it round Penlee Point.

The speaker was a lad of about the same age, but shorter in height, sturdier in build, and altogether more robust and healthy-looking than his companion, who belonged rather to the class of dreamers than that of workers.

The time was a bright summer morning in the month of June, in the year 1586; and although the great Armada—which Philip of Spain fondly believed was to crush England—was as yet undreamed of, war was even then being carried on in a somewhat desultory manner between England and Spain, very much to the disadvantage of the latter country.

English gentlemen, who called themselves “gentlemen adventurers", were fitting out merchant-vessels as warships, and sailing for the Spanish Main and the Indies in the hope of securing some of the splendid prizes that were at that time to be obtained through pluck and audacity, in the shape of Spanish galleons richly and heavily laden with spices and gold from Manila, plate from Acapulco, or costly silks and fabrics and treasure untold from the new Spanish colony of Mexico.

It was of these stirring deeds and adventures that Roger Trevose of Pentillie Manor, on the river Tamar, in the county of Devon—fairest and sweetest of all English counties,—was thinking when his friend Harry Edgwyth, who had just arrived upon the scene, put his question: “How now, Roger, my lad; what are you thinking of?”

“I was thinking, Harry, what a splendid thing it would be if you and I could join some of these gentlemen adventurers (heroes I call them), and try our luck in the Spanish seas, fighting for our fortunes, and the glory of dear old England. Just think of it, lad! That is a life for a man to lead; is't not so, Harry? Pentillie Castle, as you know well, is heavily mortgaged; and my poor father and mother are very hardly put to it to make sufficient money to keep the old place up; and what would be more fitting, Harry, I ask you, than for the only son, the heir to those fair estates and that grand old mansion, to sail in some ship going to the Indies, and endeavour to retrieve the fortunes of his house? Think for a moment, Harry; who knows but that we might sight some rich Spanish galleon, laden almost to the water's edge with plate, and, having sighted her, chase and capture her! Why, a share of one of those splendid cargoes that the plate galleons carry would probably be sufficient to enable me to restore the fortunes of the dear old home, pay off its mortgages, and free my dearly-loved parents from the load of care that is now oppressing them. And that,” continued Roger, becoming wildly enthusiastic, “need not be the finish of it all. With some of the money I could and would fit out an expedition of

my own, and sail for the Indies on my own account; and perhaps return with my ship more richly-laden than any ship has ever been before; and my name would ring through England; I should be given honours; perhaps be called to court; and who knows, Harry, where I should stop! Why, lad, it is enough to fire the most sluggish blood, let alone mine, which is hot enough, God wot, as is that of all the Trevose family."

"Ay, Roger," answered Harry, "but have you well weighed the risks; have you thought of what your parents would feel if you left them all alone to go to the Spanish Main, whence, perchance, you would never return? Remember, lad, you are their only son, and heir to the old estate and manor; and think what they would feel did you never come back."

"Harry," replied Roger, "never, never have I seen or met your equal for caution! Why prate, lad, of what might happen? Think rather of what is certain to befall, and that is that I shall come back a rich man, rich enough to enable me to realise all my wishes and ambitions. Why, if everyone thought as you do, where would now be the names of the heroes who have already made our dear England the mistress of the seas? `Nothing dare, nothing gain', lad; that's my motto!"

"You are quite right in what you say," replied Harry, "but only too well do I know your careless and reckless disposition, Roger; and although you would surely do daring deeds, and cover yourself with glory, I fear me greatly that you would not live to bring home that treasure, even if you did live long enough to gain it."

"Harry, if I did not know you as I do, lad," retorted Roger, "I should be inclined to dub you craven; but, as it is, I know full well that you only suffer from excess of caution, even as you say that I suffer from lack of the same. But I do not agree with your prophecy that I should not live to bring home my spoil. No, I feel within myself that I shall succeed in my venture, if I can bring my father and mother to consent to my going; and I am also convinced that I shall be able to bring my riches safely home. Meanwhile, the question is: Can I persuade some brave captain to take me on his ship?"

"Have you, then, truly made up your mind to sail for the Indies, Roger, if you can get one of our adventurers to take you?" cried Harry. "Methought you were only dreaming, and did not seriously entertain the idea of leaving England."

"I was never more serious in my life," replied Roger; "in fact I had made up my mind some time since, and was but considering how and when I could best put the matter before my parents, and wondering whether they would give their consent to my embarking on such an enterprise. And I would give much, Harry, my friend, if I could persuade you to accompany me. Has not the prospect of adventure, glory, and perchance great wealth, any attraction for you?"

"Ay, that has it," asserted Harry; "but you seem to forget that, if I go with you, I must leave my sister behind; and what would become of her, poor maid? I have no other relations to whom she could go, or who would care for her; and I cannot leave her

behind, all alone."

Roger broke into a peal of merry laughter.

"Why, lad," said he, "you are forever making difficulties where none exist! Now list to me, for I have a proposal to make you. If I can persuade my father and mother to let me go, they will then, as you say, be alone, seeing that I am their only child; but if your sister were to go to them, it would in part reconcile them to my absence, while at the same time the arrangement would provide a home for your sister, and a way out of your difficulty. What do you say to my idea?"

"That it is a good one," agreed Harry; "and I thank you, Roger, for the thought, which truly had occurred to me also, but I did not like to be the first to mention it. My sister has ever loved your mother, and I think your mother has some little affection for the maid; and I am sure, therefore, that she would be happy with your folk."

"Let us then consider the matter as settled, so far as we are concerned, Harry," said Roger; "and let us pledge each other to sail together; to stand by each other through thick and thin, through fair and foul; to share all dangers; and to divide equally all plunder that we may obtain from the rascally Dons. Then I will away to consult my folk; and you shall come too, Harry, and add your persuasions to mine. You shall entreat them, with me, to let me go, promising them that, if they will part with me, your sister shall keep them company till we return. And I am sure that if we both plead hard enough, Harry, lad, we shall in the end succeed in obtaining from them a promise to let me go at the very first opportunity."

"Very well, Roger," assented Harry; "this shall be the first action in which I will stand by you according to our pledge; and I will come with you and add my entreaties to yours that your people should let you go. But when do you intend to ask them, lad?"

"I am in Plymouth until the morrow after next," said Roger; "and then I intend to take my boat, which I have left at Sutton Pool, and pull up the river back to Pentillie; and you will come with me, Harry, will you not?"

"Ay, lad, that will I; have I not promised you?" replied the latter. "But I must now go about my business, else shall I not be in time to accompany you according to my promise. So until the appointed time, when I will certainly meet you, farewell, lad! and have a care that that hare-brain of yours does not get you into some trouble, meanwhile; for I know what you are when you come into Plymouth on a holiday."

"Never fear for me, Harry," returned Roger; "I have now something in view of more importance than street brawls and such follies, and shall take care that I get into no trouble to prevent my joining you at Sutton Pool, as we agreed."

With these words the two lads separated, Harry returning to his home to break the momentous news to his sister, and elicit her views concerning the proposed expedition, and Roger proceeding to the house of his uncle, a worthy mercer of the town, with

whom he was staying during the holiday which he was at that time taking in Plymouth. Little did those two boys (for they were scarcely more) realise the momentous nature of the step that they had taken when they pledged one another on Plymouth Hoe! Could they but have foreseen the wild and terrible days, the awful sights, the hardships and privations, which lay before them, and through which they would have to pass ere they might return to their native country, it is highly probable that they would not have started on their expedition at all. Or, if they had done so, it would have been with far heavier hearts and more serious faces than they carried at the time when they made their compact to stand by one another “through fair and foul, through thick and thin", as they phrased it, that morning on Plymouth Hoe.

CHAPTER TWO. HOW THEY LEFT PLYMOUTH AT DAWN ON THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY OF JULY, 1586.

At the time appointed the two friends met as agreed, and, taking the small boat belonging to Roger, which he had left at the boat-stairs in Sutton Pool, they pulled up the river Tamar, arriving in due course at Roger's home, Pentillie Manor—or Castle, as it was called by the country-folk round about.

Harry, as Roger's best and dearest friend, was always welcome there; it was, in fact, almost as much his home as was his house in Plymouth, where he lived with his only relation, his sister Mary, on whom, be it whispered, Roger had already begun to look with eyes which had somewhat more in them than mere friendship.

After the two lads had had a meal—which they sorely needed after their long pull—Roger intimated that he desired to speak to his father and mother in private; so they all three moved to an adjoining room.

Said Roger: “My dear father and mother, I have for some time been of the opinion that I am only wasting my days at home here doing nothing, and have long been wishing to speak to you both about the matter. While I was on my holiday in Plymouth I heard of nothing but the adventures and exploits of those men who have gone to the Indies and the South American coast, and of their success in arms against the Spaniards. To my mind there is no occupation so befitting an English gentleman as that of taking up arms against our natural enemies, the Spanish; and also it is quite clear to me that huge fortunes are to be won in this grand game of war; while you both know, as well as I, in what great need of money our house stands at present. So a few mornings ago I finally determined that, if I could obtain your consent and permission, I would enter into the profession upon which I have set my heart, without further delay. And as Cavendish is sailing very shortly for the Indies and the Spanish Main, I think it would be a good plan for me to sail with him if he can be persuaded to take me. I have spoken with Harry on the matter, and he has agreed to sail with me; while, as some compensation for my loss to you, he will leave his sister Mary—of whom I know you are very fond— with you, to be in your safe-keeping until our return, which God grant may be not only with honour

and glory, but also with sufficient money from prizes to enable us to retrieve the fortunes of our house! You may perhaps think that I ain too young, and had better wait for a few years; yet Cavendish himself is only twenty-six, and he is not only joining an expedition, but is actually captain of it. I think, therefore, that I am quite old enough to be one of the members of his crew; and if I show any promise, and work hard, as I fully intend to do, no doubt Cavendish will soon promote me to some post under him as an officer of rank, suitable to my age and ability. This, then, is what I have wished to speak to you about; and now, having told you all my wishes, I beg that you will let me go."

It is needless to say that this sudden news of Roger's determination came as somewhat of a blow to his parents, especially his mother, who was very much against her son adopting a profession in which there was so much danger. Roger's father, however, looked at the matter from a more practical and business point of view, being fully aware that what Roger had said about the glory honour, and riches to be won by a brave man at sea at that period was perfectly true; and, although loath to lose his only son, he saw quite clearly that the lad had fully made up his mind to go to sea, even before speaking about the matter, and that if he were forbidden he would take kindly to nothing else. So he promised Roger that he would talk the matter over with his wife, and that in due time they would let their son know their decision, possibly in the course of the day.

Roger's mother, as might be expected, raised all the opposition she could to his going away; but her husband pointed out to her so clearly the advantages to be gained that eventually she gave way, and consented, with many tears, to part with her boy. She found some slight consolation, however, in the fact that Mary Edgwyth would be with her during Roger's absence; for she knew that Mary would be to her even as a daughter, and would help, in some measure, to fill Roger's place until he returned.

His father accordingly communicated to Roger the result of his talk with his wife, and the latter, being a high-spirited young fellow, was naturally greatly elated thereat, and plied his father with questions as to when he might be allowed to leave, and how the adventure was to be brought about. There was a good deal to be done, however, before Roger and Harry could get away; clothes had to be bought and packed, and Roger's father had to make enquiry as to whether Mr Cavendish could find room in his ship, and, if so, whether he would take the two lads.

All, however, proved satisfactory in the long run, and Roger and Harry were ordered to be on board Cavendish's ship, the *Stag Royal*, on or before the twentieth day of July. This left the two boys about a month in which to complete their preparations before the day of sailing came round, and, needless to say, the time lagged most painfully for the eager young adventurers, although to Roger's parents it seemed all too short.

Meanwhile Mary Edgwyth had come up to the Manor, and was safely installed there; and the last week before the date of sailing soon came round, both boys being in a perfect fever of enthusiasm and delight at the prospect of leaving England to fight the Spaniards.

On the eve of their departure Roger's father presented Harry and Roger each with a splendid new rapier, the blades of which were made of the best Toledo steel, of so fine a temper that it was possible, without injury to the weapon, to bend the point round until it met the hilt, the blade springing back, when released, to its original position and shape. This gift naturally delighted the two lads immensely.

At length their final orders came, bidding them be on board by the 20th of July, without fail, as the ship and fleet sailed on the 21st at daybreak.

Roger and Harry accordingly packed their belongings, and, girding on their new swords, started down the river early the next day, accompanied by Roger's parents and Harry's sister, all of whom were anxious to see as much of the two lads as possible before they left.

They all arrived in Plymouth in the afternoon, and the lads having reported themselves, and formally joined their ship, the entire party proceeded to Harry's house to spend the night.

They all rose in the early hours of the next morning, and the last farewells were said upon the quay, while the boat from the *Stag Royal* remained alongside to convey them to the ship. Roger's mother wept copiously, and fervently prayed that her son might return safe and sound, while his father, less demonstratively, shook hands with him and gave him his blessing, in the form of a husky “God keep you, boy!” Mary Edgwyth embraced her brother affectionately, and it must be said that all the tears she shed were not for Harry alone; it is certain that many of them were evoked by the thought that she was also parting from Roger.

At length the two lads stepped down the quay stairs into the boat, each looking rather fixedly in front of him as he battled with a peculiar choking sensation in the throat; but they gripped their swords tightly, striving to gain courage by the touch of them, and managed to keep back the tears which threatened to overflow; and when half-way to the ship they were able to turn round and wave farewells to the three people still watching from the quay.

CHAPTER THREE. HOW ROGER AND HARRY TOOK PART IN THEIR FIRST SEA-FIGHT.

The squadron, headed by the ship of Cavendish himself, the *Stag Royal*, was well on its way to the Indies across the Atlantic, having taken in wood, water, and stores at the Western Islands. Roger and Harry, by this time quite recovered from their first sea-sickness, were fast asleep in their bunks, it being their watch below, when they were aroused by a cry on deck of “Sail-ho!” followed by the question in another voice: “Where away?”

“Right ahead, sir,” came the reply. “She seems to be a large ship, and Spanish by her rig.”

This was quite enough for the two lads, who, springing out of their berths, dressed with all possible speed and ran up on deck.

When they arrived there, however, there was nothing to be seen from that level; but twenty pairs of eager eyes were looking out from the forecastle-head, anxious for the first glimpse of the stranger, who was nearly certain to prove an enemy, and therefore a prospective prize.

Presently a voice exclaimed: “I see her, I see her; there she is right ahead of us!” and at the same moment another hail floated down from the masthead: “Sail-ho, again, and several of them!”

By this time both Roger and Harry could see the topsails of the ship first sighted, and their hearts beat fast at the prospect of a coming engagement.

“How many sail can you make out?” shouted the officer on deck.

“I can see four more, besides the one we sighted first, sir,” came the reply; “and the ships look to me like a Spanish fleet sent out to intercept us, for they seem to be hove-to and waiting for something.”

“That is well,” replied the officer, smiling at Roger; “let them only lie-to until we reach them, and there is not much doubt that they will get something in the nature of an extremely disagreeable surprise.”

Now the fleet of Cavendish consisted of three ships only—the *Stag Royal*, on board which were Roger and Harry, with Cavendish himself, she being the flag-ship of the little squadron. Behind, at a distance of about half a mile, came the *Elizabeth* and the *Good Adventure*, close together.

Cavendish, having come on deck shortly after the first hail, looked at the fleet of the enemy, and then cast his eyes over his own small squadron, as if comparing in his mind the comparative strengths of the two fleets.

Then he gave the order: “Prepare the ship for action, men; clear the decks; get the hammocks rolled up and triced along the bulwarks; open the powder-magazine and get powder and shot on deck, and see that the captain of every gun has a plentiful supply of each. Also pass the word for the yeoman of the signals to signal the *Elizabeth* and the *Good Adventure* to prepare for action forthwith, and to range up one on each side of me.”

Having given these orders, and seen that the men hastened to carry them out, Cavendish turned to Harry and Roger, who were standing together anxiously looking ahead at the five ships, which were growing larger and more distinctly visible to the eye every moment.

“Well, young gentlemen,” said he, “I mean to engage those five ships that you see yonder, and so will you get your first taste of the adventure you have come to seek. See that you bear yourselves bravely; remember you are fighting for your queen and the

honour and glory of your country. This coming engagement is going to be no child's play, you may take my word for it. They are five vessels to our three, and are more heavily armed and of bigger tonnage than are we, by the look of them. But fear not, young men; faint heart never won fair enterprise; and if we should beat them—as I am certainly determined that we shall— doubtless you will have a handsome booty to handle after the battle. Yet will it be hard fighting; and I trust that not only you two, but every man on board these good ships of mine will do his very utmost."

With these words Cavendish turned away, and went aft to give further orders. Meanwhile the other two ships of his squadron, in answer to his signal, had crowded on more sail, and were fast closing up, one on either side of the flag-ship.

The hulls of the five Spaniards were now quite plainly to be seen, and it was observed that they were all prepared and waiting to give battle, having slightly altered their formation since sighting the English, in order to secure what they thought was the best position for fighting their opponents.

They were by this time about two miles distant, and had formed themselves into two divisions, in the order now known as "column of line ahead", and were evidently expecting the English ships to run in between the two squadrons thus formed, trusting thus to be obliged to use only one broadside of each ship, while the English would be compelled to use both; the idea of the Spaniards being that with this formation the English would pass between them one at a time, and while each English ship would use both broadsides upon entering the lane between the two Spanish squadrons, she would be thereafter exposed, with empty guns, to the fire in succession of the five Spanish ships; that is to say, the two ships in line ahead on the one side, and the three in the same formation on the other.

But if they imagined that the English were going to walk open-eyed into such a simple trap as that they were vastly mistaken.

Cavendish saw at once what tactics the enemy anticipated that he would adopt, and immediately made up his mind to checkmate them by following a totally different line of action; and accordingly he promptly signalled for his other two captains to come on board. This they did forthwith, and, taking them into the cabin of his ship, he briefly and hurriedly explained to them the manoeuvre he intended to adopt to outwit the Spaniards.

This explanation was soon made, and the two skippers immediately returned to their respective ships.

The two squadrons had by this time arrived within gunshot of each other, and Harry and Roger, eager though they were for the fight to commence, were yet conscious of a peculiar feeling something akin to fright, in extenuation of which it must be remembered that neither of the boys had ever been in action before.

It was now half an hour after mid-day, and one bell sounded on the three ships of the English fleet.

At almost the same moment, and before the sound of the bells had died away, the first shot in the action was fired by the Spaniards.

Harry, who was watching the starboard line or division of the enemy, saw a flash, and immediately afterwards heard a whizzing sound, followed from somewhere over his head by a sharp crash. Then a shower of splinters fell round him and Roger, who was standing close by; while immediately following this, down the wind came the dull boom of the explosion.

Roger looked aloft to see what damage had been done by the shot; it was not very much: the fore topmast showed a white mark where a piece had been neatly gouged out of it, and a few ropes were severed, but nothing serious had happened.

In accordance with Cavendish's orders, no shot was fired in return by the English fleet; and presently, as they were about half a mile from the foremost Spanish vessels, a very hurricane of smoke and fire burst from as many of them as could bring their guns to bear on the little English squadron.

There was a crashing and crackling all round, and Roger and Harry involuntarily winced as the round-shot came flying through the bulwarks, and spars and splinters came tumbling and flying all around them. From behind them there came a shriek, as some poor wretch met his death-wound, and from across the water more shrieks were heard, announcing that theirs was not the only ship that was struck.

“First blood to the enemy,” shouted Harry to Roger through the turmoil of crashing wood and the shrieks of wounded men.

“Yes,” replied Roger; “but I wish they would give us orders to fire. This plan of sailing along without making any reply to the enemy's guns is unnerving me, and it seems to me that if we are fired upon much longer without replying we shall have no men left in condition to fight when we get alongside the enemy.”

“Never fear, Roger,” replied Harry. “Cavendish knows what he is about; and I think I see, even now, what manoeuvre he means to execute.”

The three English ships were now heading as though they indeed intended passing between the two lines of the enemy's squadron, and had so far fired not a single shot. Suddenly, however, when only separated by a few hundred yards, the English changed their course two or three points to port, and headed for the starboard side of the two ships which constituted the right-hand line of the Spanish fleet.

Thus the three English vessels were for a few minutes opposed to only two Spanish ships, the three others being unable to fire except through their consorts.

This manoeuvre compelled the other three ships to leave their present berths and run before the wind, afterwards tacking before they could range up on the opposite side of the English fleet and so bring their guns to bear.

But during the time occupied by this movement, the English ships were by no means

idle.

Upon ranging up alongside the two Spanish vessels, the sails of the English ships collapsed as if by magic, the halliards being let go and the clewlines manned; and, as the craft lost way, grapnels were thrown, and the ships were secured alongside two of the Spaniards.

At that period the Spanish war-vessels were built with “flush” decks, that is, their decks were level fore and aft, and without bulwarks, and were of much greater length than the English vessels, which were short, and therefore more easy to manoeuvre than the Spaniards. Likewise there were raised constructions at bow and stern, something like small forts, called forecastles and aftercastles; the former word still remaining under our modern term forecastle.

The English vessels were then, as mentioned above, shorter by a good deal than those of their opponents, and so the total length of the three English ships was covered by that of the two Spanish vessels, which fact preserved them for the moment from the fire of the other three ships of the enemy. Roger now saw the reason why Cavendish had reserved his fire. Immediately his ships came alongside those of the enemy, the broadsides of all three were simultaneously discharged, with fearful effect, for amid the crash of falling spars and rending timbers could be heard the cries and shrieks of the wounded, and the moans of the dying.

A dense cloud of smoke spread over the decks and concealed the combatants from one another, but the din was terrific; while orders and shouts, hoarse words of command, and fierce oaths mingled with the cheers of the English.

The sternmost vessel of the enemy, which was the one that had received the concentrated broadsides of two of the English ships, was now on fire somewhere on her lower-deck; three or four of her ports were blown into one big opening, and her decks were a very shambles of dead and wounded.

The fire below made very rapid headway, and effectually prevented her men from working the lower-deck guns; it thus happened that with one discharge from the English guns one of the two Spanish ships engaged was seriously crippled.

The two craft, however, responded gallantly from their upper decks with what cannon they were still able to serve, and a perfect hail of arrows and arquebus bullets swept the English decks, mowing down men in all directions.

The English had quietly reloaded those of their broadside guns that were on the side of the enemy, the guns of the port broadside being still undischarged.

“Now, lads,” roared Cavendish above the clamour and din of rending timber and falling spars, “give them another broadside; and let the musketeers on the upper decks and the bowmen in the fore and after castles follow it up with a volley, in order to clear their decks. Immediately after the discharges the boarders are to follow me!”

At the commencement of the engagement Roger and Harry, seeing what was likely to happen, had laid aside their light rapiers and armed themselves with a pair of pistols apiece and the more formidable English hanger as used by the ordinary seamen; and shoulder to shoulder they stood by the starboard bulwarks, ready to spring as soon as Cavendish should give his order to board.

Meanwhile the three other Spaniards, seeing the manoeuvre of the English and the danger of their consorts, had made all sail as quickly as possible, and were now running away before the wind in order to go about and stand up on the starboard tack to engage the English vessels and relieve their companions, which were in a somewhat parlous state.

The guns of the English ships' starboard broadsides now once more opened fire with a simultaneous crash, which was immediately followed by a discharge of musketry and arrows which laid low on the Spaniard's deck nearly every living soul who had not taken what cover the deck structures afforded.

“Now, boarders,” roared Cavendish, his voice ringing high above the turmoil, “away with you, and do not leave their decks until their flag comes down!”

With a wild cheer the seamen, headed by Cavendish—who was closely supported by Roger and Harry, who were respectively second and third on the enemy's decks,—dashed at the Spaniards.

One of the two Spanish ships was now blazing fiercely, having been set on fire by the discharges of the English guns, and her crew were beginning to think that the time had arrived for them to leave her. In this opinion they were confirmed by the English, who were gradually driving them from their own decks to those of their consort. They were thus, as it were, between two fires, and were badly hampered by the necessity to climb from the one vessel to the other. Those of them who could not gain the deck of the other ship were driven overboard, and very few of them survived to reach their goal.

“Quickly, lads,” shouted Roger; “drive these fellows off the deck, and let us regain our own ship while we can. The other Spaniards are drawing up, and will be on us before we are ready for them if we do not look sharp.”

The seamen, animated by his voice, and seeing the necessity for doing as he said, redoubled their efforts, and, with hearty cheers, massed themselves together and charged along the reeking and slippery decks.

The Spaniards, unable to resist the weight of the charge, scattered, and, finding no other way of escape, dashed below; but they could not so easily avoid the victorious English, who followed and hunted them out of their hiding-places.

As Roger and Harry, having dashed below in pursuit, were running down one of the narrow alleyways, searching for hidden Spaniards, a man sprang from behind a curtain and aimed a heavy blow with his sword at Roger, who was foremost, cutting him down.

With a faint groan Roger fell, and Harry stumbled over his body, thus enabling the Spaniard to effect his escape.

Half-stunned from the force of his fall, Harry raised himself and bent over Roger.

“Roger, Roger,” he exclaimed, “are you much hurt? Speak to me, lad.”

But Roger made no reply, lying perfectly still, with a stream of red slowly spreading from under his head and staining the white planking. Suddenly, from above sounded a harsh cry.

“Back, back, every man of you, and cut the ships adrift; the Spaniards are firing the magazines; back, for your lives!” Loud and imperative rang out the voice of Cavendish. “Quick, lads, for your lives, or we shall be all blown up together!”

“Roger, Roger, wake, lad,” cried Harry; “the ship has been set on fire, and will blow up directly. Heavens, what can I do?”

But Roger never stirred; so, as there was nothing else to be done, Harry took his body under the arms and began to drag him along toward the nearest hatchway.

At this moment the broadsides of the English again rang out, showing that the other three Spaniards were drawing up, and were within gunshot.

Meanwhile, on board the Spanish ship no sound was to be heard save the roar and crackle of the flames, as Harry, putting out all his strength, lifted the inanimate body of his friend to his shoulder, and plunged along the passage through the blinding and suffocating smoke.

He was dashing forward, holding his breath as much as possible, with his eyes smarting with smoke, and feeling as though they would burst from their sockets, when he crashed up against some obstacle, dropping the body of Roger from the force of the contact. A puff of fresh air now blew the smoke aside for a moment, and Harry saw what was the cause of his stoppage. His way was blocked by a stout oaken door, that had evidently been closed by some seaman when he retreated upon hearing the alarm that the magazine was in danger of being fired.

Harry dragged frantically at the handle and turned it wildly, but in vain; the door was secured on the other side by some kind of spring latch, and escape seemed impossible.

The smoke meanwhile was momentarily becoming more and more dense, and it was now an agony to breathe, while every second of delay meant awful danger; and Roger seemed to be rapidly bleeding to death for want of attention to his wound.

Harry looked round for some instrument with which to force the door, and his eye fell upon a handspike, probably dropped by some flying foe. Seizing this, he smashed madly at the door, till at length the panel splintered under his frantic blows; then, putting his hand through the opening, he felt for the latch, found it, and the door opened at his touch.

Once again raising Roger in his arms, he staggered blindly along; and at last, bleeding from contact with splinters, and his hands almost raw with wielding the handspike, he reached the foot of the companion-ladder and dashed up it with his still inanimate burden in his arms.

On reaching the deck he saw that the grapnels had been cut, the three English vessels had drifted some hundreds of yards away, and were even then engaging the three other Spanish ships which had come up; and the air was again full of the roar of cannon, the crashing of timbers, falling of masts, shrieks, groans, cries, orders, and imprecations.

The Spanish ship which had been in company with the craft that caught fire had vanished, and only a few timbers and fragments were floating on the surface; she had evidently been sunk by the terrible fire of the English guns.

The ship on which they now were, the *Maria Dolorosa*, was by this time a spouting fountain of flame, from her bows as far aft as her mainmast. Her guns were exploding one after another as the fire reached them, and added their thunder to the already awful din.

Harry raised his voice, and shouted over the water with all the power of his lungs to the English ships, but the continued roar of the cannon, mingled with the rattling crash of musketry volleys, the shouted commands of the officers, the hoarse outcries of toiling and fighting men, and the crash of rending wood as the broadsides tore their way into the vitals of the reeling ships effectually drowned his outcries; while everybody was far too busily engaged to notice his critical situation.

“Ah, Roger!” said he, apostrophising the inanimate figure that lay at his feet as he stood at the extreme edge of the poop, in order to be as far away from the furnace heat as possible,—“Ah, Roger, I fear, dear lad, that our lives are coming to an end even before we are fairly launched on our adventures! Oh, why cannot they—!”

At this moment there was a roar as if all earth and heaven were dissolving in chaos, and Harry, feeling as if he were being whirled downward into everlasting night, knew no more.

The fire had at last reached the magazine!

CHAPTER FOUR. WHAT HAPPENED TO ROGER ON BOARD THE GLORIA DEL MUNDO.

When Roger next opened his eyes he was at a loss to to recall immediately to mind the preceding events; nor could he for the moment imagine where he might be.

He was in great pain from the wound in his head, received on board the Spanish ship which he and Harry had boarded together, and this served to bring his memory back to what had occurred.

He remembered rushing with Harry down a dark alleyway, with cutlass in hand, and also

that a man had suddenly sprung at him and cut him down; that he had received so violent a blow on his head that he had felt certain his skull was cloven asunder; and then his memory ceased abruptly. But where was Harry, his inseparable companion?

Roger raised his throbbing head painfully, and tried to look round, but could nowhere discover the presence of his dear friend. He shouted his name: “Harry; Harry, where are you?” but there was no reply. Only somewhere above him he could hear the roar of cannon, hoarse cries of command, angry shouts, and the trampling feet of many men.

Looking about him, he perceived that he lay in a cabin of some sort, very richly furnished, but lit by a light so dim that he could only make out objects in it very indistinctly. There was no port-hole or sky-light of any description in the apartment, which led him to the conclusion that he must be in some room far away below the water-line. This impression was heightened by the fact that exterior noises came to his ears muffled, as by distance.

In the cabin itself there was no sound, save the gnawing of a rat somewhere on the floor below him. On the walls he could dimly discern two or three pictures, and just above his bunk was a portrait of a lady. There were also several star trophies of weapons arranged at intervals; and at one end of the cabin—which was of unusually spacious dimensions—stood a large cabinet or escritoire, one of the drawers of which had apparently been pulled out hastily, as papers were to be seen protruding from it, and several documents had fallen to the floor.

Oh, how he wished he might venture to rise from his bunk and make an investigation of the cabin! But he was afraid to attempt any such exploit, for his head ached so atrociously, and he felt so deadly sick and giddy from the anguish of his wound and loss of blood, that he felt certain if he exerted himself but ever so little he would sink helpless and insensible to the deck. While thinking thus he abstractedly raised his hand to his head, and thus discovered that his wound had been bandaged, evidently by a skilled hand, for the wrappings were all neatly put on, adjusted, and sewn, instead of being merely tied. This was so far satisfactory, for it seemed to point to the fact that he had fallen into friendly hands, although his returning senses, enabled him to come to the conclusion that he must certainly be aboard a Spanish ship. With a sigh of relief he was preparing to pull the coverlet over him and lie down once more, when his ear caught the sound of footsteps approaching. He was just about to shout to the person or persons, whoever they might be, and enquire as to where he was, and whether they could afford him any information as to what had become of Harry, when his quick ear caught one or two words of the conversation which the unknown persons were carrying on. It was in Spanish. Then his surmise was a true one, and he was indeed aboard one of the enemy's ships. With a stifled cry he flung himself down in the bunk, and pulled the coverlet over him once again, closing his eyes, and simulating heavy breathing, in the hope of persuading the new-comers that he was in a deep slumber.

He was only just in time, for as he composed his limbs into a comfortable position, in

the event of the strangers making a lengthy stay, two men entered.

Roger looked at them from between his nearly-closed eyelids and saw that both were tall men, slender and dark, both wearing long black mustachios and closely trimmed beards. Roger happened to possess a slight knowledge of Spanish, and was thus able to gather the meaning of at least part of their conversation. With one accord they approached Roger's bunk and leaned over, looking at his face.

“He sleeps,” said the elder of the two men.

“Well, let him sleep as long as he will,” replied his companion sardonically, “for it is little enough sleep the young heretic will get when once he is delivered over to the Holy Inquisition.”

Roger shuddered.

He had heard quite enough of the methods of that institution to understand the significance of the words. He longed to open his eyes and take more particular note than he had yet been able to do of the personality of his two visitors; but he withstood the temptation, and kept his eyes closed, listening hard to catch all he could of the ensuing conversation.

“And what, Alvarez, are the captain's orders with regard to the boy?” said the elder man, whose name, it transpired, was de Soto.

“Senor Don Guzman's orders,” answered the other, “are that he is to be kept in this cabin until we have finally disposed of these three pestilent English ships; and when that is done, and we have captured them, he is to be locked up in the fore hold, with the other prisoners we shall take—if the rascals do not in this case fight to the death, as they often do. Then when we return to Cadiz they are all to be handed over to the Holy Inquisition.”

Roger felt the cold perspiration start in beads on his forehead.

“Ah! It seems almost a pity,” said de Soto, “that we should have plucked this lad from the sharks, only to hand him over to those other fiends of the Holy Office; for he is a handsome and stalwart lad, and those limbs of his were never meant to be seared with red-hot irons, and torn asunder on the rack!”

“Hush, de Soto, my friend!” responded Alvarez; “let no man save myself hear you speak thus of the Holy Office, or thy limbs, of which thou art so proud, may perchance make acquaintance with the same torments as are reserved for this young heretic.”

“Thanks, Alvarez!” returned de Soto; “I should not have spoken thus before any other than thyself; but thou art my friend, I know. I can trust thee with my life; as, indeed, I am trusting thee in speaking thus freely of the so-called Holy Inquisition. Is it not so?”

“Yes, de Soto, it is so; and I am indeed thy friend,” replied Alvarez, turning his head slightly aside, so that his companion might not catch the evil glitter that shone in his

eyes. He did not know that Roger was observing him through nearly-closed lids, and that he had caught that look on Alvarez's face as he turned from de Soto; and possibly if he had known he would not have greatly cared. But if ever the devil incarnate looked out of any man's eyes, he did at that moment out of those of the man whom Roger had heard addressed as Alvarez.

"But how goes the fight, de Soto?" he continued, after a pause. "Methinks there is less cannonading now than there was a little time since."

"When I left the deck a few minutes ago," answered de Soto, "two of our ships, alas!—the *Maria Dolorosa* and the *Buena Vista* —had disappeared. One was sunk by the fire of these cursed English: and, unable to hold the other, our brave countrymen fired her magazine. I expect this young heretic was on board the ship that blew up, for just before the explosion came I thought I saw two figures on her poop, one of whom was standing up, while the other was lying on the deck at his feet. I think the one who was lying down must have been our friend, here. What became of the other I know not; but he was doubtless either drowned or swallowed by one of those same sharks from which we only just rescued this lad in the nick of time. He will live, I fear, to wish that we had left him to them. As for our other three ships, they were engaging right valiantly those of the enemy, and beating them down too; but these cursed islanders seem to know not when they are beaten, and I doubt me that our victory will be at all an easy one. As for them, although the ship of Cavendish has lost all her masts, her hull is almost intact, thanks to our wretched gunnery; and there she now lies on the water, unable to move, it is true, but, like a wounded lion, all the more dangerous for being wounded. But the *Gloria del Mundo* is giving her all attention, and she will be compelled to strike to our heavier broadsides ere long. Our other two vessels, *El Capitan* and *Salvador*, are engaging the remaining ships of the English squadron, and the moment cannot be far distant when they will all surrender to the flag of his most sacred majesty, Philip of Spain, the invincible flag, the flag of the empire of the Old World and the New," concluded de Soto. "So," thought Roger to himself, "it would appear that I am on board the *Gloria del Mundo*, and that the action is as yet undecided. But Senor de Soto is, I imagine, somewhat mistaken if he seriously believes that Cavendish will surrender his ships; rather will he let them sink with colours flying. I will not believe that the flag of England, the mistress of the seas, is this day destined to dip to the blood and gold flag of Spain. And the end of the fight, I will wager, is not only farther off than this good de Soto suspects, but it will also have a different ending from what he looks forward to, or my name is not Roger Trevose!"

"I believe the lad is awake," said Alvarez; "I could almost swear he moved just now."

Both men bent over Roger, who had involuntarily stirred upon hearing that these two anticipated the surrender of the English.

"No," dissented de Soto, "I think he still sleeps; you must have imagined it, Alvarez."

The glitter came again into the eyes of the latter, as he replied: “de Soto, my imagination is not—” when suddenly the roar of cannonading again commenced, drowning the remainder of the sentence. Then came a shock that made the stately vessel reel throughout the whole of her massive fabric. There was a rending and grinding of timber, and a frightful crash on deck announced that one of the masts had come down.

Roger heard distant cheers, and knew that his prognostication that the end had not yet come was correct. Evidently the English had repeated the manoeuvre that they had so successfully practised earlier in the day, and laid their ships alongside once more. Musketry, pistol-shots, shouts, groans, the clash of steel, a perfect medley of sound floated down from the deck above and through the open cabin-door.

“Quick, Alvarez, on deck!” roared de Soto, plunging out of the cabin; “the English have laid us aboard, and will have the ship if we are not careful!”

Alvarez was in nowise behindhand. Snatching his sword from its sheath, and clutching a pistol from the table as he went, he followed de Soto on deck.

Roger attempted to get out of his bunk, with the idea of joining his friends on deck and taking part in the fight, but he fell back on his mattress, weak and giddy from the attempt. What would he not give to be able to go on deck at this moment! but he could not stir for the reeling giddiness of his head; he felt that to attempt to rise would but result in his falling insensible to the floor of the cabin; and he could but lie still and listen to the turmoil raging above his head.

The din was terrific; now came triumphant shouts in English, and Roger could picture to himself the bravo fellows rushing the Spaniards pell-mell across their own decks and into the water, or below; and again the tide of battle seemed to turn, and the English to be getting the worst of it.

Oh, maddening thought, that he was helplessly imprisoned here, unable to take part in the brave doings that were being wrought above! Little by little the shouts and fierce cries died away. “Who had won?” conjectured Roger to himself.

There was a clatter of running feet in the passage leading to the cabin, and the man Alvarez, with a hunted look of terror in his face, clashed into the apartment. He burrowed hastily among the papers in the open drawer that Roger had noticed at first, and apparently was unable to find what he was looking for.

“Carramba!” he ejaculated, “what has de Soto done with those papers?”

He tore the remainder of them from the drawer with a curse, flung them on the floor, and, dropping on his knees, hastily turned them over one after another as they lay there.

Now for some time Roger had been vaguely conscious of a peculiar sluggish movement of the ship as she heaved on the swell, and the sight of Alvarez's haste suddenly brought the ghastly truth home to him. The ship was sinking!

“I must wait no longer,” muttered Alvarez to himself, “or I shall be drowned like a rat in

a trap, in company with that young heretic there in the bunk. I wonder whether by any chance de Soto has taken those papers himself! Carrajo! now I remember. When we came in together to look at the English whelp the drawer was open. Without doubt de Soto has them. Well, never mind; I will have them from him before I have finished with him. I can recall all he has said about the Holy Inquisition, and, if that is not enough to condemn him, I can easily enough invent something else; but have those papers from him before he dies, I will. Perhaps, when he is in the hands of that Inquisition he hates so much, he will be willing to surrender those documents to his dear friend Alvarez, if that friend promises to rescue him from further torment. And now for the English cub," he continued, rising to his feet and drawing his dagger from its sheath.

Once again came that sickening lurch, accompanied by the sound of washing of water close at hand. The ship was fast settling down.

"No," murmured Alvarez, "I cannot wait. My life is too valuable to me to risk it even for the pleasure of slaying an Englishman; and the sea will soon send the youngster to the nether world." And he rushed from the cabin, leaving the papers and charts strewn on the floor at the foot of the escritoire.

By this time Roger was pretty fully awake to a knowledge of his great and pressing danger. Here he was, weak and dazed to the point of utter helplessness, on board a fast-sinking ship, with none to render him aid, and feeling quite unable to move without it.

"Oh, God help me!" he moaned; "what a miserable death to die! Harry! Harry! Harry!" he cried distractedly, "come and help me; I am here below drowning! Help! help!"

There was no reply.

But a sound that he had heard before without attaching much importance to it now forced itself upon his attention; it was the swishing of water; and, looking over the edge of his bunk he saw that water was already rising fast over the floor of the cabin. Desperation now lent him strength, and, pulling himself together with a violent effort, he slowly and painfully rose upright and put his legs over the edge of the berth. He felt incapable of making any further effort for the moment.

Then once more he raised his voice and shouted for help, and this time he fancied that far away in the distance he heard a reply. He shouted again and again; then paused, listening.

The answering voice sounded a little nearer.

At that moment the ship gave another roll, and to Roger it seemed as though she must founder immediately.

There was another sickening lurch, and Roger, convinced that the end had come, went tumbling off the edge of his bunk, and fell flat on his face in about two feet of water which was washing over the cabin floor. The shock of the fall displaced his bandages; his wound began to bleed afresh; and, confused as he still was, the idea took possession

of him that he was in danger of bleeding to death.

Would nobody ever come to take him out of this awful hole? “Help, help, I am drowning!” he shouted.

But this time there was no answering voice.

Then Roger once more pulled himself together and began to crawl over the floor, the water splashing round and over him. Inch by inch he neared the door, and then he heard a call, so near that it startled him.

“For Heaven's sake, where are you, Roger? Answer, man, if you are alive.” The voice was Harry's.

“Harry,” groaned Roger, “here I am; help me quickly or you will be too late; the ship sinks fast!”

Guided by the voice, Harry soon made his appearance.

“Roger, man,” he cried, “thank God I have found you! I thought you were gone for ever. Can you help yourself at all, lad?”

“A little, I think, if you will put your arm round me,” replied Roger.

Harry flung his arm under Roger's arm-pits and raised him to his feet.

“One moment, Harry,” cried Roger, pointing to the papers which Alvarez had left on the floor, and which were now floating about the cabin; “secure these papers; I believe they are of value.”

Harry seized the documents with his free hand, and, supporting Roger, staggered with him to the foot of the companion-ladder. How they eventually got up into the free air the two never clearly knew, for they were deep down in the body of the ship, and had two or three ladders to climb ere they arrived on the upper deck. But reach it they did, after what seemed an eternity of suspense. Then, as they stepped out once more into the blessed free air of heaven, the whole of the Atlantic seemed suddenly to sweep over the ship; they felt her slide from beneath their feet; and they were drawn down, down, down, until it appeared as though they would never again see the light. But at last, with lungs bursting and almost suffocated, they shot up to the heaving surface of the sea, clinging tightly to each other.

And there—oh, blessed sight!—not twenty fathoms away, lay their own ship, dismasted and looking an utter wreck, but more beautiful to their eyes than any palace.

From her decks there came a shout: “There they are! there they are! Lower away a boat! lower quickly, or the sharks will have them!”

In a few minutes the only remaining boat belonging to the ship was lowered, and a dozen willing arms were sending her flying over the water towards the two lads.

Bearded faces looked over her gunwale, and brawny arms literally snatched them from

an awful death; for as they were dragged out of the water there was a snap of hungry jaws, and several huge sharks were baulked of their prey.

A few minutes later, dripping and exhausted, the two lads found themselves once more safe and sound on the decks of their beloved ship, and saw Cavendish himself looking at them with an expression of anxiety on his face.

“I hope, lads, you are none the worse for your adventure?” said he.

“No, sir, we are safe, thank God!” replied Roger; “but we have been through a good deal, and are somewhat shaken. We should therefore like to go below for a while. But is all the fighting over?”

“Yes,” replied Cavendish, “and victory is to us.”

The two then went below, and Harry soon had Roger under the care of the surgeon. The good man pronounced that his wound was not dangerous, and that he would do, with care.

Then, sitting by Roger's side, Harry plunged into a recital of his adventures since the boarding of the Spaniard, a circle of eager listeners standing or sitting round them.

CHAPTER FIVE. THEY ENCOUNTER A STORM AT SEA, AND REACH THE ISLAND OF CUBA.

What had happened to Roger is already known to the reader, and what befell Harry after the explosion on board the *Maria Dolorosa* may be very shortly recounted.

The shock of his plunge into the cold water brought him to his senses in time to prevent him from drowning, and his first thought was to look after Roger; but his friend was nowhere to be seen. He shouted his name in vain for some time, and then started to swim towards his own ship, which lay quite near, in the faint hope that perhaps his friend might have been seen and rescued by her.

He made enquiries immediately on reaching the deck of the ship, but could elicit no information as to Roger's whereabouts, and everybody on board was much too busy with his own work of fighting the three remaining Spanish ships to pay any attention to Harry. But he could not thus easily resign himself to Roger's loss, and he peered over the lee bulwarks in an endeavour to discover his friend's body, if it were still afloat.

He could, however, see nothing of it, and was beginning to fear that he had indeed lost his dear friend and the companion of his boyhood, when from the *Gloria del Mundo*, the Spanish ship which was nearest to him, he saw a boat lowered, which pulled away in the direction of a floating piece of wreckage which he had not until then noticed. He saw the boat row up close to this wreckage, and take from it a body which appeared to be hanging limply across it; and, looking more intently, he felt almost certain that the body was that of Roger. The boat pulled back to the *Gloria del Mundo*, and was hoisted on board.

If the body was indeed that of Roger, then, thank Heaven! he was safe for the time being; but the poor lad was nevertheless still in a very precarious situation, being on board a Spanish ship. Harry could see also that the vessel was in manifest distress, and had apparently not much longer to float.

It was some time after this that Cavendish, having at length disposed of his previous antagonist, ordered his ship to be laid alongside the *Gloria del Mundo*, with the object of capturing her out of hand, and making a prize of her before she sank. This was accordingly done, and the crash which Roger had heard, followed by the cries and musketry, was indeed, as he believed, the result of the English vessel being laid alongside and the rush of the English boarders.

It goes without saying that Harry was among the first to board, and he immediately commenced his search for Roger, but unluckily began it in a totally different quarter from that in which Roger had been placed.

The *Gloria del Mundo* was soon in the hands of the English, but it was found that she was sinking too fast for them to save her, and the boarders were at once recalled.

Harry, however, determined not to leave without his friend, and he was therefore left behind when the Englishmen returned to their own vessel. The grapnels uniting the two ships were cut, and at once the craft began to drift apart, Harry being left on board the Spanish vessel searching for Roger.

How he found him and rescued him, obtaining possession of certain documents at the very last moment, and hoisted Roger on deck even as the ship swamped beneath their feet, has already been told.

Now, as to the result of the action. Of the two ships first engaged by the English—the *Maria Dolorosa* and the *Buena Vista* —the latter had been sunk at the commencement of the action, and the former had blown up.

The third ship, the *Gloria del Mundo*, had sunk. The *Salvador* and *El Capitan* were the only two of the Spanish fleet that still remained afloat, and both were fearfully knocked about. The *Salvador* had lost all her masts, every one of her boats had been smashed to pieces by the gun-fire of the English, and her sides were everywhere perforated with shot-holes. But a prize crew had been put on board her, and was now hard at work patching her up and rendering her seaworthy, rigging jury-masts, cutting away wreckage, and otherwise putting her once more into sailing trim. *El Capitan* was in a similar condition. She had still her mizzenmast standing; but otherwise she was as badly damaged as her companion, and was undergoing the same repairs and refit.

The Spaniards who had escaped on board the *Salvador* and *El Capitan* from the other vessels, and the crews of the two ships themselves still left alive, had been divided into five batches, one being put on board each ship. This was done by way of precaution, since, thus separated, there was much less likelihood of their attempting to recapture their own ships or take those of the English.

The English squadron had suffered almost as badly, for although none of the vessels had been sunk, they were all in a very seriously damaged condition. Cavendish's vessel, the *Stag Royal*, had lost all her masts, and was in great danger of foundering, her appearance being that of a huge mass of wreckage rather than a ship; but the carpenters were hard at work on her, and were making good her defects as quickly as possible.

The other two vessels of the English fleet, the *Elizabeth* and the *Good Adventure*, were not quite so much cut up as the ship of the commodore, but stood in need of a good deal of repair before they would be again serviceable.

The English had put prize crews on board the two Spanish ships, sadly depleting the companies of their own ships, and all hands were kept hard at the work of repair, for Cavendish knew that, in the event of a gale springing up, none of the ships would weather it in their existing condition. It was very trying work, too, this patching up of the vessels at sea, and at the best it could be nothing more than a temporary repair. But at last, after three days of incessant toil, all five of the craft were reported as fit to proceed on the voyage. Yet it was agreed that they ought to run for some place where the ships might be beached, careened, and overhauled thoroughly; otherwise they could not be trusted to weather the storms which they would inevitably meet with on their proposed cruising-ground, which was the Caribbean Sea.

Cavendish therefore summoned a conclave of the captains of his little squadron in the cabin of the flag-ship, to decide upon some place where they might go to execute the necessary repairs.

The charts were got out and laid upon the table; courses were laid off to various places, and the distances thereto measured and calculated; and after some discussion it was decided unanimously that they should run for the West India Islands, trusting that they might meet with no Spanish squadron either on the way or at their rendezvous for overhauling.

The place they agreed to make for was the eastern end of the island of Cuba, as this island lay on their direct course for the Caribbean Sea and the coast of Mexico, where they intended to cruise in the hope of picking up some plate-laden galleon from Vera Cruz or Tampico.

This island of Cuba was, it is true, a Spanish possession, but it was at this time newly discovered and only very sparsely populated. So, by keeping to the eastern extremity of the island, and maintaining a sharp lookout whilst the ships were in the process of careening, they hoped to avoid any encounter with their enemies until, the ships being properly repaired and once more serviceable, they should find themselves in a position to resume their cruise with a view to the securing of more prizes.

The squadron of five ships which they had just beaten had been sent out from Cadiz to intercept Cavendish and prevent him from reaching the Indies, and, being a war fleet, had no treasure on board. The gain to the English consisted, therefore, solely in the

acquisition of two more ships for their little fleet; but this was not altogether an unmixed blessing, because, with the obligation to man their extra two vessels, the whole five were now short-handed.

Cavendish gave his orders to his captains, which were that the five vessels should make for the eastern end of Cuba, and, if separated, meet at a spot the bearings of which he gave them, about a day's sail from the island, whence they would proceed in company, so as to arrive at their agreed destination all together.

It now remained to appoint two captains to the prizes and put prize crews on board them, and this was soon done. Cavendish appointed the first and second officers of his flag-ship as captains of the two captured Spanish ships, replacing his first officer by the third, a man named Leigh, and appointing Roger to the vacant post of second officer.

It had been his intention to promote Harry to a position as officer on one of the captured ships, but the lad begged so hard to be allowed to remain in the same vessel as Roger that Cavendish at last consented, adding that he thought Harry was throwing away an opportunity which might not again occur. So long as he might remain by Roger's side, however, Harry did not very much care. “Besides,” thought he, “we made a compact to remain always by one another, and I am sure Roger would have stayed with me had I been appointed instead of him.”

The signal was now made for all sail possible to be carried, so that they might the sooner reach their rendezvous and begin the work of overhauling and repairs of which they stood in such urgent need. If separated by storm or any other mischance they were to meet at the place agreed upon during the conclave in the cabin of the flag-ship.

Sail was made accordingly, and the little squadron, now increased by two ships, but with sadly diminished crews, resumed its voyage.

For the first three days all went smoothly, the speed of the whole being regulated by the pace of the slowest vessel in the squadron. On the evening of the third day, however, the weather showed signs of changing. They had been sailing along with a good following breeze, the sky overhead a deep, cloudless, sapphire blue, and the sea smooth enough to relieve them from all uneasiness. Now, however, the sun was sinking toward the horizon like a ball of dull red copper, and the western sky, instead of being clear as previously, was heavy with black clouds that were banking up and threatening to obscure the sun ere it set. Overhead, too, deep violet clouds made their appearance, tinged here and there to lurid red and orange by the rays of the fast-disappearing luminary. The air, moreover, felt dull and heavy, and carried a peculiar odour not unlike brimstone. This singular condition of the atmosphere was not without its effect on the men, who felt listless and disinclined to work. A sense of impending peril seemed to be hanging over all. The wind, too, was gradually dying away, and came fitfully and at intervals in hot, sulphurous puffs. The sea, which had been sparkling in thousands of tiny wavelets in the rays of the sun, began to assume a dark and oily appearance; and a long swell was

beginning to make itself felt, causing the sails, as they drooped against the masts, to flap noisily with a sound like the crack of an arquebuse.

Gradually the sky grew blacker and more overcast, and the sea assumed the appearance of ink. The five ships of the squadron were all well within sight of one another, and lay motionless save for their uneasy heaving to the swell which was now fast-rising. Having lost steerage-way, they were “boxing the compass", that is, were heading first in one direction and then in another, their bows slowly swinging until they pointed in various directions. Cavendish was on deck, looking anxiously at the sky, and presently he gave the order to all hands to shorten sail, and hailed the ship lying nearest to him to do the same.

The other vessels were lying too far away for a hail to carry, and there was no wind to lift the signal flags if hoisted; but the commodore was relieved to see the remainder of the fleet follow his example. In a few moments the canvas of the whole squadron was seen coming heavily down or being rolled up on the yards; and before very long all the ships were either under bare poles or being snugged down with everything secured ready for any emergency.

Cavendish, however, still remained very anxious: and he had cause enough for his anxiety. For his squadron had only recently come through a heavy action, and their timbers were strained; masts had been merely secured in a temporary manner, and the necessary stays and fore and aft preventers had not yet all been rigged; indeed, the process of bending new sails, ropes, etcetera, was still being gone on with although the ships had been got under way at the earliest possible moment. Shot-holes had been only roughly plugged, and in some of the vessels pumping was still being carried on day and night. The two prizes had been knocked about still more badly; in fact the whole squadron was in a very unfit state to encounter even a strong gale, and the coming storm threatened something very much worse than this. But everything was battened down and made as snug as possible, and all that Cavendish could now do was to trust in Providence and hope his ships would survive the tempest, since nothing had been left undone that mortal hands could possibly do.

A dull moaning sound at length began to make itself heard, and several hot sulphurous gusts of wind came down out of the north; the blocks overhead creaked, the cordage rattled, and in the heavy silence weird noises made themselves perceptible. Roger and Harry were standing on the poop, exchanging comments on the weather, and Cavendish and his chief officer, Richard Leigh, were in close conversation on the main-deck just below them, glancing anxiously from time to time toward the northward, where the sky had become black almost as midnight.

“Look there, Harry,” observed Roger, pointing to the main-topgallant yard; and, looking up, Harry perceived two lambent globes of greenish fire.

As he continued looking and wondering what they might be, other weird lights made

their appearance on the yard-arms and on the very tops of the masts, presenting a beautiful, but at the same time a very eerie, spectacle. The same phenomenon was to be seen on the spars of every vessel in sight; and as it was by this time very nearly dark (there being scarcely any twilight in these latitudes), the whole squadron had the appearance of being illuminated.

“Whatever can it possibly be?” queried Harry; “I have never seen anything like it before.”

“I suspect,” returned Roger, “that it is in some way connected with the approaching storm. I have heard sailors speak of those lights as witch-lights, death-gleams, and corposants, and their appearance is said always to foretell disaster. I hope, however, that they do not forebode evil on this occasion, although things are looking decidedly unpleasant just now.”

Cavendish, hearing their conversation, looked up, and, observing the apprehension of the two, explained to them that the lights were termed, by the Portuguese navigators, “Lights of Saint Elmo”; and he assured the lads that the lights were not the cause of, but the harbingers of, storm.

“I fear, however,” added he, “that we are in for a bad time of it, and you youngsters had better beware lest you be swept overboard when the sea rises; for if anyone is washed over the side during what is coming he will have no chance of being picked up again. So take care, young men!”

Suddenly Roger perceived, far away to the north, a line of white, which looked like a thin streak of paint drawn across an ebony background, and the dull moaning noise in the air quickly grew in volume, at the same time becoming more shrill. Roger shouted down a warning to Leigh, who was standing near the wheel, and pointed away in the direction from which the line of white was approaching. Cavendish, who had just walked forward to make sure that all was as it should be, heard the warning, and shouted an order for all on deck to prepare for the outfly, and then, seizing his speaking-trumpet, rushed up on the poop beside the boys, and roared out a warning to the only ship within hail. Then, turning, he told the two lads to get down off the poop on to the main-deck, where they would be sheltered to a certain extent by the high bulwarks of the ship. In obedience to this command they hurried down the starboard accommodation ladder, whilst Cavendish made his way down the one on the port side, and all three reached the deck together.

Cavendish then shouted some order to Leigh at the wheel, but whatever it may have been, his words were drowned by the awful shriek and roar of the hurricane as it burst upon them.

To Harry and Roger, who had never experienced anything of the kind before, it seemed as though some mighty invisible hand had smitten the ship, throwing her over on to her beam-ends. She heeled down before the blast until it seemed as though she would

capsize altogether, while the two boys were precipitated both together across the streaming decks into the lee scuppers, whence they found it impossible to escape owing to the excessive slant of the deck.

Leigh was hanging on to the wheel for his life, endeavouring to put the helm hard up, and so turn the ship's stern to the wind to enable her to run before the gale—the only course possible under the circumstances.

Cavendish and a few men in the fore-part of the vessel were meanwhile striving manfully to hoist a staysail and get some way upon the ship, so as to help her to pay off before the sea, and so save her from being pooped by the waves, which were rising higher and higher every moment.

At length the stability of the ship prevailed, and she began to right. Then, Roger and Harry, rushing to Leigh's assistance, helped him to put the helm up, and the ship paid off and began to scud before the wind, while Cavendish, encouraging his little body of men up in the eyes of the ship, managed to get the foresail set, after having had it nearly blown out of the bolt-ropes.

Looking astern, the boys saw the huge seas rushing after them, each one threatening to engulf the craft and send her to the bottom; and indeed that would speedily have been her fate had the men not been able to set the small rag of sail, and thus made it possible for her to keep ahead of the waves.

The foaming crests of the sea were ablaze with phosphorescence, and appeared to tower above the poop as high as the main-topsail-yard, and the sight of them sweeping along after the ship was positively appalling. The wind now began to increase in violence, literally tearing off the summits of the huge waves and sending them in spindrift hurtling across the deck like showers of shot that cut the face like the lash of a whip. The uproar was terrific, the shrieking and howling of the wind blending with the creaking and straining of the timbers of the labouring ship. Crash succeeded crash aloft, but they could distinguish nothing of what was happening because of the intense blackness. Yet the motion of the ship was becoming steadier, for the reason that the wind was so strong that it was actually beating down the sea.

Suddenly the two lads heard a rending and tearing sound, followed by a crash quite close to them, as something weighty smote the deck; and through the fearful din that raged round them there rang out the scream of a man in agony.

“Harry,” said Roger, “that is the mizzenmast come down, and it has injured some poor fellow! Let us endeavour to reach him if we can.”

And, still holding to each other, they began to feel their way carefully along the deck, which was now encumbered with wreckage.

Suddenly Harry cried out, and fell over something, which proved to be the wreck of the fallen mast.

“Are you hurt, Harry?” queried Roger.

“No, lad,” came the response, “and I think I have found the poor fellow whose scream we heard just now; he seems to have been crushed by the mast as it fell. If you will stoop down here, you will be able to feel his body. Had we but a lever of some kind we might perhaps be able to raise the mast sufficiently to drag him from underneath it.”

Roger climbed over the mast and, feeling for Harry, knelt down beside him, where he found the body that Harry had fallen upon when he tripped over the mast.

By touch he found that the poor seaman, whoever he was, was pinned down immovably to the deck, the mast lying right across the middle of his body.

Roger put his mouth to the ear of the man, and shouted: “Are you badly hurt; and can you move with assistance?”

He caught the reply: “Is that you, Master Trevose? I am pinned down by this spar, and I believe my leg is broken; but if you could manage to get the mast raised by ever so little, I believe I could scramble out from under it.”

“Can we find a lever anywhere?” shouted Roger.

“There are a couple of handspikes in the rack close to you; if you can find these, they will do,” replied the wounded seaman.

Roger worked his way to the rack indicated by the man, and fortunately found the handspikes at once. Taking them both, he quickly scrambled back again and handed one to Harry, retaining the other himself.

The two lads then prized the points under the mast, and threw all their weight on the shafts, using them as levers. They felt the mast quiver and move slightly.

“That's the way, Master Trevose; one more lift like that and I'll be out from under,” shouted the man.

Roger and Harry again exerted all their strength, the mast rose perceptibly, and they heard a cry of pain from the seaman as he wormed himself from under the spar.

“I be out now, Master,” came the voice; “if ye can lift me up and get me below, I'll thank ye.”

One of them supporting him on either side, they raised the unfortunate fellow upright, and with great difficulty assisted him across the deck, and so to the companion-hatch, which they found without trouble, as it was now growing somewhat lighter. The clouds were not quite so thick, and an occasional gleam came from the moon as she was uncovered.

They got the man below, Roger taking him on his back down the companion-ladder, while Harry ran for the surgeon. The latter soon made his appearance, and attended to the sufferer, who proved to be an ordinary seaman named Morgan.

Having seen the patient off their hands and well attended to, the couple returned to the deck.

They found that the wind was lessening every moment, and the clouds were disappearing fast, permitting the moon to shine out fitfully; but the sea, no longer kept down by the pressure of the wind, was rising rapidly.

“I think the squall is past its worst, Harry,” said Roger. “What we have to fear now is the sea, which will get worse, I am afraid, ere it goes down—but look there! Merciful Heaven! what is that?” he continued, pointing away over their port quarter with his finger.

The inky blackness had lifted somewhat, and they could plainly perceive the hull of one of their own ships, presumably; but her ports were open, and her interior appeared as a glowing furnace, while, even as they looked, tongues of fire spurted up from her deck and began to lick round her masts, and from the hapless vessel a long wail of anguish and despair came floating down the wind.

Every eye in the ship was at once turned to the burning vessel, which they presently made out to be, by her rig, the *Salvador*, one of the two captured Spanish vessels.

What seemed to have happened was that the Spanish prisoners confined below had fired the ship before the squall came down, in the hope of being able to overpower their captors in the ensuing confusion, trusting to luck for the opportunity to extinguish the conflagration afterwards. The storm arising after they had set fire to the vessel, however, the wind had fanned the flames until she had become a raging fiery furnace fore-and-aft. And there was no means of affording succour to the miserable men on board her, for the sea was running tremendously high and rising every minute.

She was an awful but gorgeous spectacle, presenting the appearance of a floating volcano, vomiting flame and smoke as she rushed along before the wind; but still more awful were the cries and shrieks of agony that were borne to them across the intervening water.

Cavendish at once gave orders that his ship should be run as close as possible, compatible with her safety, and this was done; but it was impossible to save her wretched crew, and the rest of the fleet endured the misery of beholding their comrades burn, together with the panic-stricken Spaniards, the authors of the calamity, as many of whom as possible had been released as soon as the fire was discovered.

A speedy end, however, came to the appalling tragedy which was taking place before their very eyes; for while they still watched, powerless to save, a terrific explosion occurred, followed by a rain of blazing pieces of timber and, gruesome sight! of portions of human bodies which had been whirled aloft, and now came hurtling down on the decks of the flag-ship. The fire had reached the *Salvador's* magazine!

This awful spectacle cast a deep gloom over the entire ship's company.

Shortly afterwards, none of the other vessels being in sight, and the sea having moderated somewhat, Cavendish ordered the ship's course to be altered, and they again bore up for the rendezvous.

On the tenth day after the storm they reached, without further adventure, the agreed latitude and longitude, and hove-to, waiting for the remainder of the squadron to make its appearance.

Two days later, the first of the other vessels, the *Elizabeth*, made her appearance, and on the same evening, by the light of the tropic stars, the other two joined them.

All four remained hove-to until daybreak. Early on the following morning they all got under weigh again, and headed for the land, which now could not be many miles distant.

Shortly after noon came the ever-welcome cry from the masthead: “Land ho!”

“Where away?” demanded the officer of the watch.

“Dead ahead,” answered the lookout.

“Keep her as she goes,” ordered Cavendish; and with an ever-lessening wind they glided toward the land that climbed higher and higher above the horizon by imperceptible degrees.

By the end of the first dog-watch on that same evening they were close enough to make out the formation of the land; and at length, sighting a bay that looked promising for their purpose, they bore up for it, sounding all the way as they went.

As the land opened up, the bay toward which they were heading appeared to offer increasingly advantageous facilities for careening and repairing; and they presently passed in between two low headlands covered with palms, and dropped anchor in the calm inlet in six fathoms of water, at which depth they could clearly see the bottom of sand thickly dotted with shells and broken pieces of coral.

At last, after many weary and fateful days, they had reached a haven on the other side of the Atlantic; a haven in one of the islands of those fabled Indies where, if legend was to be believed, gold was to be found more plentifully than iron in England!

All hands gazed longingly at the shore; but leave could not be granted that night, as the country was unknown, and although it appeared to be uninhabited, they could not be certain what eventualities might arise. Cavendish, therefore, deemed it better to wait until morning, and then send a strong force on shore to reconnoitre and explore.

Meanwhile Roger and Harry went below to their bunks and slumbered, dreaming of the coming morn. Those of the crew who were off duty slept on deck or in their hammocks, as the fancy took them; the anchor watch was set; and thus all hands, waking or sleeping, waited for the morning which should disclose to them this garden of Paradise.

CHAPTER SIX. HOW THEY INVESTIGATED A CERTAIN CIPHER AND MET WITH SOME ADVENTURES.

Day had scarcely broken next morning ere Harry and Roger tumbled out of their bunks, dressed, and went up on deck, so eager were they once more to be on shore after their many long days at sea.

As they came on deck the sun rose in all his tropic grandeur, and transfigured the little inlet—with the ships floating on its bosom, its environment of green palms and tropical verdure, and its golden sands running down to the water's edge—into a veritable nook of fairyland.

For a distance, so far as they could judge, of about three miles the ground appeared to be fairly level, rising very gradually, and thickly covered with tropical foliage. Beyond that there was a range of hills, apparently about a thousand feet high; and beyond these again rose peak after peak of lofty mountains, the bare summits of the tallest glowing like jewels in the brilliant tropical light. Close at hand, on the southern shore of the inlet, lofty cliffs ran sheer down to the water's edge, where a ledge of rocks ran out some little distance into the bay, and these rocks seemed to be literally honey-combed with caves. On the northern side of the inlet the water shoaled gradually, terminating on a beach of clean yellow sand, which again stretched for some distance above water mark, and was then lost among the bush foliage. Tall coco-nut palms graced the margin of the inlet, and, behind them, trees bearing oranges, guavas, bananas, lemons, mangoes, and various other kinds of tropical fruits could be discerned close at hand. It was in truth a lovely scene that the lads gazed upon that bright morning.

There was a moderately good rise and fall of tide, judging from the marks on the beach, and the northern shore was undoubtedly the one that would be chosen by Cavendish for careening his vessels, as the ground sloped steeply but evenly, the sand was firm and hard, and the trunks of the palm-trees would be very useful for securing the hawsers, by means of which they would heave the vessels down on their beam-ends.

The sun mounted higher in the clear blue of the heavens as they looked, and all about them rose the sounds of awakening nature. Away back in the woods they could hear the chattering of monkeys; parrots and birds of bright plumage screamed and sang and fluttered among the trees near the beach; and several bright-plumaged flamingoes stalked gravely about the shallows, seeking their morning meal in the limpid water.

Presently, too, life on board the vessels was stirring, and the shrill whistle of the boatswain's pipe roused all hands to their duties. The men came tumbling up from below, and the business of the day commenced.

The officers of the ship and the two lads went down presently to breakfast, after which leave to go on shore was granted to several of them, including Roger and Harry.

Those who were going ashore quickly determined to make up a party and keep together, because as yet they knew nothing of the country, and there was the chance that it might

be inhabited; in which case, if separated, and any savages were in the neighbourhood, the whites might find themselves awkwardly situated.

As many of the crew as could be spared were also allowed to go on shore for a few hours before the business of careening and refitting commenced; and, needless to say, they were delighted at the prospect of having a little more space wherein to walk about than the narrow decks of their own ships, and also of being able to get some fresh fruit—of which they stood in great need, scurvy having already appeared among them.

After breakfast, therefore, they quickly got the boats over the side, and soon there was a regular procession of them from the vessels to the shore.

Once there, the seamen immediately began to gather the fresh fruit, and, collecting a pile of what they most fancied, they lay down beside it, and ate at their ease, their past perils forgotten for the moment, and all of them supremely happy.

A few of the more adventurous spirits, however, went off into the woods on a tour of investigation, taking their muskets and bows with them, in the hope of procuring a little fresh meat.

Roger and Harry, who had, of course, gone ashore with the first boat-load, stood for a while on the beach at the edge of the water, undecided for the moment what to do first.

Harry suggested having a bathe in the limpid water of the little bay, first of all; and indeed it looked so inviting that Roger was not slow in seconding the proposition.

Accordingly they soon slipped off their clothes, and were quickly disporting themselves like young dolphins in the water, when Harry, glancing up, saw the ships lying, as it seemed, only some quarter of a mile away, their shapes reflected in the water with such distinctness that it was difficult to say where the substance ended and the shadow began.

This apparent proximity of the ships immediately put an idea into both their heads at the same moment, and they both shouted together: “Let us have a race off to the *Stag Royal*.”

They laughed that they should have spoken the same words together, and they immediately decided that they would have a wager of a noble on the event.

“Are you ready, then, Roger? 'tis a race to the *Stag Royal*; and the first up the ship's side and on her deck will win the noble,” exclaimed Harry.

“Agreed, lad; away we go!” replied Roger.

And the two started off, swimming strongly, with a side stroke instead of the breast; for although the former required more power, yet it was the faster stroke, and they reckoned their strength to be quite equal to a much longer distance than that to the ship.

But, as is invariably the case, distance viewed over water is deceptive, and by the time that they had done three-quarters of the course both were feeling pretty well fagged out with their unusual exertions, though neither would admit it; and the fact remained that

they were swimming much slower than at the start. Suddenly they were startled by a loud hail from the deck of the *Stag Royal*—the ship for which they were making,—in the voice of Cavendish.

“Be not frightened, lads, but pull out as fast as you can for the ship; there are sharks coming after you!”

Their hearts leapt in their breasts at this startling news, and, looking hurriedly round, they perceived, to their horror, that several black triangular dorsal fins were cleaving the water in their wake, and closing rapidly in upon them.

Fortunately the water in the direction in which they were swimming was as yet clear, to all appearance.

“Cannot you send a boat, sir? We are nearly exhausted with the swim,” hailed Roger, who was slightly in advance of Harry.

“Nay, that I cannot, lad, for all the boats are still on shore. You must swim, and for your lives' sake swim hard,” answered Cavendish from the deck of the ship.

He was leaning anxiously over the bulwarks, and the rail was lined with the faces of the few seamen who were left on board, while two of them had gone down the accommodation ladder and were waiting at the foot, ready to haul the lads in as soon as they were near enough.

The men on board now quickly seized whatever missiles they could lay their hands on, and stood ready to bombard the sharks, in the hope of driving them off, if they did not seize the lads before they got within range.

As for Harry and Roger, they struck out with the energy of terror; but each felt that he was tiring with every stroke, while the knowledge that at any moment they might feel themselves in the jaws of one of those sea-tigers seemed to paralyse their limbs. Their flesh crept with the horror of the thought.

Harry, especially, was showing manifest symptoms of increasing distress; while Roger, resisting the impulse to swim on and reach safety, kept valiantly at his side, encouraging him.

“Go on, Roger,” at length gasped Harry; “I am done, and cannot reach the ship. Swim you on and get on board; I will follow if I can.”

“Nay, Harry, lad,” answered Roger, “either we both get on board, or—or not; we did not make our compact to break it at the first sign of danger. Do your utmost, and we shall yet get on board all right.”

Even in his extremity Harry could not avoid noticing that Roger hesitated when he came to “or—or not;” the brave lad could not bring himself to utter the alternative in words.

Before leaving the shore the boys had stripped down to their pantaloons and vests, which they had retained as a makeshift bathing-costume. Now, as luck would have it,

Roger invariably wore a belt round his waist, to which was attached a very fine Venetian dagger, slender of blade, sharp as a razor, and very strong.

This had been given him by his father as a parting keepsake, and he looked upon it almost as a kind of talisman; he therefore never allowed it to leave his person.

Merely by force of habit he had buckled this belt and dagger about him before starting for the swim, and now, in the moment of his deadly danger, he suddenly recollected that he had it on him, and an idea came to him like an inspiration.

“Harry, swim you on and reach the ship,” said he. “I am not at all tired, and I have my dagger with me; swim on, and I will swim after you. Argue not, lad, you will but waste your breath; do as I say, and make all haste to the ship.”

Harry, knowing that when Roger spoke thus it was useless to argue, did as he was ordered, and struck out for the vessel with such energy as he could muster.

For his part, Roger drew his dagger, and held it firmly in his hand; and then, swimming after Harry, began to splash and shout with all his might.

The fins, which had by this time come very close to them, paused suddenly and scattered at the unexpected commotion; and a little time was thus gained for the fugitives, who made the utmost of it.

The sharks, however, were not so easily to be denied, and presently they began to close in again; by which time Harry was approaching the side of the *Stag Royal*, while Roger was still some distance behind, splashing and shouting vigorously.

The fins drew nearer and nearer with deadly determination.

Abandoning now the splashing, which was greatly exhausting him, Roger put out all his remaining strength and swam for his life, while, the splashing having ceased, the sharks were after him again at once.

It was now a race, not between two boys for a wager of a noble, but between a boy and a school of sharks, with the boy's life as the stake.

The sharks were fast gaining upon Roger, and he and they were as yet quite out of range of the missiles with which the men were ready to pelt the ravenous monsters. But Harry had meanwhile reached the ship and been hauled in and deposited on deck, where he immediately sank down fainting with exhaustion.

Then, seeing his friend safe, Roger redoubled his efforts, and the distance between the sharks and him lessened but slightly, while he decreased the distance between himself and the ship very perceptibly.

These herculean efforts could not last long, however, and the sharks once more began to draw in upon him.

The men on the deck of the ship now shouted, and flung their missiles as far as they

could; but the swimmer and the sharks were still too far off for the latter to be frightened by the bombardment.

Inch by inch the ravenous fish closed in on the lad.

He glanced over his shoulder as he swam, and as he perceived how close the monsters were, the men on board the ship could see, even at that distance, that his face turned livid.

The foremost shark was nearly on him now, and there was yet a considerable distance to cover ere he could reach safety.

Suddenly the leading fin disappeared, and the watchers knew that the shark had dived, in order the better to seize its prey. Their warning was roared over the water to him, but apparently too late, for with their shout, Roger's body disappeared!

A cry of horror at once went up from the ship, and strong men turned away, unwilling to witness the death of their favourite.

Those who still watched, however, almost immediately saw a tremendous disturbance of the water just below the spot where Roger had disappeared; and presently a broad blotch of red stained the blue water of the inlet, while a deep groan went up from the assembled crowd on deck. But the groan quickly changed to a mighty cheer as they saw Roger's form appear again at some considerable distance nearer the ship, and evidently safe and sound, for he was still swimming strongly. And immediately after, in his rear, the body of the shark rose to the surface, floating on its back, dead! The remainder of the sharks instantly flung themselves upon the carcass, tearing it to pieces, and churning up a bloody froth as they struggled and tore and fought for their share of the spoil.

Roger had done the only thing possible to save his life. As the shark dived, so did he, and, swimming below the brute, he had ripped up its belly with several strong slashing blows from his keen dagger, thus effectually ridding himself of one adversary, and trusting that the remainder of the school would wait to devour it—as indeed they had done,—thus giving him a further chance to escape.

He was now quite near the ship; but the sharks had quickly disposed of the carcass of their companion, and were again after him. Roger, however, was now within range. So, as the sharks came on in pursuit, they were bombarded with every description of missile upon which the men could lay their hands, a proceeding which checked them slightly, and gave Roger a little more grace.

At length, utterly exhausted, the plucky lad reached the foot of the accommodation ladder, but just in time, for, as he was pulled clear of the water, a pair of huge jaws clashed behind him with a sound that made him nearly faint, so suggestive was it of what he had so narrowly escaped.

By the time that he reached the deck Harry had fully recovered, and he was the first to grasp Roger's hand and wring it convulsively as the latter stepped inboard. Harry could

find no words wherewith to express his feelings adequately, but the pressure of his hand spoke for him, and Roger felt amply repaid for all he had done.

“And now, young gentlemen,” said Cavendish sternly, when the young hero of the adventure had been recovered somewhat by the administration of a liberal dose of rum, “let this be a warning to you never again to go bathing in these seas. You have both had a most miraculous escape, and I for one had given the pair of you up as lost. But, thank Heaven, you are safe after all. Only never let it occur again. But I suppose you will take care of that,” he added with a twinkle in his eye. “Your first experience with Johnny Shark has been enough for you, hasn't it?”

They reassured him on that point, and both then went below to dress. When they were again clothed, Harry said:

“And now, how shall we spend the remainder of the day, Roger? I don't feel like going ashore again to-day, even if we had a boat. The idea of crossing that sheet of water again does not very greatly appeal to me just now.”

“I feel pretty much as you do,” replied Roger. “I have had quite enough of the water for to-day. As an alternative, I suggest that we investigate that sheaf of documents that we took out of the *Gloria del Mundo* at the time of the battle. That fellow Alvarez seemed feverishly anxious to find a certain paper, and bitterly disappointed at his failure, so perhaps there may be something of value among them.”

So saying, Roger went to his sea-chest, and, having unlocked it, drew out the bundle of papers to which he had referred, and laid it on the table.

They ran through most of them without finding anything of interest, those examined proving to be merely papers relating to the provisioning of the ship, and one or two old charts with courses marked off on them.

On another chart, however, they found something that claimed a moment's attention. It was one upon which the position of the Spanish intercepting fleet had been laid down, together with the supposed course that the English vessels would steer, thus proving that they had correctly anticipated the movements of the English. This they put aside, intending to hand it to Cavendish, as it would be of interest to him.

“This is probably the document that scoundrel Alvarez was looking for while the *Gloria del Mundo* was sinking,” said Roger, who had related to Harry all that had happened while he was awaiting death in the cabin of the Spanish vessel.

“Hardly that,” demurred Harry. “I should think it would be something of much more importance; because, you see, this would not be of much value to him after the action. Let us search further.”

They did so, and presently came upon a sheet of rough parchment, which had escaped the search of Alvarez through its having worked its way into a folded chart.

They spread it open upon the table, and found that they could make nothing of it, as it

appeared to be a mass of figures, and nothing else.

“I wonder what on earth this can be,” said Roger. “It seems to be nothing but a lot of figures put down anyhow. I expect it is merely a sheet of scribbling-paper, upon which some rough calculations have been worked. At any rate it is of no importance, and clearly is not what Alvarez was looking for.”

“Wait one moment, Roger,” said Harry; “be not over-hasty, lad. I believe this is more important than it looks. May it not be a cipher of some kind? Let us have another look at it.”

The document presented the following appearance:—

1581.
2227 1819 1919 2622 1820 1335 1138 1918
1717 2020 1618 2727 2722 2222 3811 1819 1816
1237 2225 1915 1515 2424 2525 1730 2014 1430
1718 2121 1420 1920 3014 1830 1519 2120 1915
2018 1030 1440 1614 3019 2017 1028 2226 1930
1226 1616 1324 1325 1236 1818 1235 1222 1218
3118 2725 3113 1334 3217 1324 1424 1335 3212
1817 2019 1321 2824 1420 2021 1434 2121 3212
1533 3316 2223 1614 1433 3415 3311 1916 2220
2525 1715 1423 2322 3314 2414 1517 1816 3019
1416 1822 1618 2122 1120 2826 2022 1321 1424
2221 1930 2413 2014 2413 3311 2624 2029 1423
2512 1915 1614 2611 2319 1713 2320 2925 1519
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1618 1822 1816 2221 1917.

Beyond these figures, the paper, which seemed of considerable age, was perfectly blank.

The lads gazed earnestly at the mass of figures for some time, trying to fathom its meaning.

That a hidden meaning of some kind was attached to it was almost certain, as no sane man would put down a long string of figures to no purpose, or for mere pastime; and if the writer had not intended the meaning to be hidden, he would certainly have used words in preference to a number of mystifying figures.

“Roger,” said Harry, “the more I look at this cipher—for cipher I am convinced it is—the more certain do I feel that it is the key to something important or of value. Now, friend, do you notice anything peculiar about these figures?”

“I cannot say that I do,” answered Roger, “unless you mean that they are arranged in groups of four.”

“Yes, that is certainly so,” agreed Harry; “but there is somewhat else of significance, and that is, that, although they are grouped in fours for the most part, there are two groups of six figures, one of two, and one figure stands alone. These being different from the remainder of the cipher, we may at once set them down as denoting something different from the rest of the writing. I should say that possibly some direction, instruction, or it may even be a compass-bearing, is concealed in these two groups of six figures, while, to my mind, the figures 14 and 5, are to be read as they really are, that is as figures only; for I believe that the remainder of the figures stand for words or letters, as indeed they must, if any sense is to be made of the thing. Yes, the more I study this, the more certain am I that we have found something of value, and this, I am convinced, is the document you told me Alvarez was looking for while you were in the cabin of the sinking *Gloria del Mundo*.”

“By Saint George,” said Roger, “I am inclined to believe you are right, Harry; only I see not how it will benefit us if we cannot translate the cipher, and that seems to me impossible without the key thereto.”

“Nothing is impossible, my friend,” retorted Harry. “We have no key, it is true, but by repeated experiments we shall solve the thing eventually, I am sure.”

“Let us start trying right now, then,” suggested Roger.

“Well, starting from the beginning, let us take the first group of—”

“Mr Trevose, hie you on deck, if you please; I want you,” came Cavendish's voice down the companion at this moment, putting an abrupt end to the operations on the cipher.

Leaving Harry to put away the document in safety, Roger ran up on deck, and touched his hat to his captain.

“Mr Trevose,” said Cavendish, “one of the boats has just come off from the shore with a load of fresh fruit and vegetables which the men have collected. They have now had a

short spell ashore, and it is time for us to be thinking of work again; so I wish you to take this boat and proceed to the shore in her with instructions to Mr Leigh to collect all the men forthwith. Let them bring off as much fruit and vegetables as they can find, but they must not be very long about it. You can take your friend Edgwyth with you, if you will, and while the men are getting fresh provisions together you and he have my leave, after you have delivered my message, to do as you please until all are ready to come off aboard.

"And have a care," added the skipper, "that you two lads do not get into any further scrapes. You had a particularly narrow escape this morning, both of you, and perchance may not get off quite so easily next time."

Roger saluted, and forthwith ran down to inform Harry of his errand; whereupon the two mounted again to the deck and dropped into the boat, which was waiting for them alongside, and were soon being pulled over the water to the shore again.

Arrived at the beach, Roger enquired of the few men who were there where Mr Leigh was to be found. None of them seemed to know, but one man said he believed that Mr Leigh had gone in "that" direction—pointing it out with a stubby and tarry forefinger—and had taken a musket, with the intention, he thought, of getting some fresh meat for the pot.

The lads at once set off in the direction indicated, pushing their way through tangled underwood, and treading down in their passage many splendid and brilliant flowers, while startled birds, of rainbow plumage, flew out from the branches over their heads.

Everywhere stillness reigned supreme, and no sound or sign of any of the men was to be met with. They pushed resolutely forward, however, trying to discover some indication of people having passed that way before. So dense was the undergrowth in many places that Harry and Roger were obliged to draw their swords to cut a passage through it.

Presently Roger caught sight of a beautiful orchid on the trunk of a tree just below the first branch, and put forth his hand to gather it. As he did so there was a bright green flash, and the lad started back only just in time. There was a swish of steel, and a snake fell to the ground severed in half, yet still writhing horribly.

"A thousand thanks!" said Roger. "I owe you my life again, Harry. He would surely have bitten me if you had not been so quick with your sword."

They examined the reptile, which was about six feet long, and of a brilliant green above and light yellow underneath, with the heart-shaped head that betokened an extremely venomous variety. Tossing the two writhing halves of the body into the bush with the point of his sword, and giving a shrug of repugnance, Roger passed on, followed by Harry, with no further desire to pluck orchids, and each taking care to look well about him.

Presently they came to a small clearing, and on the opposite side saw an opening in the

bush which seemed to suggest that someone had recently passed that way.

They crossed the clearing and pushed through the opening on the other side, and, after going about half a mile, heard the report of a gun close to them, followed by a great fluttering of wings, as a host of startled birds flew away from the branches where they had been roosting.

A few moments later they came upon Leigh, accompanied by a seaman carrying a large bag, which seemed to be well filled, and gave promise of a few savoury meals in the immediate future.

Roger at once gave him Mr Cavendish's orders to reassemble the men, and then asked him how far he had succeeded in his hunting.

“Oh, very well, Roger!” replied Leigh. “I have nearly filled the bag, as you may see, and some of the birds are fine big fellows, and should be excellent eating. At any rate we will sample them at mess this evening. But I must be off and get the men together. As you two have liberty until we start for the ship, you may take this musket and ammunition, if you like, and try to shoot something on your own account. One's own shooting always tastes best, I am told,” he added with a laugh, as he prepared to return. “But I should not wander too far away, if I were you,” he advised. “We do not know the place as yet, and there may be dangers that we are not aware of; so be careful.”

The lads thanked Mr Leigh for the loan of the musket, and the lieutenant disappeared to collect the men, telling the lads that he would sound the trumpet if they were not in sight when it was time to return to the ships.

“Now,” said Roger, when Leigh had disappeared, “where are we to go, Harry?”

“Do you remember that ledge of rocks that we saw this morning?” asked Harry! “Well, we noticed quite a number of caves among them; what say you to going and having a look at them?”

“Agreed, my friend!” said Roger. “But can we get to them, I wonder, from here, without going back to the beach and walking all the way round?”

“Oh, yes! I think so,” answered Harry. “I believe I remember how they lie, and in what direction; and if we bear away to the left here it will bring us to them, no doubt.”

So the two turned off, and presently found another opening in the brush, through which they went.

“It appears to me,” said Roger presently, “as though someone had been along this way before us. See, some of the small branches are broken, and the growth beneath our feet seems to have been recently trodden. I expect we shall find that some of our men have been here before us, perhaps to look at those same caves themselves. If so, we can warn them to return immediately; and if they are in front of us it will give us a little longer, as it will take them some considerable time to get back to the boats from here.”

Thus reassured in their own minds—for there was always the danger of savages to consider,—they pressed on, but saw no further signs of the men whom they imagined to be in front of them.

“It is possible,” said Harry, his thoughts still dwelling upon the matter, “that if they have gone this way they are still at the caves. Or they may have gone back along the beach; for that, I suppose, is the nearest way of return. And if so, we shall not meet any of them coming this way; but we may overtake them.”

They had gone but a little distance farther when Roger looked up suddenly.

“Harry, I heard something whistle past my head a moment ago,” said he.

“Nonsense!” responded Harry. “What you heard was one of those small creatures they call `humming-birds' flying past your ear.”

“I am certain it was not,” retorted Roger. “If it had been, I should have seen as well as heard him, and—why, there it is again!”

“Yes, you are right, Roger; I heard it myself that time. I wonder what it can be?” exclaimed Harry.

“I don't know,” said Roger, “but it sounds very queer. Let us push on, or we shall have no time to explore those caves.”

They pushed forward for some little distance, and again heard, more than once, the same peculiar sibilant sound, as of something flying past them with great velocity; but they saw nothing, and could not account for the occurrence at all.

Suddenly Harry, who was behind, whispered to Roger: “Do not appear to take any notice, Roger, at present; but I distinctly saw the head of a savage peering at us from behind a tree when I turned my head just now, and I believe that what we heard was the sound of arrows flying past us. I should not be greatly surprised to find that there is quite a crowd of natives round us, and the only wonder to me is that we have not yet been hit. Now, we must press on and endeavour to reach the shelter of the caves, and there defend ourselves, if necessary, until assistance comes. It is useless to think of retreating by the way we have come; we should only be ambushed. Ah! I see two more faces looking at us over there in the bush. We had better make haste; but we only need walk a little faster. It will never do to run, or they will see that we have discovered them, and in that case they will attack us at once, and we shall have no chance here. By the way, is that musket loaded?”

“Yes,” replied Roger. “It was loaded when Leigh handed it to me; for I remember that, after the discharge we heard which led us to him, he was loading as we came up, and he did not fire again.”

“Very well,” said Harry, “we had better for the present trust to our swords; we must reserve the musket until the last. And you had better drop a few more bullets in, so that it will do as much execution as possible when we fire. And I trust to Heaven that the report

may bring some of our men up. But it will not do that if we fire now, as they will merely think we are shooting game. If we fire from the caves they will know there is no game there to shoot at, and it may attract their attention."

The two lads now moved as fast as they thought consistent with safety, and, to their great relief, at length perceived an opening in the trees, and got a glimpse of the sea beyond. A few minutes later they emerged on the beach, and found themselves quite close to the caves.

Then, having a clear ground, they took to their heels and ran as hard as they could for the nearest cave.

As they started to run, a chorus of savage yells broke on their ears, and what they had quite anticipated happened. The natives had at last left cover and were pursuing them at the top of their speed.

Roger and Harry, unaccustomed to running in sand, moved but slowly, and the savages gradually began to overhaul them. They were not far from the caves by this time, however, and presently they gained the entrance to one of them some fifty yards ahead of their pursuers.

As soon as they were safely inside, Roger turned, and, raising the musket to his shoulder, discharged the piece point-blank into the midst of the nearest group of running savages.

It was a lucky discharge, and the extra bullets that they had put in, scattering as they flew, had almost the effect of a round of grape-shot, dropping no fewer than four of the blacks. It did not check their rush, however, and there was no time to reload before the howling, yelling mob were upon them.

Roger and Harry had at once taken up positions, one on each side of the entrance to the cave, allowing themselves sufficient room to avoid striking each other with the blades of their long swords, which, with the now useless musket, were all the weapons they had.

The savages came at them with a rush, stabbing furiously with their spears, and forced on by those behind, who feared to use their bows and arrows at such close quarters lest they should hit their companions.

The long sword-blades, however, rose and fell untiringly, flashing in the sunlight, now parrying a spear-thrust, and anon making a sweeping cut, and with every blow at least one savage had cause to regret his temerity.

The natives, however, had numbers on their side, the sound replacing the fallen until quite a heap of dead and wounded began to grow at the entrance to the cave.

They were likewise growing chary of those long blades of steel that hewed through shield and spear-haft as though they had been paper.

At length one of the natives stooped down and picked up the dead body of a fallen

comrade, held it before him as a shield, and rushed toward the defenders of the cave, and as Harry thrust at him he flung the body full upon the sword's point, where it remained impaled, dragging Harry's weapon from his grip. The man then lunged savagely with his spear, but Roger's wary eye was on him, and the fraction of a second before the spear left the fellow's grasp the sword flashed and fell, and the savage stood looking stupidly for a moment at the arm still grasping the spear, that had fallen at his feet, ere he himself sank, groaning, to the ground.

Harry shouted his thanks across to Roger, and drew his sword out of the impaled body with some difficulty, determined not to be so tricked again, and once more the battle went furiously on, the savages surging madly about the cave's mouth, and the two lads straining every nerve to keep their stronghold inviolate.

“I wonder,” gasped Roger, “how long it will be before Leigh collects all the men, and, missing us, sends out a search-party?”

“They should all be mustered long before this,” replied his companion. “You must remember that it took us some time to reach this place, and Leigh started to look for the men directly we left him. Hark! there goes the trumpet for our recall, unless I am mistaken. Did you not hear it?”

“I think I heard something,” answered Roger. “If it was indeed the trumpet, it means that Leigh has collected all the men and only waits for us; and he will not wait long before sending in search of us, because of the captain's orders to return on board as quickly as possible. If we could but find time to reload the musket and discharge it again, Leigh might possibly hear the report, and it would show him where to look for us.”

“That is true,” agreed Harry. “Now, Roger, leave me to defend the cave-mouth alone, and try to load the piece; the discharge may bring down the men, and if you load, as we did last time, with plenty of bullets, we shall do the enemy some considerable damage at the same time.”

It was no time for arguing. Roger therefore did as Harry had suggested, and, leaving the defence of the cave to his friend, grasped the musket and loaded it with frantic haste.

Seeing one of the defenders apparently retreating, the natives at once redoubled their onslaught, and spears came whizzing through the air, thick as falling autumn leaves.

The long blade, however, still flashed untiringly hither and thither, and the cave remained untaken.

“Hasten, Roger!” cried Harry. “I cannot much longer keep these fellows off unaided.”

“Coming, lad,” shouted Roger in return.

A huge native at this moment forced himself to the front and engaged Harry at close quarters, and, tired as he was, the boy knew his strength must soon fail. He responded gallantly, however, and drove the man back for an instant; but, with a cry like that of a furious beast, the fellow again leapt at him, and, beating down the sword-point, bore the

lad to the ground, at once shortening his spear to pin him to the earth.

Poor Harry closed his eyes, and for a moment experienced all the bitterness of death. But it was for a moment only. The weight suddenly rolled from his chest, and, opening his eyes, he saw Roger pulling his reeking blade from the savage's body. Then, dropping his sword, Roger raised the musket to his shoulder and fired into the thick of the group of natives.

With the report came a hearty English cheer as Leigh and a couple of dozen well-armed sailors rushed round a bend in the beach.

“Lie down! lie down!” roared Leigh, and as the two lads flung themselves to the floor of the cave, a storm of bullets whizzed over them that at once accounted for ten of the savages.

Then out came the hangers, and the sailors charged the remaining assailants, who turned resolutely to meet them, while Harry and Roger, rising from the floor of the cave, dashed down on the rear, cutting and slashing and thrusting with right good will, their strength renewed somewhat by a sight of their own countrymen.

Thus taken in front and rear, the blacks, seized with sudden panic, broke and fled, followed by another storm of shot from the sailors.

“Now,” shouted Leigh, “make for the boats ere they return in overwhelming numbers!”

In response to this order the English all went off along the beach at the double, and soon reached the boats, which were not very far away.

They embarked forthwith, and were soon once more on board their respective ships.

“Well, my boys,” said Cavendish as the inseparables climbed the ship's side, “this morning's adventure was not enough for you, it would appear, so you must needs go and get yourselves into another mess. Now, mark my words, you will some day get into a scrape, and one or the other of you will fail to come out again alive!”

CHAPTER SEVEN. THEY CAREEN THE SHIPS, ARE ATTACKED, AND DISCOVER THAT THEY ARE NOT THE FIRST TO VISIT THE INLET.

It was by this time fast approaching evening, and too late to start lightening the ships that day, since in the tropics the transition from broad daylight to total darkness is extremely sudden, the light dying away after sunset like the drawing of a curtain. The men, therefore, immediately upon their arrival on board, were piped down to supper, and ordered by their several officers to turn in early, as the next day would be a long and arduous one for them.

There was no moon, and the figures of the various men on watch could be but dimly discerned in the starlight, while the stars themselves, reflected in the dark water, made the placid surface of the bay look as though studded with gems, presenting a most

beautiful spectacle.

Roger and Harry, although they would have to work as hard as any of the others next morning, did not feel inclined to sleep, their minds being still in a state of unrest after their two hairbreadth escapes of the day. They therefore remained on deck, walking so softly up and down as to disturb nobody. They had taken but a few turns when their attention was attracted by the sound of low voices, being those of the men constituting the anchor watch. Roger and his friend strolled up to them, and, sitting down on the breech of a gun, prepared to listen to what was evidently a yarn that the old quarter-master, Cary, was spinning.

"Yes," they heard him say, "this arn't by no means the furst taime I was in thaise seas.—Good-even to ye, Mr Trevose and Mr Edgwyth!—No; I tall 'ee I was 'ere in the zummer of 1582, just after the taime that that there bloody pirate, Jose Leirya, was sailing of these vury seas. 'E was a fiend in 'uman shape, if there ever was one; nobody was zafe in anny of the ships 'e tuk. All the men—passengers or zeamen—that 'e captured 'e did bind and put under 'atches in their own ship, aifter 'e 'ad taken all out 'e wanted. Then 'e zet 'em adrift; but afore 'e zet 'em adrift 'e used to fire the ship in zeveral places, and all they poor creatures did roast. The childer 'e took aboard his own ship, keepin' zum on 'em, and the others 'e zold to the plantations. 'E was a reg'ler devil, 'e was; and they do zay as 'ow 'e be about 'ere even now, although 'e baint been 'eard of for zum taime. And more; they zay that zumwheres near this vury plaace 'o 'as buried tons of goold and silver, precious stones, and all kinds of vallybles; but 'ow far that be true I doen't knaw. But I do knaw as 'ow I would laike to fall in with 'e with these 'ere ships; we'd taich 'un a vaine lesson, wouldn't us, laads?"

"Harry, come here a moment," said Roger, jumping down from the gun at this point in the old man's narrative, and walking aft. Harry joined him.

"What do you want, old fellow?" said he.

"Well, lad," remarked his friend, "it has just come to me, somehow, as old Cary mentioned about the treasure of that scoundrel, Jose Leirya, being buried somewhere about here, that possibly that cipher of ours which we brought from the *Gloria del Mundo* may refer to that very treasure. You see, Cary says that Leirya hasn't been heard of for some time. That seems to point either to his death or the disbandment of his crew.

"Now, Cary says he was here in 1582, in the summer, and mentions that that date was just after the time when Leirya was committing such atrocities on the high seas. There is what is presumably a date at the beginning of our document, and that date—if such it is—is 1581, the year before Cary came to these parts. People do not write in cipher save to conceal important information from the eyes of those not in the secret, do they? Very well.

"Now, what would any man wish to conceal by cipher save hidden treasure? There are other things, certainly, he might wish to write about in such a way that the ordinary run

of people should not understand the writing, but, to my mind, treasure is the most likely, and the dates coincide very well. Our date is 1581, and Cary says that when he was here in 1582 it was just after the pirate's depredations; and he has not, apparently, been heard of since. This, I say, points to his death or to the disbandment of his crew; and what more likely than that, before either of these occurrences, he should bury his accumulated booty and locate its position by cipher? I believe most strongly, Harry, that we have in our possession the key to the hiding-place of all the treasure of Jose Leirya—and he must have accumulated millions of dollars' worth in his time—if we can but come upon the translation of it. What do you think of it, Harry?"

"Well, Roger, lad," said Harry, "as you put it, certainly it does seem as though you might be right, and that there may be something in it. We must make another attempt to find the key to the cipher, and when that is found I certainly think we shall obtain something valuable for our trouble, even though it should not be this great treasure of Jose Leirya. But we had better go below now and try to get some sleep, for we shall have a hard day before us to-morrow."

They were roused early next morning by the boatswain's whistle, and, having dressed, came up on deck to find that the boats were just being got over the side again to take away the kedge anchors, by which to haul the ships closer inshore for careening purposes.

It was decided by Cavendish that, as the beach was very spacious, and there were four ships to be careened, they should careen two at a time, instead of one only, as usual. The vessels that most needed overhauling and repairing were the commander's own ship and the captured Spanish vessel, *El Capitan*, which had been rechristened the *Tiger*. So it was determined to careen the *Tiger* and the *Stag Royal* first of all, leaving the other two vessels, the *Good Adventure* and the *Elizabeth*, afloat for purposes of defence, should an enemy appear in sight while the operations were being carried on.

The *Tiger* and the *Stag Royal* were therefore swung broadside-on to the beach. The anchors were then taken ashore in the boats and carried up the beach to above high-water mark, where they were buried in deep holes dug in the sand, with timbers laid lengthwise upon them to prevent them from being dragged out again when the strain was put on the cables.

The holes were then filled up and the sand heaped high above them, to get as much weight as possible upon the anchors, and to allow more purchase.

Then from the cables attached to the anchors themselves, at a distance of about twelve feet before they disappeared into the sand, a spring of stout manila rope was led, and fastened securely to a palm-tree at the edge of the brushwood in a direct line with the ship and the anchor, thus affording a doubly secure purchase when the time came to heave on the cable and haul the vessels up on the beach.

Roger and Harry had been sent ashore by Cavendish to take part in this work, as he

wished them to get an insight into every part of the duties of a sailor, and thus make themselves two useful members of the crew, for the captain could not afford to carry any man who was not thoroughly proficient, the capacity of his ships being too small to afford accommodation to mere idlers.

The lads were, however, very quick to learn, and very anxious to master all the details of their profession, and therefore never complained, whatever the duty that was assigned to them. They thus increased their knowledge and efficiency very quickly, and Cavendish had no grounds for regret that he had taken them on board his ship.

The anchor belonging to the flag-ship had been taken ashore and securely buried, and the cable, with the rope attached, bent on to the anchor, and the *Stag Royal* was ready for careening. The seamen then tramped off along the beach to where the anchor for the *Tiger* had been brought ashore and laid on the sand, and proceeded with their preparations for careening that craft also.

They had begun to dig the hole in the sand in which to deposit the anchor, when Roger's attention was attracted by a sound of rustling in the wood behind them. He looked round, and perceived that for a considerable distance along the beach the foliage appeared to be moving to and fro, as though stirred by a slight breeze. Yet, so far as he could tell, down there on the beach, there was no wind at all stirring, nor had there been a breath of air all the morning; the atmosphere, in fact, was so still, and withal so heavy, that a thunder-storm was anticipated.

Another circumstance that he noted was that this peculiar movement in the bush extended only from just beyond where the seamen were now occupied to a point a trifle beyond where they had been at work a few minutes before, fixing the anchor of the flagship. Everywhere else the foliage was absolutely without movement of any kind, as it had been during the whole of the morning.

Much perplexed how to account for this singular phenomenon, he stood gazing at the moving foliage, and wondering what it could portend.

The movement seemed to be confined to the one place only, but as he gazed the motion suddenly ceased, and all was quiet as before.

He looked round to see if any of the other men had observed anything, but they were all much too intent on the work in hand to take notice of anything else; and his friend Harry was just as busy as the rest of the men. He therefore dismissed the matter from his mind, thinking that his eyes might perhaps have deceived him, and set to work again with the other men.

The hole was soon dug and the anchor deposited therein, planks and baulks of timber being laid upon it as before. The sand was filled in and a mound raised above the work, and it only remained to further secure the anchor by putting a spring on to the cable, and fastening to a palm-tree as before.

As this last part of the work was being done, and the spring being lashed round the palm-tree, one of the seamen, named Martin, grasped Roger by the arm.

“Do you see that, Master Trevose?” said he, pointing.

“What do you mean, Martin?” answered Roger.

“Why, over there, sir,” said the man, pointing in the same direction as that in which Roger had seen the peculiar movement of the foliage some little time before. “I be sure I saw something shining among the trees just now. What d'ye think it can be? I only just caught a sight of it for a moment; but I be sure I beaint mistaken.”

Roger looked in the direction indicated by the seaman, but could distinguish nothing.

“Are you sure, Martin?” asked he. “Because I fancied that I, too, saw a peculiar movement among the trees over in that direction a little time ago.”

“Yes, I be sartin sure, master,” replied Martin. “I only see'd it for a minute, 'tis true, but there warn't no mistake about it; and it seemed to me to be very like the glitter of steel.”

Roger was much puzzled, and also somewhat perturbed; he therefore determined to inform the captain of what he and Martin had observed, immediately upon his return to the ship, but to say nothing to the men until the work on shore was finished, for fear of distracting their attention from the task in hand.

This was soon completed, and Roger, calling the men together, got them into the boats and they pulled back to the ships, leaving the party of men from the *Tiger* upon their own vessel, and taking his own crew on board the flag-ship.

He then sought out the captain, and found him seated in his cabin working out some observations. The lad duly reported that the work he had been sent to execute was completed satisfactorily.

“Very good, Roger; very good indeed!” replied the captain. “I will come on deck presently and see how the tide serves; and if it is suitable we will haul in at once. For I am anxious to get these repairs effected as soon as possible, and the sooner we start the sooner we shall be finished. By the way, Roger,” he continued, “as you know, we are somewhere on the eastern coast of the Spanish island of Cuba; and while you were ashore with the men just now I have been busy working out our exact position on the chart.”

Cavendish here pointed to a chart which he had open on a table before him, together with a pair of compasses and a ruler.

“Here we are, you see,” resumed the captain, pointing to a spot on the chart. “Here is the island of Cuba, and here”—pointing to a little indentation in the coast-line—“are we in latitude 20 north, and longitude 75 west.

“Now you had better remember that bearing, my boy, in case you should ever wish to return here when you get command of a ship of your own. We sailors would call this

bearing `20 north, 75 west', leaving out the word degrees. You, Roger, if you will take my advice, my lad, and your friend Harry as well for that matter, will start in as soon as you can and thoroughly perfect yourselves in the science of navigation, for you never can tell, lad, when you may want it; and if you intend—as I suppose you do—to follow the sea as a business you will not be able to do anything without it.

"I will tell you all that you want to know about it if you will come to me from time to time when I am not busy; and I have here a book which you may study at your leisure. You will find it very interesting."

Roger thanked the commander both for himself and on Harry's account, and promised to take up the study as soon as they were again at sea, as he and his friend would be much too busy for anything of that kind while the vessels were in harbour undergoing repairs and overhaul. He was then on the point of informing the captain of what Martin and he had seen, when Cavendish interrupted him.

"Roger," said he, "I have been much exercised in my mind lately as to what shall be done with these Spanish prisoners we have on board. There are nearly three hundred of them, and although many of them are in irons, and all are imprisoned below, I do not altogether like the idea of carrying them about with me too long, for they are a dangerous cargo; and not only that, they are also a great drain upon our stock of provisions. When we leave this island we shall probably be at sea for a very long time, as I intend to cruise in the Caribbean Sea, out of sight of land for the most part, on the lookout for the plate and bullion galleons from Mexico; and when we finally sail from here I wish to take on board as much fresh meat, fruit, and vegetables as I can, to help eke out the ships' stores. Now I do not want to carry about with me nearly three hundred men who will be of no use to me, and who will only help us to eat up our provisions faster than I wish. Moreover, these men are a constant menace to us while they are on board.

"Now I have been working out our position with a view to seeing exactly where we are, and discovering how far we are at present from the nearest Spanish settlement on the island. For it has been in my mind for some days past that we could not do better than land those fellows here, when we are ready to sail, giving them a few of their own weapons wherewith to procure food by the way, and defend themselves against any savages they may meet, and tell them where their nearest settlement lies, directing them to make their way to it. It is true that I do not much like the idea of letting loose nearly three hundred Spaniards who are the enemies of our beloved queen—God bless her—and who will perhaps compass the death of many an Englishman before they come to their own, but what else can I do, Roger? Have you any suggestion to offer?"

"No, sir," replied the boy; "I think, with you, that the only thing to do is to release them and let them make their way to some settlement of theirs on the island."

"Well then, that settles it," said Cavendish. "While you were ashore I conferred with

others of my officers, and all offer the same advice; so, when we are ready for sea once more, ashore they shall go. And now it is quite time that I went on deck and saw about getting the vessels hauled ashore; that is if the tide yet serves, which it should do by this time. Let us go."

The captain rose, and was about to leave the cabin, when Roger said he had something to tell him.

"What is it then, lad? tell me quickly, as I want to get on deck," said the captain.

Roger then recounted what Martin and he had observed, adding that these occurrences seemed to him to signify the presence of a body of men hiding in the brushwood.

"It is possible, Roger," agreed Cavendish, "seeing that you and Harry were attacked but yesterday. But I thought that we gave the savages so sharp a lesson then that they would not wish to renew our acquaintance. Are you sure that it was not wind moving the trees, and that it was not the sun shining on the palm-leaves that made Martin think of the glitter of steel?"

"I am sure there was no wind, sir," replied Roger, "for I looked very closely; and it was no leaf that produced the glitter that Martin saw; he knows the glint of steel too well to be mistaken."

"Well, many thanks for the information at any rate!" said the skipper. "I will order a doubly sharp lookout to be kept. We must avoid a surprise at all hazards, for we might lose a great number of men thereby."

He then turned and went on deck, followed closely by Roger.

When they arrived on deck, Cavendish considered, upon inspection, that the tide would serve, as it was now rising rapidly; he therefore immediately gave orders that the winches and capstans should be manned, and the ships hove in towards the beach until their keels touched bottom.

This was done, and soon the two vessels had been hauled in until they grounded gently.

Then the boats were again got over the side, together with a number of rafts which had been constructed for the purpose, and the guns were lifted out by derricks and deposited in the boats and on the rafts, and so carried ashore.

This unloading occupied a considerable amount of time, and when at length Cavendish considered the two vessels sufficiently lightened, the tide was almost at high-water mark.

The boats and rafts were then taken back to the ships, the men climbed on board, the windlasses and capstans were again manned, and, the vessels being considerably lightened, and so once more well afloat, were again hauled in until their keels touched bottom.

The captain considered that they were now far enough up the beach, as the receding tide

would leave them high and dry.

Tackles were next fastened to the masts above the topsail-yards, and fastened to convenient trees, and all was in readiness to heave the vessels down as the tide left them.

Roger and Harry had been busy with the rest of the crew, and, as they worked, Roger had found time to inform his friend of the peculiar occurrence which he and Martin had witnessed, and he asked Harry his opinion of it.

“Well,” said Harry, “it would seem to me to denote the presence of savages near us. That there are hostile natives in this part of the island we know from past experience. Have you informed the skipper?”

“Yes,” replied Roger, “I told him what I had seen; but it seemed to me rather as if he put the circumstance down to my imagination and Martin's. Nevertheless he thanked me for the information, and promised to be on the lookout.”

“Well,” said Harry, “it strikes me as rather a foolish thing to leave the ships' guns scattered about the beach as they are at present. If we should be attacked we could never use them, pointing as they are in all directions; we could not fire without danger of hitting one another. It would be a good thing, I think, if the captain, instead of leaving the weapons strewed about the beach as at present, were to arrange them in a circle round the place where we are working on the two vessels, and get them loaded in readiness, and we should then be prepared to repel an attack if it came.”

“A very good idea, Harry,” exclaimed Roger; “you always seem to be prepared with good schemes. Go and tell the captain, and see what he says.”

Harry at once ran off and told Cavendish what Roger and he thought of the matter.

“You two lads,” said Cavendish, “seem ever to be thinking of attacks by natives. Yet your scheme, young man, is a good one, and I will have it carried out at once; it is well to be on the safe side.”

He accordingly gave the necessary orders, and the men turned to with a will, with the result that the guns were soon arranged as Harry had suggested, with the muzzles so pointing as to command not only the adjacent bush but also the whole range of the beach. The weapons were then loaded, and the party were reasonably secure from an attack in that direction.

By this time the tide was ebbing fast, and the men took a pull on the ropes secured to the ships' masts, with the result that the vessels soon began to heel over perceptibly on their sides. As the tide continued to drop, the ropes were hauled upon, and soon the vessels were down on their beam-ends. Then the men, like a swarm of ants, grew busy on their exposed sides, working with hammer and chisel, paint-pot and brush, and the scene became one of great activity.

The tide had by this time retreated so far that the hulls of the vessels were clear of the water, and the men could work right down to their keels, the ships being hard and fast

aground, so that they could not possibly be moved until the next tide.

As they could not leave the captured Spaniards in the careened ships, and dared not let them loose to help with the work, they had been transferred to the two craft still afloat, the *Elizabeth* and the *Good Adventure*.

Roger and Harry were slung over the bow of the *Tiger*, both of them busy with scrapers taking off the old paint before the new was put on. It thus happened that they were higher above the level of the beach than any of the others, the part of the hull upon which they were working being just below the starboard cat-head.

Roger was scraping away merrily, when Harry plucked his sleeve.

“Is that the movement you were speaking of, Roger?” said he, pointing to the brush.

“Yes, there it is again,” said Roger excitedly; “only it is somewhat nearer this time; and see, I am certain that was the flash of the sun upon some steel weapon.”

“Yes, I see; there it is again. I see it clearly now,” answered Harry.

Just then a hail came from below in the captain's voice.

“Roger, my man, the cable secured to the maintopmast seems to be working loose, and may carry away. Get up aloft, boy, and look at the seizing, and, if necessary, put a fresh one on.”

Roger hastened away up into the main-top, leaving Harry still in his perch, and examined the seizing. It was, as the captain had said, loose, so the boy proceeded to secure it afresh.

Having finished his job to his satisfaction, he prepared to descend from aloft, but, before doing so, cast his eyes round the scene, and nearly fell out of the main-top in his alarm; for there, coming round a point half a mile away, and concealed as yet from those on the beach by a low point, was a large fleet of canoes filled with natives, who were doubtless hoping to come upon the beached vessels unawares. They would certainly have done so had it not been for the fortunate circumstance of Roger being sent aloft.

He threw another glance to seaward, to see if he could count the canoes, and found that there must be quite a hundred of them; then he took a survey of the brushwood inland, and found that his suspicions as to savages being present there were only too true. At his greater elevation he found himself looking down upon quite a horde of them armed with spears, bows and arrows, and clubs. They were advancing slowly through the bush, and their stealthy movement forward had occasioned the swaying to and fro of the foliage that Roger first, and Harry afterwards, had observed.

Roger could not tell whether or not the natives had seen him, and were aware that they were discovered, but hurried down from the main-top with such speed that, when he had reached the last ratline of the rigging, he lost his footing and fell on his back on the sand at the very feet of Cavendish.

Fortunately for him the sand was soft, and he was not much hurt, though a good deal shaken. Pulling himself together, he got on his feet and at once told Cavendish what he had seen.

There was no time to lose; a boat was promptly sent away with messengers to the two vessels afloat, the *Good Adventure* and the *Elizabeth*, to warn them to be in readiness; and the trumpet sounded for the men to cease work and muster. Arms were hurriedly served out; men were stationed at the guns, which the captain was now very glad he had loaded and arranged according to Harry's advice; and very soon they were as ready for the attack as was possible in the short time at their disposal.

Meanwhile the two vessels afloat had lifted their anchors, and were standing closer in, the better to defend their now helpless consorts.

It was evident that the natives in the bush were waiting for their friends in the canoes to approach closer before they attacked, and this hesitation saved the English the loss of a number of men; for had the savages attacked while the men were at work on the ships, the latter would have been taken at a serious disadvantage, and the loss would have been very heavy.

As the first canoe made its appearance round the point, a perfect pandemonium of savage and ear-splitting yells arose from the bush, and a loud noise of crashing and crackling announced that the enemy there were coming along at their utmost speed. The outcry was answered from seaward as the canoes came pouring into the inlet.

“Now, stand steady, lads!” shouted the captain. “As they come in upon us give them a round from the guns, and load again if you have time; then a volley from the muskets; and after that we must trust to our good swords. But keep cool, and do not throw away a shot.”

As he finished speaking the enemy burst from the bush like a swarm of angry bees, and charged at full speed at the little band of white men opposed to them; whereupon a perfect storm of grape-shot, old nails, rusty bolts, pieces of scrap-iron, and even stones, with which the cannon had been hastily loaded, went hissing through their close ranks; and, from the piercing screams and yells of agony that at once arose from them, the execution must have been terrible. Yet they poured out, checked only for a moment.

“Fire again!” roared the captain; and the muskets crashed out in a rattling volley, the bullets mowing the natives down in swathes.

This second discharge checked them and caused them to waver; but a tall man, gaily bedecked with feathers, instantly sprang from the ranks, and, haranguing them, called to his comrades to follow him, he himself leading the charge.

They soon reached the guns, and, leaping over them before they could again be loaded, were at once among the English, who had now to fight for dear life.

Howling with fury, they stabbed and slashed and struck with spear and club; and from

the other side of the little circle came a shower of well-placed arrows, and many a brave seaman fell writhing his life out on the sand, which by this time was assuming a sinister crimson hue.

Roger and Harry, each armed with an excellent sword borrowed from the ship's armoury, were here, there, and everywhere, but always together, doing much execution, and repeatedly saving each other's lives.

Cavendish, in the front of his men, swept his long blade from side to side, and as it fell, flashing meteor-like in the brilliant sunshine, the naked warriors sank before it in heaps.

Now from seaward came the crashing discharges of heavy guns, followed by renewed shrieks and cries, as the *Elizabeth* and the *Good Adventure* poured their broadsides into the closely-packed canoes.

"God grant," muttered Cavendish, "that those other vessels of ours may keep the canoes off; for if these fellows are reinforced, we can never hold out against them."

But nobody had time to see how the other action was progressing, for all were too busy with the work in hand, which was the task of defending their own lives.

Twice had the gallant little band of Englishmen driven the savages back over the barricade formed by the ships' guns, and twice had the enemy, led by the tall savage, forced their way in again.

At last, seeing clearly that all hinged upon this man's downfall, Cavendish made many strenuous efforts to reach him; but for some time he failed, owing to the press. At length, however, an opening occurred, and Cavendish, rushing forward, stood face to face with his arch-enemy.

The chief was a man of mighty stature, and evidently of enormous strength, standing nearly seven feet high; and at first sight the disparity between the two adversaries seemed enormous. But what the English captain lacked in height he made up in strength and agility.

Sword in hand he circled round and round his gigantic foe, watching like a cat for an opportunity to strike a deadly blow.

But the savage took the initiative, and, raising his spear, darted it at the Englishman with all his force. Cavendish, however, was not to be caught so easily, and, taking the shaft of the spear with the edge of his sword, he parried the thrust, and the weapon merely ripped his shirt instead of piercing his body.

Before the native could recover himself, and guard his body, the English captain thrust with all his strength, quite unprepared for the wily savage's next move.

Seemingly careless of the wound that he inflicted upon himself, the savage caught the keen blade of his adversary in his left hand, and, although the weapon lacerated his hand in a fearful manner, he succeeded in wresting it from the captain's grasp, while, at the

same time flinging away his spear, he seized Cavendish round the lower part of the body, lifted him clear of the ground, and dashed him to the earth, himself falling with his antagonist.

The pair rolled upon the ground, each striving to obtain a grip of the other's right arm, to prevent any other weapon being used. Now the savage and now the white man was uppermost, but at length, with a huge effort, Cavendish twisted himself from under his foe, and lay full-length on top of him, feeling for his dagger. The chief, however, had likewise seized a knife which hung at his girdle, and, before the captain could draw his weapon, he plunged his knife into Cavendish's side.

The Englishman's grasp relaxed, he slipped from his position, and lay upon his side, writhing on the sand. The native now rose to his knees and raised his arm to deal a fatal blow; but, even as that blow fell, a sword flashed through the air, and arm and knife fell to the ground together.

Roger, for it was he who had thus appeared in the nick of time, at once turned his sword and drove it through the heart of the chief, who rolled over lifeless at his feet. The young hero then raised his captain in his arms, and, staggering out of the press of the battle, laid him down out of sight behind a gun-carriage.

Meanwhile the vessels afloat in the bay had been giving a very good account of the enemy in the canoes. The natives, it was clear, had been watching, and, having seen the preparations for careening the ships, had hoped to find all four hauled up; in which case they would have secured an easy victory from force of numbers alone, as the ships would then have been unable to use their guns against the force in the canoes. But as it was they had to deal with two fully-prepared ships, and, after several fruitless attempts to board, were now hauling off with the remnant of their fleet, most of the canoes having already been destroyed by the broadsides from the *Elizabeth* and the *Good Adventure*.

The land force, seeing their companions in the canoes withdrawing, and also having lost their chieftain, now began to waver. Observing this, the English hastily formed up into line, and, with a loud cheer, charged the enemy afresh, hewing right and left with hearty goodwill.

This fierce rally proved altogether too much for the savages, and they broke and fled precipitately.

The English now rushed to their guns, and, hastily completing the loading which had been checked at the first onslaught of the enemy, gave the flying savages another dose of grape and canister that strewed the beach with dead and dying, and further hastened the flight of the survivors, who quickly vanished in the recesses of the thick bush.

The enemy thus disposed off, finally as they hoped, Roger and Harry went off to attend to the captain.

They found him sitting up. He averred that his hurt was only a flesh wound; and after

asking for, and obtaining, a draught of water, the gallant fellow got on his feet and went off to survey the scene of carnage.

Over a hundred of the natives lay dead on the sands; and a number of wounded were seen crawling towards the brush, endeavouring to escape. They were allowed to go, as the English could not be burdened with wounded savages, and were indisposed to slay them in cold blood. There were twenty-three of the Englishmen who would never again answer the roll-call; and over forty wounded, who were conveyed on board the *Good Adventure* and the *Elizabeth*, afloat in the bay. The dead, both black and white, were, for health's sake, immediately buried in the sand where they lay.

Cavendish, after having had his wound bound up, ordered a stockade to be at once built, and loopholed for guns and muskets, for their future defence, in the improbable event of the savages not having already received a severe enough lesson.

The seamen were now divided into two parties. One half of them were to continue the work of repairs and overhauling on the two vessels then careened, the *Stag Royal* and the *Tiger*, and the remaining half were to work upon the stockade.

Then, this matter arranged, Cavendish called Roger to him, and, first thanking him for his timely rescue and the saving of his life, he put the lad in command of the party who were to build the stockade.

Roger was also publicly thanked, in the presence of officers and men, for the warning he had given, which enabled the party to make their hasty preparations for the reception of the natives, without which the whole party on shore would most likely have been cut off to a man. And if the ships in the bay had not likewise been warned, it was quite within the bounds of possibility that they would have been boarded before the guns could have been loaded and brought to bear on the canoes; in which case there could be little doubt that the savages would have captured the vessels through sheer weight of numbers, for there were several hundred men in the canoes.

It ought to be mentioned that when Cavendish gave Roger the command of the company to be employed in building the stockade, he also endowed him with full power to use his own discretion as to how the work should be carried out, only occasionally giving the lad a few hints. Invested thus with such great responsibility, and with such important duties to execute, Roger naturally needed a lieutenant, and he selected Harry for the post, dividing his men into two parties, one of which he placed under the command of his friend.

This arranged, he sent Harry away into the woods with his men, armed with axes and bush knives, to cut timber for the stockade, while he himself, with his own party, remained on the beach, digging holes in which to deposit the uprights when they were cut, and also digging a ditch round where the palisade was to be, in order to drain off any water that might accumulate, and thus prevent the interior of their small fort from being flooded.

Harry and his gang soon returned with a load of stout stakes, plenty of suitable trees for the purpose being found close at hand. Depositing these on the beach, he then returned into the woods for more material, Roger and his men meanwhile proceeding to plant the main posts in a ring round the guns.

It was not long ere they had driven a row of posts deep and firm into the sand, starting from the margin of the beach nearest the water's edge.

This brought them, in the direction in which they were going, fairly close up to where the woods ceased at their junction with the beach.

Roger was watching the men drive in the next post with heavy wooden mallets, procured from the ship, when he observed that, although they were hammering hard at the stump, it did not seem to be going down as quickly as it should; indeed, upon closer inspection, it did not appear to be moving downwards at all. And, further, the mallets, instead of giving out a dull sound, as they had done whilst driving through sand, now gave out a sharper and quite different sound as the top of the post was struck.

One of the men engaged stepped up to Roger and touched his hat. “It seems to me, sir,” said he, “as though something was stopping of this here post from going down any furder. I expects as how there is a stone or summat in the sand under the point. Do you think that ere stump is down fur enough as it is, or shall us pull un up and put un in somewheres else?”

Roger stepped up and shook the post, and, finding it quite loose, decided that it would have to be driven deeper in order to be secure. Nevertheless it was necessary to space the posts at equal intervals one from another, if his ideas were to be carried out; he therefore ordered the stump to be pulled up, the obstruction removed, and the post driven down again in the same position.

The seamen thereupon laid hold of the post, and, all hauling together, it soon came out; and with shovels and crowbars they began to break down the sand and enlarge the hole, so as to get at whatever was in the way and remove it.

It was not long ere the shovel of one of the men struck upon something hard, and the man, dropping upon his knees, went to work to scrape the sand away with his hands, presently laying bare to view what was apparently part of a spar of some kind, not old or worm-eaten, but seemingly almost new. Having located this, they started to clear the sand away from the whole length of the piece of timber, and, while doing so, found that there were two other poles or spars laid alongside it. After an hour's hard work the three spars were unearthed, and proved to be the three poles of a set of sheer-legs, which had evidently only quite recently been hidden.

Roger then instructed the men to start probing in the sand, to see whether there might be anything else buried, and he himself took a boat and pulled away over the bay to the *Elizabeth* to inform Cavendish of his discovery.

He found the captain lying in his bunk nursing his recent wound, and informed him of the circumstance, asking also what he should do in the matter.

“You have dug out of the sand what you think is a set of sheer-legs, eh, boy?” said the captain, raising himself in his berth on one elbow. “And have you found anything beside?”

“No, sir,” said Roger in reply, “there was nothing else dug up when I left; but I told the men to probe the sand, whilst I came off to you, to see if there was anything else there.”

“Well,” responded the captain, “I must look into this. I will get up and come ashore with you; but just go and call the surgeon first; I wish him to bind this wound of mine up again before I leave the ship.”

Roger did so; and, the surgeon having dressed and bound up Cavendish's hurt again, the two descended the ship's side and, getting into the boat, were rowed ashore.

When they reached the beach they saw that the men had already lifted out the three sheer-leg poles and laid them on the sand, and now a gang of men were hauling upon a rope attached to something still in the sand.

When Cavendish and Roger came up to the spot they saw that the top of an iron chest had been uncovered, and the men had fastened a rope to a ring in the lid, and were now hauling on the rope to drag the chest clear.

Cavendish watched the seamen a moment, and then went to examine the poles. After a few minutes' observation, he said to Roger: “It is pretty evident to me, boy, that this inlet has been used before for some such purpose as that for which we are using it, namely, for careening vessels for repairs and refit. These poles have been employed for lifting guns or other heavy material taken out of a ship or from off a raft. Now I wonder who it may be that has used these things? The Spaniards would not need to use this inlet for any such purpose, for they have their own ports on the island, where this kind of work could be done far better than here. Nor can they have been Englishmen, I should think, for if this place were known to any of our own people it would be marked on the chart, and we should have heard of it, most certainly. Also, the fact that these things have been buried points to the certainty that the people who have hidden them intend to return and use them again. If they had not meant to come back, they would have taken them with them when they left. No, it is evident to me that the people who left these articles will return periodically to this place to refit; and as this spot is almost unknown, as well as being lonely and secluded, it would seem to my poor understanding that the men who use this place are not Spaniards or English seamen proper, but pirates. It also occurs to me that there may be something in this box that they are just getting out which will tell us what we want to know.”

As the captain finished speaking, the box came up suddenly, and the seamen, who were hauling manfully on the rope, fell upon their backs, only to scramble quickly to their feet again with much laughter at the mishap.

“Now, men,” said Cavendish, who had a habit of taking his crew into his confidence, “before we go any further, let me tell you that I believe this inlet to be a pirate's resort, which they visit periodically for the purpose of effecting repairs. If so, we must capture them if we can. We must, therefore, be careful to leave no traces of our own visit here or they may become alarmed and desert the place. Therefore all this gear must be replaced exactly as we found it, before we sail, and this box must not be broken open, but the lock must be picked instead. And if we replace everything exactly as we found it, the pirates—if such they be—will not suspect that anyone else has been here; they will still continue to use the inlet, and some day they will walk right into the little trap that I intend to set for them. Now, lads, up with that chest, and be careful with it. Pass the word for the carpenter and armourer to come here and bring their tools.”

These two men were soon on the spot, and between them they had the chest open in a few minutes. An eager examination of its contents showed that there was nothing of any intrinsic value contained therein; but there were documents and papers written in Spanish which abundantly verified the captain's conjecture. For from these Cavendish, who could read and understand Spanish perfectly, learned that the bay where they were now lying was indeed the resort of a pirate crew; while the name of the chief miscreant, as ascertained from the papers, was Jose Leirya. The documents gave, among other particulars, a detailed account of the scoundrel's doings ever since he had started his nefarious trade on the Spanish Main; and the mere recital of his atrocities proved enough to make every man of them there present swear a great oath to hunt the villain down wherever he might be, and hang him, with all his rascally crew, from the yard-arms of his own ship.

Nothing else of any importance having been found, the chest was carefully locked up again, after the papers had been put back, everything replaced in its former position and buried in the sand once more, the utmost care being taken to destroy all evidence of the things having been disturbed.

After this little episode the work on the ships went steadily forward. The *Tiger* and the *Stag Royal* were soon finished, and the *Elizabeth* and the *Good Adventure* took their places.

These last-named vessels received the same attention as their consorts, and were in a fortnight pronounced quite sound and once more ready for sea. They were hauled off the beach, and Cavendish had the great satisfaction of seeing his little squadron of four ships once more all ataunto and ready to sail.

The next morning Cavendish called a meeting of his officers in his cabin, and their long and earnest consultation resulted in the decision that they should cruise, as originally intended, up the Mexican coast and in the Caribbean, with an addendum to the effect that special efforts should be made to capture the pirate Jose Leirya, whose atrocious deeds, as recorded by his own hand, had made every man in the fleet his enemy, determined to hunt him ruthlessly to his death.

This having been arranged, preparations were forthwith made for leaving. The Spaniards were brought on deck in squads, and armed with weapons sufficient to enable them to obtain food, or successfully defend themselves against the attacks of savages. They were then sent ashore in boat-loads, the ships all having their broadsides trained on the beach where they landed, to prevent treachery on their part.

In the last boat-load went Alvarez and de Soto, both of whom Roger had seen on the *Gloria del Mundo* at the time of the engagement with the Spanish fleet.

De Soto gracefully thanked his captors for their courtesy and kindness as he went over the side, but Alvarez scowled heavily round him, and looked attentively at every face near him before he went, as though he meant to fix their features on his memory, that he might recognise them again in the event of a future meeting. Then, with a glare of hatred at the retreating form of de Soto, he turned his back without a word and went also.

This completed the landing of the prisoners, and very glad the Englishmen were to be rid of the responsibility and risk.

“That fellow Alvarez will know us again when next we meet,” said Cavendish with a laugh, to Roger, who was standing by his side watching the Spaniards on the beach.

“Yes,” replied Roger, “and he means mischief, I am sure. I should be very sorry for any one of us who might be unfortunate enough to get into his power.”

“He seems to hate de Soto also pretty thoroughly,” said Harry. “Did you see the look he gave him as he went over the side?”

“Ay,” answered Roger, who went on to tell of Alvarez's little soliloquy relative to de Soto while searching for the papers in the cabin of the sinking *Gloria del Mundo*. “He will do de Soto a bad turn, of that I am sure, if he ever gets the opportunity,” remarked Roger in conclusion.

All was now ready for their departure. The Spaniards had formed up on the beach and marched off in order into the bush, and were by this time nowhere to be seen.

Sail was hoisted and, the flag-ship leading, the little squadron passed out between the heads one after another on their way to the coast of Mexico; and by evening the island was merely a long grey line on the eastern horizon, while all eyes were strained toward the golden west, each man eager for the first sight of a sail that might prove to be a richly-laden galleon, or even the pirate Jose Leirya. Later in the evening the moon rose in all her tropic glory, and the sea in her wake gleamed like one huge speckless sheet of silver.

Behind them, in the bush on the island, by the evening camp-fire, Alvarez, with certain other choice spirits of his own stamp, was plotting grim and deadly evil by the light of the same moon which lit the English adventurers on their way.

CHAPTER EIGHT. ROGER GOES ASHORE TO RESCUE A MAROONED MAN, AND IS HIMSELF LEFT IN THE LURCH.

The days now slipped by uneventfully, and morning after morning broke without either land or ship making its appearance to break the monotony of a perfectly clear horizon.

Slipping down the Windward Channel, and sailing on a South-South-West course, they had left Morant Point, at the eastern end of Jamaica, on their starboard beam; and after keeping to their South-South-West course for the five succeeding days, they had turned the vessels' heads to the East-South-East, intending to sail as far in that direction as La Guayra, where they hoped to find a plate galleon in the harbour, and make an attempt to cut her out. Thence they planned to change their course once more, standing westward along the coast of Venezuela, crossing the Gulf of Darien, the Mosquito Gulf, and the Bay of Honduras, and so up through the Yucatan Channel, leaving the western end of the island of Cuba on their starboard hand, and into the Gulf of Mexico, where they intended to cruise for some time, feeling tolerably certain of picking up a treasure-ship there at any rate, even if they were not fortunate enough to snap one up whilst cruising on their way.

They could, of course, have reached the Gulf of Mexico much more quickly by sailing down the Windward Channel and along the southern coast of Cuba, and by the Yucatan Channel into the gulf; but they had heard of the treasure-ships that made La Guayra their port of departure, and were anxious not to miss any of them. Also, they believed that, by taking the longer course, there would be more likelihood of their falling in with that most ferocious and bloody pirate, Jose Leirya, as he was called, or Jose de Leirya, as he loved to call himself—for he was said to claim descent from a grandee of Spain, although those who knew the man were well aware that his birth and parentage were obscure.

As has already been related, one of the seamen on board the flag-ship one night gave some account of the pirate's former doings, and the discovery that the buried gear found at the Careenage—as Cavendish had named the spot where the squadron refitted—was the property of the pirate was proof positive that the scoundrel was still prowling somewhere in those seas. Likewise, it will be remembered, every man in the fleet had sworn to do his utmost to bring the villain to justice. The anxiety, therefore, to catch him was such that officers, even, not infrequently spent hours at the mast-heads in the hope of seeing his topgallantsails showing above the horizon. Old Cary—the man who claimed to possess some knowledge of Leirya—said that when he last sailed in these seas the pirate was cruising in a schooner of unusual length, and lying very low in the water, her hull painted black, with a broad scarlet riband, in which her open gun-ports looked like a number of gaping mouths, having been built very large to enable the broadside guns to be trained almost fore and aft. The craft's masts were, furthermore, said to be of great height, and might be recognised by their remarkable and excessive rake aft; indeed—so asserted Cary—her spars were of such extraordinary length, and the

vessel herself lay so very low in the water, that she had the appearance of being perilously overmasted and topheavy. This appearance, however, Cary explained, was altogether deceptive. The vessel sat low in the water indeed, but she was not the shallow craft that she looked; there was more of her below than above the surface, and she drew a great deal of water for a vessel of her tonnage. This great draught of water enabled her to carry a heavy load of ballast, tall masts, and a correspondingly heavy press of sail; thus she was an enormously fast vessel, and had up till now easily eluded capture, being able to run away from and out-weather many vessels more powerful than herself.

In justice to the pirate, however, it must be admitted that he had seldom been known to run away. His vessel was exceptionally heavily armed, and, if his antagonist happened to be not very much more powerful than himself, he invariably stayed and fought the action out, always succeeding in beating off his opponent, while in many cases he had captured her. The fate of the unfortunate crews that fell into his hands was—if his own records were to be credited—not to be dwelt upon; for he described himself as guilty of the most awful atrocities to men, women, and even children. The fights, of course, occurred only between himself and war-vessels; merchant-ships never attempted such an impossible task as to fight the pirate, and very often seemed too completely paralysed with terror even to attempt the equally impossible task of running away!

Such was the vessel that everyone in Cavendish's squadron was so eagerly looking for, their eagerness being further stimulated by the fact that the captain had offered as a prize, to the first seaman who sighted her, the best weapon that should be taken out of her after her capture— which, of course, all on board considered as absolutely certain, could they but once succeed in coming up with her; while to the first officer or gentleman who saw her he offered as reward the best suit of clothing to be found in her. Such, however, was the eagerness of all hands to come up with and destroy the vessel, and her rascally crew and leader, that the lookout would have been just as keenly kept if no reward whatever had been offered.

But there was a still further stimulus in the not unnatural hope that Jose Leirya would have on board some, at least, of that vast treasure of his, with the possession of which he was credited by every man who had ever heard of him; and visions of much prize-money to spend on their return to Plymouth were always before the eager eyes of the Englishmen.

Regulating the speed of the whole squadron by that of the slowest ship— which happened to be the *Tiger*, the rechristened *El Capitan*—the fleet went slowly to the East-South-East on its appointed course.

In those days, as, of course, it is hardly necessary to remind the reader, charts were few, and those few were not to be relied upon as more than approximately accurate.

On the course that the commodore had marked out for his little squadron they would, according to their chart, fall in with no land until they made Oruba Island, after which

Cavendish intended to steer a course between the island of Oruba and what is now known as the Paraguena Peninsula, leaving the other two islands of Curazao and Buen Ayre on his port hand, and then heading straight for La Guayra.

Several sailors, and one or two officers, among whom were Roger and Harry, were as usual perched upon the cross-trees, the yards, or at the mast-heads, on the lookout for the first sight of the infamous Jose Leirya's schooner, and with no idea whatever of sighting land. So everybody on deck was much astonished when, on a certain morning, the cry came down from the masthead of the *Stag Royal* of "Land ho, bearing dead ahead!" At the same moment a string of flags fluttered up to the main truck of the *Tiger*, which was signalling that she also had caught sight of land of some description.

"What do you make of it, Roger?" shouted Cavendish, for it was Roger's sharp eyes that had caught the first glimpse of the unexpected land as he was aloft straining his eyes in a search for the raking masts of Jose Leirya's craft.

"Well, sir," responded the boy, "it is an island of some kind, a very small one, and lying low in the water. I can make out what I take to be a few trees, probably palms, and I think—nay, I am quite sure now—that I can see a thin column of smoke rising from about the centre of the island."

"In that case," said Cavendish, turning to Leigh, who was standing at his elbow trying to catch sight of the land from the level of the deck, "there is evidently a human being on that island who has seen the sails of our fleet, and wishes to attract our attention and be taken off. I suspect there has been a shipwreck there, and very likely there may be more than one man. Now, I should not at all object to find and take off a whole crew of shipwrecked seamen—provided that they were English,— for what with our fight with the Spaniards, that brush with the savages, and sickness, we have had our crews thinned down very considerably. God grant that they be not Spaniards; for if they are, and are in distress there, I must take them off in common humanity—though, were we in like case, I doubt if they would do the same for us,—and then I shall have my vessels again lumbered up with a lot of useless fellows until I can land them somewhere. Moreover, that same landing will be very difficult now, for we shall not be likely to find down here another place which will serve our purpose so well as did the Careenage, all these islands and land hereabouts being already occupied by Spaniards, and we should be running our own heads into danger in attempting to get rid of them. Mr Leigh, be good enough to work out our dead-reckoning up to this hour, and let us see exactly where we are on the chart, for there is no island or land of any description marked where we are at present sailing."

Leigh did as the captain had ordered him, and found that the ships were at that moment in longitude 73 degrees west and latitude 15 degrees North; so that, going by the chart, there ought not to be any land in sight for several days at least.

"This particular part of the Caribbean Sea, sir, is not very greatly frequented by English

ships," said Leigh in explanation; "but the Spaniards, no doubt, know these waters well, and yonder island may perhaps be laid down on one of their charts."

"Very possibly," answered the skipper; "but we have no Spanish charts. The next Spaniard we capture, however, we will search for her charts, which will certainly be of the utmost use to us."

During the foregoing conversation Roger had come down from aloft to report still further to the captain, and he had overheard the last remark, which immediately reminded him that he had brought certain charts away from the cabin of the *Gloria del Mundo*; in fact, Harry and he had found their cipher concealed in the folds of one of them. He had intended to give them to his captain, but subsequent stirring events had driven the idea out of his mind.

Having now recollected them, however, he explained the matter to Cavendish, and asked if he should bring the charts up on deck.

"By all means," replied the skipper; "let us have them at once, Trevose, my man."

Roger dived below, and soon reappeared with the charts under his arm. They were immediately spread open on the deck and overhauled, and all were found to be of the utmost importance; some papers also being found among them giving the bearings and soundings of certain secret channels leading to ports on the South American coast. There were also found plans of towns and fortresses that would prove of inestimable value to them. These last were forthwith placed in safety for future reference, and a chart was presently discovered showing that particular portion of the ocean upon which they were now sailing; and, sure enough, there was a small island marked in the precise spot occupied by the one for which they were heading. There was, in ink, a description of the island— written, of course, in Spanish,—setting forth that it had been named "Isla de Corsarios", and that it was, according to English measurements, two and a half miles long by one mile broad; also that it was uninhabited. The description, written as a marginal note, further stated that there was a spring of fresh water on the island, and that there were palm-trees thereon; that the islet was of sandy soil, and supported no vegetation beyond the few palms mentioned.

"This, then, explains the matter," said Cavendish. "Evidently it has been missed by our vessels, but the Dons have located it. I can clearly see that these charts will be indeed very useful to us."

By this time the island could be made out from the level of the deck, as also the smoke, which was undoubtedly rising from a signal-fire that had been lighted on the beach. The ships were, however, not yet near enough to make out who the inhabitants were, nor how many of them there might be. Indeed, had it not been for the sight of the smoke, the captain would have imagined the island to be totally uninhabited, and would not have thought it worth while to stop thereat; and, but for the fact of the smoke being observed, this veracious yarn would most probably have had a very different ending.

All the officers of the ship, including Cavendish, Roger, and Harry, were now standing in the eyes of the vessel; some had mounted the bulwarks, and were supporting themselves thereon by holding on to the rigging, and one and all were shading their eyes with their hands against the powerful rays of an almost vertical sun, each anxious to catch the first sight of the man, or men, who had built that signal-fire on the beach.

In obedience to an order from Cavendish, old Martin, who was credited with having the sharpest eyes in the ship, went aloft to the foremast-head, on the lookout, with instructions to let those on deck know when he first caught sight of the inhabitants of the island.

In about a quarter of an hour they had very perceptibly neared the shore, which lay very low, and presented, at a closer view, more the appearance of a mud or sand-bank, with a few dwarfed trees and shrubs growing thereon, than an island in its accepted sense of the word; and shortly afterward Martin's voice came down from aloft in accents of excitement: “I see un, zir; there 'a be. 'Tes only one man, zir, so far as Ai can mek out, and 'a be a-waving of a red shirt, or zummat laike that, Ai think, zir.”

“Can you only see one man, Martin; or are there any more with him, think you?” shouted Cavendish.

“Naw, zir,” responded the old fellow; “as Ai zay, Ai can only zee one of 'em, and 'e do be a-carryin' on zumthing wonnerful, zir. 'E be a-jumpin' up an' down, and a-wavin' of his arms laike to one possessed. Ai expec's as how un belaives us 'aven't zeen un, an' wants to attrac' our attention.”

“Very well, Martin,” answered the captain; “stay where you are, man,” as he perceived the old fellow making preparations to descend, “stay where you are. Keep a sharp lookout, and let me know if anything further takes place, or if any more men make their appearance.

“I expect, gentlemen,” said the captain, turning to the assembled officers, “that there is only one man there; the others would have joined him by this time, had there been any more of them. In a way, I am sorry; for I could very well have done with a great many more men— always provided, of course, that they had been Englishmen,—for we are, as you all know, very short-handed. This man is possibly the sole survivor of a shipwrecked crew; but, as there seems, so far as we can see at present, to be no trace of others being there, I should be more inclined to think that he has been marooned. Marooning is, of course, a very common practice, particularly among pirates, and, in my opinion, it is one of the most cruel forms of punishment ever conceived by the brain of man. Now, it has occurred to me as quite within the limits of possibility that this man ashore there may be a marooned member of the crew of that scoundrel, Jose Leirya. It would not be so very extraordinary, after all, if he were. Leirya is practically the only pirate at present in these seas, and we are all aware that marooning is practised chiefly among pirates. Should it happen to be as I somewhat suspect, the man will, at all events,

know something worth telling us about that arch villain; for I shall never be happy until I have hunted the scoundrel down, and hanged him for the dog he is!"

The captain's face blazed with righteous anger as he spoke, and his expression was reflected on the countenances of the officers gathered round him. It boded ill indeed for the pirate if ever the squadron should fall in with him.

"Send a man into the chains," continued Cavendish, speaking to Roger. "As the land lies so low in the water, it is not unlikely that the water round it is very shoal, and I have no wish to get any of the vessels ashore if I can help it. And order the signalman to signal the rest of the fleet to keep the lead going."

Roger obeyed, and a leadsman was soon perched in the chains to windward, busy with his sounding-line to ascertain the depth of water in which they were then sailing, and to give timely warning if the water should begin to shoal dangerously.

"Seven fathoms now, sir!" reported Hearst, the leadsman.

"Very well," answered Cavendish; "we are safe as yet," turning to Leigh. "Let her go through the water."

The other vessels were strung out behind the *Stag Royal*, and they fell into her wake for their greater safety; for she drew more water than any of the rest, being a much larger vessel, and where she could go the rest could follow. They were running along with a fresh breeze on their starboard beam, and making about six knots an hour. They were therefore rapidly nearing the island, and could by this time discern the solitary occupant from the deck. He still continued to wave the red shirt, or whatever it was, that they had at first seen, and it appeared as though even now he could scarcely convince himself that he had yet been seen, although the fleet was heading directly for the island, for he continued his wild gestures—leaping into the air, and waving his arms like one possessed.

"Six fathoms!" came the voice of the leadsman from the chains.

"We can stand in some way farther yet," commented Cavendish. "I want to take the ship in as near as I can, so that the men may not have far to pull in the boat. Furthermore, gentlemen, by the look of the sky, methinks that a gale is brewing, and it will be well that the boat get not too far away from the ship."

"Five and a half fathoms!" chanted the leadsman a few minutes later.

"'Tis well. Still keep her going as she is," ordered the captain.

The people on deck could now see the poor solitary on the beach quite distinctly, and presently he came running down to the water's edge, still waving his red flag; and so eager did he appear for rescue that it seemed as though he intended to swim off to the ships, for he waded into the sea up to his arm-pits.

"I pray Heaven that he does nothing so foolish!" murmured Roger, who still

remembered his own experience with the sharks.

The unfortunate man had no such intention, it presently appeared; yet was he still in a sufficiently dangerous situation, for he stopped where he was with the water up round his shoulders, and continued waving his signal of distress.

“Five fathoms bare!” was the next report of the man with the sounding-line.

“We can edge in even a little farther yet,” remarked the captain. “But I cannot understand,” he continued, “why that man persists in acting so strangely. He must know by this time that we have seen him and will rescue him, yet he continues to signal with his arms and that red rag as though he were demented. It would not greatly surprise me to find, when we get him on board, that his brain has given way with the horror of solitude, suffering, and privation.”

“By your leave, sir, it seems very much to me,” suggested Roger, touching his hat, “as though the poor fellow were striving not so much to attract us nearer as to warn us to keep farther away.”

“Why, boy, prithee what puts that idea into your head?” retorted the captain rather testily. “Why should he wish us to keep off? Surely if you were in his place you would be fully as anxious as he appears to be to have the rescuing ships approach and take you off without delay?”

“What I meant to suggest, Mr Cavendish,” responded Roger rather stiffly, and not one whit abashed by his commander's testiness, “was that perchance this man knows the shoals and rocks round the island well. He may perceive that we are sailing into danger, and wish to warn us from approaching any closer before it be too late.”

“Zounds, boy!” shouted Cavendish, “'fore Heaven I believe that you may be right in your assumption!”

Then, turning to the crew: “All hands stand by to veer ship!” he cried.

But even as he spoke there was a sudden check to the vessel's way, and almost instantly she stopped dead, the sudden shock throwing more than one man prostrate on the deck. At the same moment the leadsman in the chains gave his warning cry: “Three fathoms only, and shoaling fast!”

But the warning came too late, for the vessel had taken the ground, which evidently shoaled up with great abruptness. Her fore, main, and mizzen topmasts snapped like carrots with the sudden check to her speed, and came tumbling down with their attendant wreckage, thus adding to the already great confusion on deck, and, what was worse, killing two men, whom they could ill spare, and badly injuring five others.

“You were right, Roger!” shouted the captain as he ran past the lad to the stern of the vessel, with intent to warn the other ships from a similar mishap. But the warning was needless, for they had been on the lookout, and, observing the accident to their consort, had at once hauled their wind and gone off on another tack in time to avoid a similar

fate. When at a safe distance they luffed into the wind and, furling their canvas, came to anchor.

Cavendish, seeing that the remainder of his little squadron was safe, ordered the wreckage to be cut adrift and the decks cleared for further operations.

"Work away with a will, lads!" he cried encouragingly.

"The ship has taken a soft berth; she lies on the sand, and there is no present danger of her sinking; indeed we are in much too shoal water for that. Mr Leigh, we must get the wreckage cleared away first of all, after which we will get out kedge anchors astern; and if these fail us we will run out cables to the other vessels. Perchance we may thus get ourselves off by our own hauling and the others towing. But we must all work with a will; for, as all may see, there is in the look of the sky every prospect of ill weather very shortly, and if it take us ashore like this we shall lose the ship! Now, Roger, take you two hands in the gig—I cannot spare more—and bring off that poor fellow. I would that we had earlier understood what he meant; it would have saved us this disaster. And hasten, lad, for I cannot spare even three of you for a single moment longer than is absolutely necessary. Yet must I have that man, for he may possess information of untold worth to us. And you, Mr Leigh, will take two hands also, and go off to the other vessels. You will acquaint them with our condition, and give them their orders to prepare for towing, and to be ready by the moment when we can avail ourselves of their help, for we have no time to waste."

Roger soon found his two men, and the boat was got ready and over the side in a very few minutes; yet, quick as he had been, he perceived as he pushed off that Mr Leigh's boat was already some distance on her way to the other ships.

"Now, give way, men, with a will!" cried the lad, encouragingly. "You heard what Mr Cavendish said—there is not a moment to lose if we are to get that man off, and the ship too, ere the gale breaks. And indeed I like not the look of the weather at all. It fast grows more threatening, and we shall be lucky if we get back to the fleet in time. Furthermore, I fear much that there will not be time to save the poor old *Stag Royal*: she is, to my mind, hopelessly lost, for, if appearance belie it not, the gale will be down on us ere they can hope to move her off the sand; and I pray God that the poor fellows on board her may be able to get away from her in time. Ah, the wind comes away even now! Pull, lads, pull, or we shall be swamped ere we can get ashore!"

As he spoke, the whole sky seemed to darken in a moment all round them; the sea took on the appearance of dull metal and became of a livid hue. Away on the north-western horizon the sky was black as ink, and below that, between sky and wave, was a line of white extending athwart the horizon, showing the forefront of the advancing gale.

"Pull, lads, pull!" again shouted Roger, raising his voice above the deep moaning sound that filled the air everywhere about them. "Unless we can contrive to reach the shore before that line of white, you know what our fate will be. We shall have to wait until the

gale blows over before we can return to the ships, if indeed they survive it."

The seamen saw that what Roger said was only too true, and pulled for dear life; but the boat was a heavy one, her full complement of oarsmen being eight. Now, however, she had only two men pulling; they therefore made painfully slow progress, and the white line of water seemed to be overtaking them at a speed that filled them with despair.

Meanwhile Roger noticed that the solitary watcher on the beach had now left the water, and was lying at full-length on the sand as though overcome by his exertions, weakened as perhaps he was by long exposure and privation.

The lad felt extremely anxious as to the fate of the ships, and frequently turned his head to snatch a glimpse of what was happening behind him. He was able to see, during his brief observations, that boats had been lowered from the stranded ship, and from her consorts, and were plying at their utmost speed between the wreck and the other vessels of the squadron. It was evident to Roger that the captain, observing the extraordinarily rapid approach of the gale, and foreseeing that, unless a miracle were to take place, the stranded ship must be lost, had not delayed a moment, but was transferring her crew to the other ships as fast as he possibly could. Roger fervently prayed that this operation of transfer might be completed ere the storm burst upon them; but he was very doubtful, for that fatal white line of foam was driving down upon the fleet with appalling rapidity.

But he could not relax his attention from the matter that he himself had in hand. He could not watch what was going on behind him and also steer the boat; so he set his teeth and gripped the tiller hard, looking straight ahead of him in search of the best and safest spot on which to beach his boat, for the sea was rising fast. He would have given much to have had his bosom friend and more than brother, Harry, in the boat with him at that moment. He could always rely on Harry's coolness and sound clear-headed advice, and he would have felt much less anxious had his chum been with him then.

The man on shore was now seen to stagger to his feet and to support himself with a stick, alternately pointing out to sea and beckoning them on. But neither Roger nor the men with him now needed anyone to remind them of the peril in which they stood.

They were nearing the beach now, but meanwhile the sea had been rising with almost incredible rapidity. When they left the ship the sea had been calm, with not even a ripple lapping the beach. There had been the proverbial calm before the storm. But now, although the gale had not yet reached the boat, the waves were leaping up the beach in foam, and their back-wash gave forth a roar like that of distant thunder. Roger yearned to look behind him again, to ascertain how far away the white squall still was, but he dared not turn his head; all his nerve and skill and courage were now needed to enable him to beach the boat without capsizing her. One glance at the faces of the men pulling, who of course were sitting looking aft in the direction from which the storm was coming, was enough to convince him that it could not be by this time very far distant. They were now within a few fathoms of the beach, and Roger, for the first time, dared to

hope that they would reach the shore without any mishap, when he observed his two seamen redouble their exertions, with a look of terror on their countenances, although they were very nearly "gastados" as the Dons say, or used up, and the next moment, with a fearful shriek, the white squall burst in all its fury upon the unhappy trio. The boat seemed suddenly to take wings; she was propelled with fearful velocity towards the beach; the spindrift whistled about them and blinded them; the shriek and roar of the wind deafened them, and its fearful force stunned them. The seamen were blown bodily from the thwarts into the bottom of the boat; but Roger, clinging desperately to the gunwale with one hand, and fiercely gripping the tiller with the other, contrived to retain his seat, and strove to pierce the dense mist of scud-water with his eyes, that he might see to beach the boat safely. But he could perceive nothing, and the next moment a wave descended full upon his back, dashing him forward and out over the bows. The tiller thus released, the boat broached to, filled, and capsized, and her three occupants were left struggling in the water and fighting for their lives, while the craft was flung bottom-upward on the beach and dashed into staves by the violence of the shock. Tossed hither and thither, to and fro, Roger strove to get his breath; but he could not, for he seemed buried in salt water; and he was suffering all the agonies of suffocation when his head emerged for a moment from the water and he drew a hasty breath that seemed to put fresh strength into his fast-failing limbs. Yet, strive against it as he would, although he felt the beach under his feet, they were fast being dragged from under him; he was in the clutch of the fatal undertow, and he knew that, exhausted as he was, if he were once swept back again into deep water he would drown, for his strength was now at an end. Summoning up all his energy, therefore, he gave vent to a loud shout for help—although help seemed to be the last thing he might expect at that moment—and made one last struggle for life. But, even as his senses failed him, and he was sinking backward in that fatal embrace, a pair of strong hands clutched his hair and arm, and for a few seconds he felt as though, between the sea on the one hand and a sturdy British seaman on the other, he were being torn asunder. Presently, however, the wave receded; the awful feeling of being sucked back left him, and, opening his eyes, he saw that he was on terra firma, with the sea behind him. "Now run," shouted the seaman—one Jake Irwin, who had been in the boat with him,—"run, Master Trevose, before the next sea catches ye." At the same time he dragged the lad up the beach with all his strength, and they reached safety as another wave came rolling hungrily after them, to retire again with an angry snarl, as though cheated of its lawful prey. Roger stood up and wiped the wet from his eyes and ears, and wrung the water out of his clothes as well as he could, and looked about him. He saw the two seamen—one of whom had rescued him, only just in the nick of time, from a watery grave—standing close by; and not far from them he perceived the figure of the man whom they had come to rescue, and for whom they had so nearly met disaster. The seamen who had rowed in the boat seemed none the worse for their adventure, and asked the lad how he felt, and whether he had suffered from the accident to the boat. Roger, aching in every limb and muscle from his recent struggle in the water, felt himself carefully over, and was able to assure them that he had broken no bones.

The stranger now approached and spoke to them, thanking them and applauding their bravery in coming away to save him, despite the threat of the gale that was by this time raging furiously. The man, it appeared, was an Englishman, and, in answer to a question put by Roger, he confessed that, as the captain had suggested on the deck of the flag-ship, he had been one of a crew of pirates, and, having incurred the displeasure of his captain and the enmity of his companions, had been marooned on the sand-bank with but a small stock of provisions and no means of obtaining more when those were exhausted; he had been allowed neither fishing-tackle nor musket with powder and shot, although the latter would not have been of very much use to him, for the island was small and so far away from the mainland that birds very seldom made their appearance there. It appeared that he had been on the sand-bank some thirty-six days, with the few provisions that they had been moved to give him, and nothing else beside but the clothing he stood up in.

“But,” concluded the poor fellow, who was emaciated and weak to the last degree, “I have made a bit of a shelter to leeward of the top of this bank; let us go there, since even it is better than nothing at all. Your boat's smashed to pieces on the beach, and we shall be forced to remain here until the storm blows itself out before they can send another boat. I pray that it may not be long in doing so, for, although there is water here in plenty, my provisions are pitifully low; in fact, for the four of us, there is only enough for about two days with the strictest economy. But come round to my shelter and I will make some fire, so that you can get your clothes dried, and you will then be a bit more comfortable.”

They were turning to follow their new friend, when Roger once more cast his eyes out to seaward, and he came to a stand-still, remaining as if rooted to the spot. The others gazed at him for a moment in astonishment, not knowing what had come over the lad. As they looked, however, he raised his arm slowly and pointed to seaward; the other three, following the direction of his outstretched arm, at once saw the reason for the horror and despair depicted on the lad's countenance. The flag-ship, which they had left stranded, lay broken in half by the terrific force of the sea, and the after-part of her was now being gradually driven shoreward, the fore-part remaining, as before, embedded in the sand; and, worse still for the poor castaways, the remaining three ships of the fleet had cut their cables and, setting what sail they dared, were heading away from the island before the gale. No wonder that Roger felt stunned with despair, as he realised that he was actually left on an island that was nothing more than a mere sand-bank, with three other men to bear him company, it is true, but with, between the four, only two days' provisions, provided that they were used with the most rigid economy!

But he was roused from his reverie by Jake's voice saying to him: “Never worry, Master Trevose, they ships ha'n't forgotten us by no manner o' means; but the skipper sees as how he can't take us off while this 'ere gale lasts, so he's cut his cables and run for it. The captain have lost one ship, and he don't want to lose any more, so he've just bore up out of harm's way until the gale have blowed itself out. And that, sir, with all submission, I

calls good seamanship. Never you fear, sir; we ain't forgotten; the skipper ain't the man to forget his crew, nor no part of 'em; and as soon as this 'ere bit of a breeze is over, you'll see they three ships come sailin' back here to this sand-bank to take us off again. I knows Captain Cavendish, I do, and he ain't the man to forget we's here, and sail away and leave us. We'll see 'em all back here to-morrow, or next day at the furdest. But I'm wonderin' whether there were any poor fellers left aboard the *Stag Royal* when she parted in the middle!" And old Jake Irwin looked round, shading his eyes from the flying spindrift, to see if he could discover any trace of human being either in the sea or washed up on the beach. But none was visible.

"Yes, you are right, Jake," said Roger. "I forgot for the moment that Captain Cavendish would be obliged to leave that anchorage or be blown on shore. But the captain will, of course, return as soon as he is able. As to there being any people aboard when the ship parted, Jake, I think all were taken off before that happened. And now, since we can do no more for the present, we had better go and take shelter as this man suggests. By the way, my man, what is your name?"

"My name, sir, is William Evans," replied the marooned man.

"And mine," said Roger, "is Roger Trevose; and these two men"—pointing to them in turn—"are Jake Irwin and Walter Bevan."

"Thank you, sir!" answered Evans. "Yonder is my shelter, and when we reach it I will give you my history up to the present, if you care to listen to it, for I feel that I have not much longer to live; this last month has compassed my death, so great have been the hardships that I have been obliged to endure. After the storm has ceased somewhat we had better go along the beach and collect any wreckage that happens to come ashore. And I pray Heaven that some food may be washed up, for we have very little here to go on with!"

A few minutes later they came to the "shelter", which was merely a deep hole dug in the sand, and roofed over with palm branches and grass, together with a few bits of plank and timber that had been washed up on the beach.

"Enter, sir, and fellow-seamen," said Evans, "and to such poor hospitality as I can offer you, you are most heartily welcome."

They went in, and the man made a fire with the help of his tinder-box and a few dry sticks that he routed out from a corner. The fire was soon blazing merrily, and they took off their clothes and held them before the flames to dry. Whilst this was being done, the marooned man, whose face even now bore the imprint of death, brought a little food out of his scanty store, and some water, and the party sat down to eat and drink. Then, when the meal was ended, they resumed their clothes, which were now dry, and prepared to listen to the history of the ex-pirate, which he gave to the accompaniment of the beating of rain over their heads, and the tumult of the gale around them.

Meanwhile Cavendish had not forgotten these poor waifs; but, having barely contrived

to clear the shore with his squadron, was now being driven away fast to leeward of the island by the furious gale, which as yet gave no sign of blowing itself out.

CHAPTER NINE. THE MAROONED MAN TELLS HIS STORY.

Crouching over the fire, the marooned man proceeded to tell his story.

"Well," he began, "I must tell you first that I was born in the year 1532, in the town of Monmouth, in Wales, of purely Welsh parents, bearing the ancient name of Evans. In my early youth I kept about the house and tended our flock of sheep, of which we had a great many, on the dear old Welsh mountains. This life suited me well, for I was of a studious frame of mind, fond of learning, and I read and studied much while out on the hills with the sheep. At this time our family was very prosperous; but not long afterwards England began to be torn by those religious struggles, which I doubt not you two older men will well remember, and we were unfortunate enough to have our lands confiscated by that tyrant, King Henry the Eighth, and, from a state of prosperity and the possession of all we could reasonably wish, my family found itself landless, without money, and even without a home. Besides myself, there were two other children, both girls; and what worried my poor parents most was the problem of what to do with us three children. Fortunately an uncle of my mother—a man whose religious convictions had a habit of changing with the times—had retained all his property, and he undertook to take my two young sisters and bring them up as his own children. This kindness on his part relieved my parents of much anxiety; but there was still the difficulty as to what to do with me. At last it was decided, in the absence of anything better, that I should go to sea; and accordingly, although I did not at all care for the idea, to sea I had to go, since no other course was open to me. My father secured me a berth as cabin-boy on board a vessel called the *Delight*, trading between London and ports on the Mediterranean, and commanded by a man named Thomas West. It had happened that my father, in the time of his prosperity, had been able to do this man a service, and that was the reason why he took me on board his ship; and I am bound to say that he was always very kind to me. The time for the next voyage came round only too quickly for my liking, and I bade a sad farewell to my father and mother, who somehow scraped up money enough to go to London with me to see me off, little dreaming, poor souls, that they would never see me again."

The pirate's voice shook slightly; he paused for a moment, and brushed the back of his hand across his eyes; then, clearing his throat, he resumed: "We left London in the latter part of the year 1547, when I was very nearly sixteen years of age, and, sailing down the English Channel, we entered the Bay of Biscay and touched at our first port, which was Bordeaux. From thence we sailed again, and—just before Christmas it was, I remember—we cleared the Straits of Jebel-al-Tarik, as the Moors call them, and entered the great inland sea. We coasted down its shores, touching first at Barcelona, for we were not then at war with Spain, and then at Marseilles, from which port we struck across for Sicily,

intending to call at Palermo. But on the way there we fell in with a Barbary corsair. Our captain was a brave man, and determined to fight to the last, as he had a very valuable cargo on board. The fight began early in the morning, and the pirate tried at first to ram our ship with his sharp beak; but the wind was good, and our ship was so nimble, and answered her helm so well, that we were able to avoid the rushes of the corsair, although he nearly had us on one occasion. Finding that these tactics did not answer, he drew off and, turning his broadside to us, lacked us through and through with his ordnance until we were a mere floating wreck, and half our ship's company lay dead on our decks. We replied as well as we could; but, being only a merchant-ship, we were not nearly so heavily armed as the corsair; and, our men being untrained in warfare, very few of our shot hit him, so that the rascal was but little the worse. Their captain then hailed us, and asked whether we would surrender; but the master of the *Delight* shouted back that if he wanted the ship he must come and take her.

"Whereat he came at us again, and laid himself alongside us, we not being able to move by this time, owing to our having lost all our masts, and being so encumbered with wreckage that we could do nothing. About a hundred fierce and bloodthirsty ruffians swarmed aboard us and began to cut us down and drive us toward the fore-part of the ship, while we, on our side, fought bravely enough with what weapons we could lay our hands on. But at last our gallant captain fell dead, cut down by the scimitar of a gigantic blackamoor, and the rest of us—very few by that time, I can assure you,—seeing this, threw down our arms and surrendered to the corsairs. There were then but seventeen of us left, all told, and not one of us but had his wound to show as the result of the fight. Five out of that seventeen, indeed, were so badly wounded that they died of their hurts before the corsair reached her port, leaving only twelve of us, all Englishmen, to be sent into slavery. After the corsairs had removed us to their own ship, they stripped the *Delight* of all that she carried, transferring all her cargo to their own hold. They were greatly pleased at the result of their day's work—for they had made a good haul—and made all haste to return to their port, which was Tunis. But before bearing up they set fire to our ship, and when we last saw the *Delight* she was blazing merrily. I make no doubt that she sank shortly afterwards, leaving no trace behind."

"You'm wrong there, mate," broke in Jake Irwin. "Don't you mind that it rained heavily soon afterwards? Well, the rain put out the fire, and an English ship comin' up found her still smoulderin', with enough of her left to show that she was the *Delight*. She brought the news of the loss of the *Delight* into Plymouth—I remember hearin' all about it,—and it was thought she had took fire in the ordinary way, and that her crew, havin' gone off in the boats, was a'terwards lost. No one ever gave a thought to pirates or corsairs."

"Ah," resumed Evans, "would to God that that vessel had come up sooner! We should have been saved—those left of us—from a living death that lasted for many years. Yes, now you come to mention it, I remember the rain; but we never dreamed that it would put out the fire, for we left her burning furiously. Well, the other ship was too late, and it makes no difference now. But, to get on with my yarn. We reached the port of Tunis

about ten days later, and there was much joy there when it was found what a valuable cargo the corsair had brought back; and the joy was all the greater because of the twelve white prisoners, for white slaves are reckoned very valuable in those parts, and there hadn't been any taken for a very long while. We were all put up to auction, and the man who bid highest got the man he fancied. A big Moor from the back-country took a liking for me, for I was a fine strapping youngster then, although you mightn't think it to look at me now. Well, he bought me, but me only; so I said good-bye to my comrades, never expecting to see them again, and we set off with my master's caravan for the interior.

"His home must have been some hundreds of miles in the interior, for it took us over two months of travelling every day to get there. We struck from the town of Tunis south-eastwards, as I could tell by the sun. After travelling for a long time we came to a big river, with fields of rice on each side of it, and beyond them the burning desert, with hills and mountains behind that again. When we came to the river we left the camels, and proceeded in boats until we came to a mighty waterfall, where we quitted the river for a time, and went a little way overland; then we took to the river again. This we did four times, and at last, after more than two months, travelling all the time, we came to a big town, built all of white stone, very fine to see. All around were green places like parks, with wells of good water in them; and there were palm-trees all about, and palaces of white marble; it was a lovely place for a free man to live in, but for a slave it was dreadful.

"Well, my masters, I was kept here for ten long years, during which I learnt the language, and found that the city in which I dwelt was named Khartoum. Then I began to fall ill; I looked old with suffering, and could not do the tasks allotted to me. I was whipped, and burnt with red-hot irons; but even such cruelties as these did not make me do any more work—for indeed I was more dead than alive,—so at last my master said he would send me down the river to the sea-coast, and sell me there as a galley-slave, as I was of no more use to him, while I should be made to work when I was in the galleys. So, with six others in like condition, I was sent off one morning, in charge of a guard, down the river, passing on our way six waterfalls or cataracts, as also many ruined temples and palaces of great age and beauty, with no men in them.

"After nearly two months of travelling, having passed many towns and villages on the way, we came one morning to a place on the river where we halted; and away in the desert I could see three great buildings, broad and square at the bottom, rising to a great height, and terminating in a point. I asked about them of our captors, and they told me that they were tombs of ancient kings of Egypt, and of great age.

"Leaving these, we went on again, and in course of time came to the city of Alexandria, where our journey ended. We stayed there several weeks, and then I—being by this time recovered from my sickness,—with the other six men, was sold to the captain of a corsair galley, who wanted a few more slaves to make up his complement of rowers.

"And now began the worst years of my life. For six long years, my masters, I sweated in

a hot sun, with no shelter; toiling at the great heavy sweeps with the other slaves; always kept to our work by the whip of the bo'sun. Ah, the torment of those years! The recollection of them would never leave me, were I to live to the age of the patriarchs of old. We pursued other craft—mostly merchantmen—and took them; and those of the slaves who were killed by the shot of the other ships were replaced by their crews.

"Many a time did I pray that I should be one of those to find death; but it never came to me, though often enough to the men by my side. At last, one day we attacked a Spanish vessel—for we had gone down towards the Straits of Jebel-al-Tarik—that looked like a harmless merchant-ship, but she proved to be a war-ship disguised on purpose to take us, and others like us. After more than an hour's fighting, during which nearly all our men were killed, she took us; and I, with the other Englishmen on board the galley, gave thanks to God, for we foolishly thought that all our troubles were now over. But we were soon to find out our mistake. There was now war between England and Spain, and we quickly discovered that we had merely made an exchange of masters.

"We were taken on board the Spaniard and the galley was sunk. Her owners were all hanged, being heathens, but we Englishmen were considered heretics, and we were to be reserved for the Holy Inquisition, that that office might convert us from our sins, and `save us from everlasting flame', as the Spanish Dons put it. We were landed at Cartagena, in Spain, and I, with eight others, was thrown into prison, to await my trial at the hands of the Holy Office. One by one we were tried, and all found guilty of `heresy'. Then they asked if we would recant. We all refused, with the natural result that we were put to the torture. Oh, my masters, pray daily and nightly that you may never fall into the hands of the Holy Inquisition! Those years that I spent on the galley were as heaven compared to being in the hands of the Dons.

"I will not tell you how they tortured us—for indeed the story will not bear telling,—but I bear the marks of their irons and the rack to this day. My companions steadfastly refused to renounce their faith, and after enduring the most hideous and awful tortures they were burnt alive. I know not whether my tortures were worse than theirs, but at last I could bear them no longer, and I recanted, to gain release from my daily pain. But I was mistaken in supposing that this late conversion was going to save me. I was tortured again, for my past obstinacy, and then, instead of being released, I was sent to their galleys, to spend the remainder of my life therein. By turning Romanist I had indeed saved myself from burning, but not from that living hell, the life of a galley-slave.

"I was, then, sent to the galleys, and remained there, how long I know not, but it seemed to be several years. During the time that I was in the Spanish galley—for I remained on the same vessel all the time,—we, together with other vessels, made several attacks upon English ships, but we were beaten off with heavy loss in every case except one, and that was when we captured a small English merchantman called the *Dainty*, the unfortunate crew of which, I suppose, were put into the Inquisition, as I had been. These many conflicts were productive of heavy casualties among the slaves, many more, indeed, than

among the soldiers and sailors who composed our fighting-crew, for, when chasing another vessel, or attacking her broadside to broadside, our enemy generally depressed his guns in order to hull and if possible sink us, as in that way only could they prevent us from running alongside. And every shot that pierced a galley's hull was certain to kill or maim at least four or five slaves. But our masters cared nothing for that; when one crew of galley-slaves was exhausted, another batch was sent for to take their place. There were always plenty of slaves to be had from the Spanish prisons, and the men we got from them were an even more cruel and wicked set of rascals than the men who called themselves our masters.

"Well, I had been a galley-slave among the Spaniards for some years—how many years, exactly, I cannot tell you, for after a time my senses became so deadened that I could not take the trouble to count up and remember the days and weeks as they passed; indeed I became more like an animal than a human being. I had been with the Spaniards for several years, I say, when one day we sighted an English merchantman, as we thought, and chased her. She appeared to be sailing but slowly, and we very soon caught her up, to find that we had walked, or rather sailed, into a deeply-laid trap. The Englishman, it appeared, had adopted a ruse similar to that practised by the Spaniards when they captured the corsair from Alexandria. The English had disguised their vessel—which was a war-ship—to look like an innocent and harmless merchant's trading-vessel, and to retard her speed and allow us to come up with her they had dropped overboard a couple of light spars connected together by a broad piece of stout sail-cloth, the whole of the apparatus being secured to the stern of the vessel by a stout rope. Thus the passage of the ship through the water caused this piece of canvas between the two spars to open, when it acted as a drag upon her, and reduced her speed so considerably that we soon overtook her. But no sooner were we well under her guns than she opened fire, and before we could get alongside her she had worked fearful execution both among our fighting-crew and also the slaves. Our eyes were now opened to the true character of the vessel, and the crew no longer had any desire to come to close quarters with her; so they put up their helm and bore away with all speed for Cadiz, the port nearest to us.

"And then began a chase that I shall never forget so long as I live, sirs. With our full crew we might perhaps have been a match for the English ship in point of speed, but half our galley-slaves were killed, and the Englishman, having now cut away his drag, was coming up with us hand over hand. The slave-drivers came down among us, and, standing on the drivers' plank, running down the centre of the galley, drove us to superhuman exertions by the merciless blows of their heavy-thonged whips, the lashes of which were plaited up with small lead balls on them. They even used the flat of their sword-blades to our backs, and after that, when the English ship still continued to overhaul us, they drew the edges of their weapons along our flesh, making the blood spurt. We were, as you perhaps know, all manacled together, and at least half our slaves were killed by the enemy's shot. The floor of the vessel was ankle-deep in blood, and the corpses of the dead, still manacled to the living—for there was no time to separate us,—

kept time with our strokes as we pulled, in a manner most horrible to look upon. The man next me had had his head cut off by a cannon-shot—I remember at the time wishing it had been mine,—and with every stroke I pulled his corpse moved also, and with each movement jets of blood gushed up from the torn veins, which were protruding from the gory neck, and flooded me. Well, the vessel still continued to gain on us, and I saw the Spanish dogs of slave-drivers whispering together, and presently they called for buckets of fire. These were brought, full of glowing charcoal, and into them irons were thrust. The unhappy slaves saw what was in store for them, and pulled until their muscles cracked. Soon the irons were white-hot, and the chief driver called to us in Spanish: `We must escape that cursed heretic-ship yonder. Now, you all see these irons? If I see one of you flagging in your efforts, that man will be branded with them, and when we get into harbour will be handed over to the office of the Holy Inquisition as a heretic and an aider and abettor of heretics.' This cruel threat drove us all nearly mad, and—for we knew what that meant—our muscles cracked again as we laboured on at the oars, hampered as we were by the bloody corpses of our fellow-slaves. For myself, I was away from the centre of the galley, I thank God! and near an open port, so I got a little air, which refreshed me; but I presently saw one of the poor fellows near the middle of the vessel, where the air was stifling, begin to relax his exertions. He was fainting with the heat and fatigue of the chase. The chief slave-driver, whose name, I remember, was Alvarez, saw it too, and called out: `Juan, this heretic is fainting; bring the fire-bucket.'

"The man brought it; Alvarez took out a white-hot iron, and—oh, sirs, I cannot describe what then happened, but I can hear that man's shrieks now, as I tell of it! It was awful; and would shrivel my tongue to relate, and your ears to hear. Well, sirs, not to harrow you further by those fearful methods of making us work, we at last got into Cadiz, and escaped the English ship; but more than half of the remaining slaves died from their exertions.

"Our diminished crew was replenished by a lot of men from the prisons of Spain, and among them was a man named Jose Leirya. This man was my evil genius; and, as he marked the turning-point in my life from good to evil, I may as well describe his appearance; for he is on these seas now, and I wish you to know the man, so that if you should meet him with a sufficient force to capture him, you may recognise the villain. He was sent down to the galley one morning with a number of other men, to make up her complement afresh after the encounter with the Englishman. I recognised him for a leader of men the moment he came aboard the galley, and, as he was chained next to me on the same tier, I had ample opportunity for observing his appearance. He was an enormously tall and broad man, of extremely dark complexion. He said he was of Portugal, but I should say he had more Moorish blood in him than anything else. He wore his hair long, and it fell in thick black ringlets over his broad shoulders. A huge moustache concealed his lips, and a long black beard hid his chin; indeed the man was so hairy that he had the appearance of being an ape rather than a man. One of his eyes—which were jet black in colour, with whites which turned red when he flew into a rage—

had a very perceptible cast in it; the left eye, I remember it was. His nose had been broken, and had a tremendous twist to starboard; and he had lost his right ear in a stabbing affray in the streets of Lisbon. In the left he now wears a huge gold ear-ring, shaped something like a nut, with an enormous emerald set in it. Such was the exterior appearance of the man who was to change both my life and that of others, Jose Leirya, murderer and galley-slave, then mutineer, and, lastly, pirate and villain of villains, slayer of hundreds of innocent folk, slave-dealer, incendiary, and bloodthirsty monster, for whom no death is bad enough. Remember my description of the man, sirs, for he presents the very same appearance at the present day. I should know, for but two short months since I was on his vessel; and, God forgive me, I believe I was not much better than he. But to continue my yarn. This man came aboard with about a hundred others; and I perceived at once—although our jailers did not seem to notice the fact—that there was some kind of arrangement or understanding between Jose Leirya and a number of the new galley-slaves. What it meant I did not know until afterwards. We left Cadiz, and our captain, thinking perhaps that the Mediterranean Sea was not suitable for his enterprises, determined to take the galley to the West Indies and try his fortune there. So we started away across the great Atlantic Ocean.

“As I have told you, Jose Leirya was chained next to me; but he never once spoke to me until after we had left the Western Isles. A few days after that, however, he one evening disclosed to me his plan for seizing the galley, and I then knew what the understanding had been between himself and a large number of the prisoners who came aboard the galley with him. On a certain night—which would fall about eight days later— at midnight, on a given signal, all were to rise and overpower the soldiers and sailors of the ship, seize her for ourselves, and use her for our own purposes. You will ask, how were we to get rid of our manacles? Well, it was thus arranged, sirs. Jose Leirya had brought on board, cunningly concealed in his clothing, a number of small saws, of exceeding fine temper and sharpness. They would cut through our manacles as a knife cuts through wood. These he gave out to some of the slaves, and on the night arranged they were to cut the links of their iron manacles and pass the tools on to the others. This would, of course, leave the iron rings round our wrists and ankles, but we should be free to move and fight; and after we had won the ship we could get the rings off at our leisure. The saws were given out one by one, the greatest care being taken that they were not discovered, and immediately after dark on the eventful night we began to cut our fetters, the galley being then under sail and the oars laid in. By midnight we were ready, and waiting for the signal. It came as a shrill whistle from Leirya's lips. At the sound we all swarmed up on deck; and, as most of the officers and seamen were asleep below, we quickly overcame the watch. We gave no quarter, knowing that none would be given to us, and we took no prisoners. Then, going to the companion-hatches, we cried `Fire!' and as our former masters came running up in their shirts, they were seized and flung overboard. None of them suspected any plot, and the vessel was soon in our hands.

“We then took counsel among ourselves to elect officers, and determine upon our future

movements. Jose Leirya was, of course, elected captain, and, for some reason that I cannot make out, I was chosen for first mate. Then for our plans. We were about in the middle of the North Atlantic, perhaps a little more than half-way to the West Indian Islands; so we determined to run there, take a ship on our way, if we could, and if not, capture one in the first port we could reach—for the galley was of little use to us for our purposes. Ah! if I had but known, if I could but have foreseen what was to happen in the future, what deeds I should be called upon to do, rather would I have suffered death by torture than have joined in the mutiny! But I did not then know that Jose Leirya intended to become a pirate, or that he meditated those awful atrocities that have made men curse his name, and swear to hunt him down and make his end worse than a dog's! At length, when the ship had been ours for a matter of fifteen days, and was approaching the islands, our lookout one afternoon reported a large ship coming up from the westward. Our hearts leaped with anticipation, but we kept a very cautious lookout lest she should prove to be a war-vessel. As she came nearer, however, we saw that she was a large merchant-vessel flying the flag of Spain—that country that we had grown to hate with a hatred passing words. She had not noticed us as yet, for we lay low in the water and had no sail set. As soon, however, as she saw us coming toward her, she made all sail to escape, and we followed in full pursuit. Then, finding that we *were* gaining upon her, she went about, evidently with the intention of returning to the islands; but she was doomed to be our prey. Every man of us, even Leirya himself, joined the crew of oarsmen below, leaving only the helmsman on deck to steer and to report progress to us below. Thus every oar was fully manned, and we swept along after her, gaining on her hand over hand, until about the middle of the afternoon the man at the helm threw us alongside her —for she was unarmed with cannon and could not fire at us—and we all swarmed up from below and on to her decks. Such was our ferocity that we cleared their deck at once, leaving dead and wounded in our path, the whole of whom—quick and dead alike —we at once flung overboard.

“We did not require the galley any longer, so we took all her guns and arms, and furnished the ship with them, sinking the galley afterwards, and thus hiding all trace of our former crime. We got under way directly after this, still making for the islands, and then provisions and wine, of which there were plenty on the ship, were got up, and we caroused and made merry for the rest of the day.

“We soon found that the new vessel was not suitable for us; but she was ere long the means of enabling us to obtain another to suit our purpose, without any loss of life to us.”

CHAPTER TEN. WILLIAM EVANS CONTINUES HIS YARN.

“We were now about two days' sail from the island of Porto Rico, and we had discovered from the ship's papers that it was from the Port of San Juan in that island that she had recently sailed.

“The name of the craft was the *Villa de Vera Cruz*, and our plan was to re-christen her, alter her rig and general appearance, and sail boldly into the Port of San Juan, hoping to be taken for some vessel just arrived from Spain or elsewhere. Then, if unmolested, we should examine the harbour; and, if it were found to contain any vessel suitable for our purpose, the plan was that we were to wait for nightfall, and then board the other vessel by means of the boats, capture her, and sail out of the harbour again before daylight with both vessels. And when once well out of sight of land, and reasonably safe from pursuit, all the survivors of her crew, if any, were to be killed and flung overboard. All stores, cargo, and guns were to be transferred to the new capture, and our present craft sunk—as we had done with the galley.

“It had become a saying with us that `dead men tell no tales'; so it was agreed to kill every soul we captured, taking care that none escaped us. We should thus—so we believed—keep our movements secret for some considerable period at any rate. For—it is useless for me to attempt to disguise the fact—we had not been in possession of our prize twenty-four hours ere we had agreed to start piracy in earnest, preying on all nations, and selecting some nook where we could hide what treasure we captured.

“Well, we duly arrived in the roads of San Juan, and anchored well out of gunshot from the forts, seemingly without exciting any suspicion whatever. We carefully examined the roadstead, and there, sure enough, was just the craft for our purpose; but she was lying right under the guns of the fort. She was a pretty vessel: schooner-rigged, very low in the water, and—as we found out when we took her—of very deep draught; broad in the beam, and `flush-decked' fore and aft, with no raised fore or after castles. We could see, by her open ports, that she carried twelve guns of a side—nine-pounders they were,—with a long gun forward of her foremast that threw a thirty-two pound shot. She was therefore quite heavily armed enough for our purpose, and there would be no need to transfer our old guns to her when she was captured; and we should thus be saved a great deal of labour. Her masts were very long and tapering, with a big rake aft, and from a distance the vessel looked overmasted; but when one got on board her one saw that her great width of beam gave her the stiffness necessary to carry such lofty masts with their corresponding spread of sail. In short, she was just what we wanted, and, indeed, we could not have had a ship better suited to our purpose even though we had built her ourselves. Needless to say, we determined to cut her out from under the guns of the fort, and capture her, at any risk, that very night. During the day we got up our arms, loaded our pistols, sharpened up our swords and cutlasses, and got all ready for the night attack. We were in a fever of impatience to try our luck, and could hardly bring ourselves to wait until dark, still less until midnight, which we decided was the earliest hour at which we could make an attempt. So great was our excitement and impatience that we strove to allay them by drinking raw spirits continually; and by night we were mad with drink, the only effect of which was to turn us into a gang of demons who would stop at nothing. It was perhaps due to the drink—though we did not know it—that we actually took the vessel after all; for we encountered a most stubborn resistance; and had there been any

people in the fort, they would certainly have opened fire upon us, and we should have been killed to a man. Luckily, as it happened, for us, there was a carnival in progress in the town that night, and nearly every man in the place was attending it. Those who had not got leave deserted, and went all the same, even to the last sentry; so that when we made our attack there was not a solitary soldier in the fort.

“At length the hour came; we got our boats over noiselessly, and pulled away toward the schooner. It was dark as the inside of a wolf's mouth, and there was but little phosphorescence in the water. We pulled with muffled oars, and were nearly alongside her, when someone on board must have caught a glimpse of the faint flash as our oars dipped, for we heard a voice giving the alarm on board in Spanish. Seemingly they did not want us to know that they were on the alert, and reckoned on giving us the surprise we intended for them; but we had caught the low words of warning, and knew that they were ready for us. We laid our boats alongside one another, and held a whispered council, as a result of which we very slowly and cautiously pulled round to the farther side of the vessel, and boarded her silently there, falling upon the Spaniards in the rear. This was the saving of us, for they had lined the bulwarks on the other side, and had we attempted to board on that side we should never have been successful.

“The fight was fierce and grim, and, strangely enough, silent; there was not a cry, save the groans and moans of the wounded and dying. We struggled and fought in silence, and in the dark it was difficult to tell friend from foe. At length, to make my long story a little shorter, we drove them below, and, cutting the vessel's cable, made sail for the open sea. We had agreed to show a red light to our own vessel, as a signal for her to slip out also, if we were successful; so we looked round for a red lantern, and presently found one. The signal was made, and immediately answered by three flashes of a white light from our old ship, as decided upon before leaving her. Both craft were soon under way for the open sea, and kept each other in view by the light of the stars; and at daybreak we could only just see the land. We kept on, however, until mid-day, to make ourselves doubly safe, by which time we had run the land out of sight; when both craft were hove-to. Then the crew of the prize were brought up on deck; and as we were, after our recent rights, very short-handed, we gave them the choice of joining us or of walking the plank. They were, for the most part, a rascally lot of men, and did not need the persuasion of `the plank' to join us; indeed they seemed glad to have the opportunity. By this means we replenished our crew, and our total number now exceeded by forty-nine that which we were before taking the galley. We had, therefore, a crew of two hundred and twenty-five men, which was a big crew for so small a ship. But then, as Leirya said, we had to provide against casualties. Seventeen men walked the plank, rather than join us, and after that we made the necessary transfer of stores and other material, and sank our old vessel. We were now ready and well equipped for our piratical undertaking, and we started at once on our nefarious career.

“I cannot recount to you all that took place, for many long years have passed since I first threw in my lot with that scoundrel, Jose Leirya; but we took countless ships, and

accumulated a vast amount of treasure, the most part of which is buried in a certain spot. I know the bay where the hiding-place is; but exactly where the `cache' itself is I know not. Of that, however, a little later on. To shorten my story—of which I expect you are now heartily tired—I will pass over my life and experiences during the years that I have been with the pirate, until about six months ago. But I must tell you first that, what with fights, disease, punishment by death, accident, and so on, our crew gradually changed until I and two others, with Jose Leirya himself, were the only survivors of the original galley-slaves. The other men hated me, and for some time had been putting about false reports of me, and other matters to my great harm, until at length Leirya said he would get rid of me. The men clamoured for my death, for I had often sent others of them to their death; but Jose refused to kill me, as I had been so long with him. He promised to maroon me, however, and the scoundrels had to be satisfied with that promise. They made many attempts, however, to murder me, but I escaped them all.

“We did not sight an island for some time, and now, every day, I brooded over the wrong Jose had done me in listening to the lies of others, and acceding to their demands, and I determined to have my revenge on him. He had always trusted me, and did so still, and I had a key that fitted the lock of his cabin. One day we sighted a ship; and, as it fell calm, the boats were ordered out to pull to her and capture her. Nearly all hands went, including Leirya himself, but I remained behind to help look after the schooner. While they were away, I went into the captain's cabin, and, finding his keys in the pocket of a jacket of his that hung there, I opened his private drawer and took out all the papers that were there, putting back blank ones of similar appearance to those that I had stolen, relocked the drawer, and replaced the key. I then hid the papers in my own chest, which I was certain Jose would allow me to take. I will tell you why I stole those papers. It was because I thought I should find the key to his hidden treasure among them; and I was not mistaken. I found it, or what I believe to be it, but it was in cipher; and I have spent nearly all my time since I have been on the island in trying to translate it, but have not been able to do so. I know, however, whereabout the bay is in which the hiding-place is situated. It is at the east end of the island of Cuba, in latitude 20 degrees north, longitude 75 degrees west.

“I have those papers still; and before I die I will give them to you, Master Trevose. They may be useful to you; and if you can translate the cipher, why, there are millions there for you, unless, indeed, Jose Leirya removes them before you can get there. Well, sirs, Jose did not discover the loss by the time that we fell in with this sand-bank, and, according to his promise to the crew, I was marooned here; but he gave me a musket, with powder and ball, and enough provision to keep me for a year. The men who went in the boat to put me ashore were, however, my most deadly enemies; and before we reached the shore, and when they were far enough away from the vessel not to be seen, they dropped musket and all overboard, leaving me only a very little provision, saying that they did not wish me to die too soon. Then, after landing me, they returned, the ship disappeared, and I have seen no sail but yours since they left me here two months ago.

That, gentlemen, is my story. To help you hunt down that bloody pirate, however, I will tell you that he intended sailing up through the bays of Honduras and Guatemala, and through the Yucatan channel into the Gulf of Mexico, to cruise there for merchantmen sailing to and from Vera Cruz and the other ports. And it is there that you will find him, sirs. Chase him; run him down; take him, at all costs, and hang him and his crew from his own yard-arm, and burn his ship; so shall you exterminate one of the most cruel, ferocious, bloodthirsty devils who ever sailed the sea, and avenge me, sirs. For I shall soon die; the hardship and exposure that I have suffered here have killed me! But now that I have told you my story, I can die comfortably, for I have only lived to impart my information to someone else, and so help them to hunt that man down. But see, the dawn is breaking!"

The other three had been so intensely interested in the outcast's tale that the time had passed unnoticed, and the first streaks of dawn were indeed in the sky. Moreover, the wind had dropped, the rain had ceased, and the sea was going down. The unfortunate ex-pirate seemed exhausted by the long recital of his experiences, and looked very weak. Presently he laid himself down on the sand under his shelter, and fell fast asleep through sheer fatigue. The others went outside and took a survey of the beach, and were lucky enough to be able to collect quite a respectable quantity of wreckage, together with several casks of provisions. And they could see several more being gradually washed in, so they were in no danger of starvation, at all events for the present. They at once began to roll up the casks to the shelter, promising themselves a good meal before beginning the work of collecting all on which they could lay their hands. They resolved to collect all that they could, for it was impossible to be sure as to when the three vessels of Cavendish's fleet would return; they knew that there were too many vicissitudes in a sailor's life to permit of their absolutely depending upon anything, and they therefore resolved to make every possible provision for a lengthy stay where they were, should such prove to be necessary. That Cavendish would never abandon them they knew, but it was easy to think of a dozen circumstances or accidents to defer his search for them indefinitely.

Roger and the two seamen rolled up a few of the casks to the door of the little shelter, and, all feeling very hungry, they determined to broach one of them, as they judged from their appearance that they were provision-casks. They first glanced at the marooned man, to see if he had yet awakened from the slumber into which he had so suddenly fallen, but he was lying in his former position, breathing very heavily, and he had evidently not moved since they left him. Roger remarked to the two seamen: "I fear that poor fellow will not live much longer; he says he is exhausted by exposure and privation, and, looking at him, I can easily believe it. I hope he will live long enough to be taken on board the ships, and so be able to tell his story in his own words to the captain; but unless the squadron appear very soon it will be too late, for I am afraid a few days will see the last of him!" Then, as there seemed no fear of rousing him, they went into the shelter to look for themselves and see how much provision he had left.

They found it without difficulty. There was only about three pounds of ships'-biscuit left, and two or three strips of dried meat. This was absolutely all the food that was left, and had it not been for the wreck, and the casks of provisions being washed ashore, their position would have been very serious indeed. Jake Irwin had been searching for some cooking utensil, or some article which could be used as such, and presently appeared with an iron three-legged pot, which was the only thing in the small establishment that would serve their purpose. Meanwhile Roger and Walter Bevan had secured the ex-pirate's only axe, and were busily engaged in removing the head of one of the casks which they had rolled up opposite to the little shelter. The top presently came away, and they saw, disclosed before their longing and hungry eyes, not the provisions they so much needed, but a hard and rocky mass of caked gunpowder, made useless and solid by the action of the sea-water that had penetrated through the crevices of the cask.

"God help us!" exclaimed Roger. "If all these casks hold nothing but powder, we shall slowly starve to death. I hoped they would all be provision-casks; I never thought they would contain aught else!"

"Never despair, Master Trevose," replied Bevan, "they may not be all the same. Let us try another cask. We may have better luck this time."

Disheartened and anxious, they set to work, desperate with hunger, and beat in the head of the next cask with savage blows. And, oh joy! in this cask they at length found the much-needed food in the form of salt pork, with which the barrel was filled.

"Hurrah," shouted Roger, "we are saved after all!"

They took out two large pieces. Jake Irwin filled the pot with water from the spring, and, having soon made a fire, they set the meat on to boil. The savoury odour of the cooking meat soon met their nostrils and encouraged them to fresh efforts on the other casks. Strangely enough, though the first cask opened was filled with spoilt gunpowder, all the rest of the barrels had good wholesome provisions in them. The second barrel opened was found to contain ships'-biscuit, the third and fourth salt pork; the fifth had beef in it, and in one or two more casks they found further food, sufficient in all to last them for some months without going on short rations. It was not long ere the meat was sufficiently cooked to satisfy them, and they went in to call Evans and acquaint him with the fact that he could now have a good wholesome meal. They aroused him with great difficulty, and he seemed to be weaker than ever. He revived somewhat under the stimulating influence of the hot food, and told them that if only he had had such food a little earlier it would have saved his life.

Their meal finished, they got up a few more casks which had meanwhile come ashore, and gathered more wreckage, piling all their material recovered from the sea in a place of safety well above high-water mark. Having at length collected everything in sight on the beach, the next thing they set themselves to do was to find a suitable spot and erect, with the wreckage that they had found, a hut large enough to contain the entire party

with comfort. But first, as Roger very rightly observed, it was necessary and prudent to build a fire the smoke of which could be seen out at sea, and which might serve as a guide to Cavendish in his search for the sand-bank should he happen to be looking for it. Their plan was to feed the fire with damp wood and sea-weed during the day, to produce a thick smoke that could be seen at a long distance out at sea, and to put on dry wood at night to make a bright blaze which could also be seen a long way off. This was soon done, and a site was then selected for the projected hut. Among the palm-trees on the summit of the bank were three trees so placed as to form the points of a fairly spacious triangle. Roger selected these, intending to nail or otherwise secure planks to their trunks, making a three-sided enclosure; leaving space, of course, in one of the sides for a door. A roof they believed they could dispense with, as the trees were not very high, and the tufts of leaves at their summits were so thick, and grew so close together, that it seemed very doubtful whether even the furious rain of the tropics would be able to penetrate them. They found a number of nails in the planks and timbers which they had collected, and these served their purpose. Roger, Jake Irwin, and Walter Bevan worked right manfully at the job of erecting the new hut, and in a few hours it was finished. Evans, poor fellow, was far too weak to take a hand in any of the operations, and lay in his shelter almost unable to move. When the new hut was finished, the builders found the man too far gone to walk, so they brought some planks and put him on them, carrying him up in that way. He was laid gently down and made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. A pannikin of water was left with him, and some cold provisions placed near him in case he should feel hungry. The others then went away to seek further wreckage and casks, but they found no more. Then they decided to make another shelter wherein to protect their provisions. It was thought advisable to construct this place near the new hut; so the old shelter—such as it was—was taken down and replaced close behind their new structure, and the casks, barrels, and other perishable matters were placed therein as being safer, as well as easier to get at at all times. They were now fairly settled down in their new domain; they had shelter, and plenty of food to last for some months, even on full rations. There was water in abundance to be had from the spring, and altogether their lot was far and away more satisfactory and endurable than that of the poor marooned pirate had been. Besides, there were now four of them, and they had the advantage and comfort of each other's company, while Evans had been entirely alone with only his own miserable thoughts for companions until Roger and his two seamen made their welcome appearance on the sand-bank. It occurred to Roger that it would be a very good thing to have a flag and flag-staff, because their fuel would not last for ever, and with it would go their only means of signalling to passing ships; so several narrow pieces of wood were nailed together, and the two seamen, both of whom were wearing red shirts, sacrificed those garments in the interests of the community. The lad then split them both down one side, to increase the area of his improvised ensign, and tied the arms together to increase the length. This “flag” was then nailed to the makeshift flag-staff, and Roger and Jake Irwin swarmed up a palm-tree—one of the three composing the posts for the support of the walls of their hut,

while Walter Bevan passed up the flag and staff to them from below. Then Roger, with his sword, which he had carried up naked between his teeth, cut away part of the foliage, and the staff was pushed up through the hole thus made, the lower portion being secured to the top of the trunk of the palm-tree. Both men then scrambled down to the ground again and looked up at their handiwork. There it fluttered, far above the tufted crowns of the palm-grove, a large red flag at the top of its lengthy staff, some eighty feet above the ground, and visible, as they judged, at a distance of at least ten miles out at sea on a clear day. This, as Roger remarked, gave them an extra chance of being recovered by the fleet, as the flag would be seen at almost as great a distance as the smoke from the fire, while the two together ensured their being sighted by any vessel that approached the island within ten miles.

Satisfied at last with their work, and seeing that there was nothing further for them to do at the moment, Roger determined to make a tour of their little domain; so, leaving Jake Irwin to attend to the sick man Evans, Roger and Walter Bevan set off. Starting from a point on the beach opposite the hut, they began their walk, going towards the eastern end of the sand-bank. They found that the shore was everywhere sand until they had gone some half a mile and nearly reached the end of the island, when they came upon a ledge of rocks over which they had to clamber, and which stretched out for quite a long distance into the sea. The two ventured out some few hundred yards along the ridge to seaward, and found that it had deep water on each side of it, the rock seeming to run perpendicularly down to the sandy bottom. The place struck them as being an excellent situation for fishing from if only they possessed hooks and lines, for, peering down into the water—which was clear as crystal,—they saw all manner of many-hued and beautiful fish disporting themselves below. They gazed admiringly and somewhat longingly at them for a few minutes, determining to return later and attempt to catch some, and then resumed their explorations. They had not gone very far, and were walking side by side, when Roger stumbled over an inequality in the surface of the sand. He passed on, taking no notice of the circumstance, thinking it to be only a stone or piece of rock covered up by the sand; but Bevan, who had noticed the occurrence, stepped back, and, dropping on his knees, began to clear away the sand with his fingers, presently revealing to Roger's wondering eyes a number of eggs.

“Whatever are those?” exclaimed the lad, hardly able to believe his senses. “I suppose they are eggs; they look like eggs; but I have never before heard of eggs being buried in sand.”

“These, Master Trevose,” responded the man, smiling at Roger's astonishment, “are turtles' eggs, and they are excellent eating, I can assure you. They will be a grand change of food for us, as will the fish when we can catch them. Moreover, having laid these eggs here, the turtle may very possibly come back to this spot to lay more. We will look out for her, and if she returns we must turn her over on her back and then go back and fetch Jake, who will help us to carry her to the hut. We need not worry about fresh meat now, Master Trevose. If we can catch turtle we shall have meat enough to last us for

some time."

"I am rejoiced to hear you say so," returned Roger. "But why turn the turtle on her back, should she make her appearance?"

"Well, sir," replied the man, "the way of it is this. By turnin' a turtle over on its back you can always make certain that, if you're obliged to go away and leave it, you'll find it in the same place when you come back; because if a turtle's laid on its back it can't turn over again by itself, and so is perfectly helpless and unable to move."

There were fourteen eggs in the "nest" in the sand; so Roger took off his coat, and, tying the arms together, made a sort of bag of it, into which he carefully put a few of the eggs. Then, carrying his parcel very carefully, they resumed their journey. They found no more eggs at that time, and discovered nothing further of importance, and shortly afterwards arrived back at the hut, having completed their walk round the islet.

Irwin reported that the man Evans had called for water, and had seemed in great pain, but had revived a little after drinking, and was now again asleep.

The two explorers deposited their burden of eggs, and told Jake of their hopes regarding the turtle, arranging to go down again later and watch for the creature, knowing how important it was to their health to secure as varied a diet as possible. But before setting out again they put a few of the eggs into the hot ashes of the fire and baked them in their shells. When they thought they would be sufficiently cooked, they took them out of the ashes, and roused Evans up with the news that another meal was ready for him.

CHAPTER ELEVEN. DEATH OF WILLIAM EVANS, AND APPEARANCE OF A PIRATE VESSEL.

It was with the utmost difficulty that they at length succeeded in arousing the unfortunate man to a sense of his surroundings. Ever since their landing on the sand-bank the poor fellow had been sinking with startling rapidity. It seemed as though prior to their appearance he had kept himself alive by a sheer effort of will, for the sole purpose of relating his story and putting the avengers on the trail of his former captain; and, this done, the strain was relaxed, and nature was claiming her due. Evans at last sat up with great difficulty, passing his hand over his forehead and gazing at his companions and around at the new hut as though he had never seen either them or it before.

The three on-lookers felt an infinite compassion for the unfortunate outcast; and although he had been, by his own showing, a party to the most dreadful atrocities, yet Roger and the seamen felt that it was not for them to judge him. They recognised that he had never been a willing participator in the horrors he had described, and in their opinion he had fully expiated his offences by the suffering and agony of remorse which he had endured on the sand-bank. Roger tenderly supported the emaciated frame in his arms, and tried to coax some food down the sick man's throat; but he weakly pushed away the hands of the would-be benefactor, and, the light of reason presently returning

to his eye, he said he could eat nothing, but pleaded for a draught of water. This was at once given him, and, seeing that the man was too weak to swallow anything solid, Roger ceased to persuade him. In a few minutes the poor fellow was again sunk in a profound stupor. As no more could be done for him, the others turned their attention to their own meal, and, being ravenously hungry, did full justice to the food before them, averring that they had never in the whole course of their lives tasted anything half so enjoyable, thus conclusively proving the truth of the statement that “hunger is the very best sauce.”

Having at length satisfied their appetites, it was considered quite time to go and wait for Mistress Turtle to make her appearance. So away they went, and, the distance not being great, they soon arrived at the spot, where, sure enough, they saw a fine large turtle. They had been none too cautious in their manner of approach, as they hardly anticipated finding her there so soon, if at all; and, directly they appeared over the ledge of rock, away she went as fast as she could for the sea. But Roger, who was a very fast runner, soon got in front of her and headed her off; and a few seconds later the men came up, when their united efforts were sufficient to turn her over on her back, after which she was safe. Bevan then drew his knife and cut off the head, which was thrown away; and then, making fast a rope which they had brought with them to one of the fins, they dragged the carcass off, and at length got it to the hut. They then started to cut it up, one of the fins being at once dropped into the pot and stood on the fire to make soup, that the sick man might have something more nourishing than water to drink. Then they put away as much as would keep fresh until they had used it, and the remainder they hung out in the sun to dry, after cutting the flesh into strips, thus ensuring for themselves a plentiful supply of meat for some time to come. They all now felt somewhat more comfortable in their minds, for they were certain that with the fish they hoped to catch, and an occasional turtle or two, with a further possibility of eggs now and then, and, above all, a plentiful supply of water, they would be able to hold out until the fleet came back to take them off their temporary prison.

Having removed every particle of flesh from the shell, Irwin signified his intention of taking the latter down to the water's edge to clean it thoroughly, as it would then afford a very handy and useful receptacle for water, and it would be further very useful as a bath; for it was highly dangerous to attempt bathing in the sea, the likelihood being that the adventurous swimmer would be snapped up by some voracious shark before he had been a minute in the water. He therefore went off, dragging the shell after him, while Bevan returned to the turtle's nest for the remainder of the eggs, and Roger busied himself with the simmering turtle soup, also taking a few strips of the meat and impaling them on pieces of wood in readiness for the next meal. Having performed this part of his duty he strolled away down to the beach to watch Jake clean the turtle's shell. As he came in sight of the beach, what was his surprise to see Jake Irwin in the water up to his arm-pits, reaching out as though endeavouring to get hold of some object just beyond him. The man did not see Roger, and continued his strange antics; but presently he got hold of what he was after, which had the appearance of a small keg that seemed to be about as

much as he could conveniently carry. He then turned round and began to make his way ashore again, carrying his prize with him. He glanced up, saw Roger, and shouted: “I have something here, Master Trevose, which will be very valuable to us if it is what I believe it to be.” He soon waded out and flung down a small barrel on the sand at his feet.

“Why,” said Roger, “what is that? It is a barrel of some sort, as, of course, I can see; but what do you suppose its contents to be?”

“Well,” responded the sailor, “as I was getting water to clean the shell, I saw some object washed up and then taken out again by the undertow; so I determined to get hold of it if possible; and next time it rolled in I made a grab at it, but missed it; then I ran out after it, and, after making several attempts, managed to get a hold of it, and brought it ashore; and here it is. And I think it valuable because it looks to me like one of the ship's spirit-casks. It may be brandy, and if the brandy has not been spoiled by the salt water getting at it, it will be a great blessing to that sick man Evans, and may even save his life. And it may save ours too, if we get taken ill; for there is no knowing when the fleet will be here again.”

“Very true,” responded Roger. “I do not believe that the skipper will give up looking for us while his ships hold together; but, as you say, it may be a long time before we are rescued, so it is as well to secure everything we can lay our hands on. Meanwhile, let us take the barrel up to the huts and open it, and see if the contents are what we hope them to be, and whether they have been reached by the sea-water, and spoiled, or not.”

Then, each taking an end of the barrel—which was one of those small casks called breakers, holding about twelve to fourteen gallons, and therefore very weighty,—they carried it up to the hut, where they found Bevan just returned with the remainder of the turtle's eggs. Irwin at once set to work to remove the bung of the cask, while Roger went into the hut and fetched out the only small vessel belonging to the little community, a wooden mug capable of holding somewhere about a pint and a half.

A few moments more and Irwin said: “Ready, Master Trevose?”

“Yes,” replied the lad.

“Then, here you are, sir.”

Roger slipped the mug in front of the hole, and caught the liquid in it as it came gurgling out. He let the mug fill, and then the bung was returned to its place and driven home with the hammer. So far as colour and smell were concerned there could be little doubt that the liquor was brandy, as Irwin had surmised.

Roger was not greatly addicted to the use of spirits, being, indeed, exceedingly temperate; he therefore considered himself but a poor judge of its quality. Nevertheless he sipped at the contents of the mug, and, having tasted, said that, so far as he could tell, the stuff was good spirit enough, and at any rate he was certain that it had not been got at

by the salt water. Bevan and Irwin then each took a taste—a pretty long taste it was too, for they returned the mug to Roger empty,—both pronouncing it to be the finest brandy of France that had ever passed their lips. They, being seamen, would have very much liked some more; but Roger pointed out that the spirit must be regarded as medicine only, and must be carefully conserved for use as such if ever any of themselves should be taken ill. The men fortunately had sense enough to see that Roger was right in what he said, and agreed to the liquor being kept for use in case of necessity.

It was now time to prepare the next meal, and this was done; a perfect feast of eggs, turtle steaks, bread, and turtle soup constituting the “spread”. Evans was again aroused, and given a few spoonfuls of the soup, with a liberal allowance of brandy in it. He seemed too dazed to enquire where all this nourishing and wholesome food had come from, but managed to swallow his portion, and it revived him so much that he sat up without assistance. His faculties seemed to return to a certain extent, and presently he asked for more. This was given him, supplemented this time by a small quantity of brandy and hot water. The spirit seemed to do him more good than anything else. The light came back gradually to the fast-dimming eyes, and a spot of colour made its appearance in his ashen face. He swallowed with great difficulty; but, taking his time, he managed to eat a very fair quantity of food for a man sick nigh unto death, and the food, together with the stimulant, revived him so much that for a time Roger thought that with care, constant attention, and good food they might even now save the man's life after all. But the effect was only transient, and it was not long before he had to lie down again; his eyes lost their fire, and he gradually dropped back into a stupor similar to that from which he had been aroused to take his meal.

Roger was greatly moved by the poor wretch's condition, and was very quiet and reserved for the remainder of the day; the two sailors, however, had seen more of the world and its vicissitudes than the lad, and it did not affect them at all. When night fell, all retired to their improvised couches, it being considered unnecessary to keep a watch; for they replenished the fire so thoroughly before turning in that it would burn until morning. And if the ships should by any chance happen to sight the island during the night, they must inevitably see the fire, built as it was on the highest point of the bank, and, seeing it, would know that the castaways were alive on the island. They would then naturally heave-to until daylight.

Day dawned, and all hands turned out, the invalid, of course, excepted. Breakfast was cooked, and they sat down to the meal with very hearty appetites, despite the fact that upon looking round them the horizon was found to be bare of ships. Evans was again roused from his now constant stupor, and managed to take a little soup and brandy; but he immediately afterwards sank back again exhausted, and relapsed at once into his usual state. The two seamen went away to fish from the reef running into the sea close to where the turtle was taken, and Roger remained in camp to look after Evans.

The men had not long been absent on the fishing excursion, and Roger was busy in the

hut, when the sick man moved, turned on his side, and, opening his eyes, fixed them on Roger's face. A sepulchral voice issued from the man's lips, and Roger understood him to ask that he should come close to his side. He, of course, immediately acquiesced, and lay down on the ground beside the man, so that his lips might be level with Roger's ear, and thus enable the poor fellow to speak without further weakening himself by raising his voice. The man asked for some brandy, and Roger at once gave it to him. This revived him a little, and he was now able to speak, though in a very low, weak, and husky voice, in which the near approach of death could now be heard. It was clear, indeed, that the invalid was sinking fast, and that he earnestly wished to communicate something to Roger before he died. First he asked the lad to see if the two sailors were anywhere near. The boy told him that they had gone fishing; but this did not satisfy him, he would have Roger look and make sure. To satisfy him, therefore, Roger went outside and took a look round, and, the men being nowhere in sight, he went in and reported the fact to Evans. Evans then signed to the lad to come closer and sit down, so that he could speak directly into his ear. Pulling himself together with an effort, he said:

“You have been very kind to me, young man, and I am going to recompense you by giving you the papers that I stole from Jose Leirya's cabin, also the cipher, which, when translated, will put the owner of it into the possession of that scoundrel's enormous treasure—always provided, of course, that Leirya has not already returned ere this and secured it himself. But I do not think he has; for, as I told you at the end of my yarn, when I left him, or rather when he left me here, he was going for a cruise in the Mexican Gulf. As I mentioned, the treasure is hidden somewhere on the shore of that inlet at the east end of Cuba, the latitude and longitude of which I gave you. But you will have to ascertain the precise locality of the treasure for yourself by translating the cipher; for I do not know it, nor does any other living man, except Jose Leirya himself. You will perhaps say that some one of those who helped him to bury it must know, and doubtless they did—once; but of those who left the vessel to bury the stuff with Jose not one ever returned to the vessel, or was heard of afterward. The crew of the ship so stood in awe of our captain that they dared not remonstrate or make any enquiry; but we were all convinced in our minds that he did away with those men by poison, and buried them in the brushwood near the beach. There were seven men to bury the treasure with him, and, big and strong as he was, and is, he could not have killed them all openly, or in fair fight. Jose may, or may not, know by this time that I have the key to the hiding-place of his treasure; but if he does he will not dare to remove it and attempt to bury it elsewhere; for all in the ship are aware of what took place when he first buried it, and none would go with him again to assist him, and he could not undertake the job alone. Besides, he has always expressed the utmost confidence that no one could ever translate the cipher without the key, and that he carries in his own brain; so he will almost surely leave his wealth where it is. I do not want your seamen to know, for those men could not keep silence; the news would soon be known to all, and then, of course, it would no longer be a secret. The papers I have not examined; I merely looked at them to make certain that

the cipher was there, and, finding that it was, I troubled no further. But you had better examine them, as there may be something of value among them. I told you in my yarn that we had a driver on the galley named Alvarez, who left her before Jose Leirya came aboard, or if I did not, I intended to. Well, I must tell you that there were originally two copies of the cipher, and Alvarez, whilst an officer in a Spanish ship of war, employed an agent of his to join the crew of the pirate vessel and steal the cipher, if possible, as Alvarez had heard all the circumstances relative to the treasure from one of his spies, of whom he employs a great number. This spy obeyed his orders, but was only able to secure one copy, leaving the other, which I now possess. We discovered the theft while lying in the very harbour where the treasure is hidden; but the spy got to hear that all was known, and sprang over the side, intending, of course, to swim ashore. But as he went he was followed by a shower of bullets, and we saw him no more; so I feel very certain that he lies at the bottom of the bay, and that Alvarez did not get the cipher he wanted."

Thought Roger to himself: "I'm pretty certain he did, and, what is more, I know now that he had it in his cabin aboard the *Gloria del Mundo*, and this man little thinks that I have the very paper he is talking about in my pocket at this very moment; for it must be the same." He said nothing, however; and the dying man resumed:

"You have therefore no rival to fear except Jose himself; and if you should destroy his ship and himself—as I hope your captain will do when you have told him my story—you will be certain of vast wealth, provided that you can translate the cipher, which I believe you will certainly be able to do, for all that Jose says as to its impossibility without the key. Now I am exhausted with talking so much. Please give me a little more brandy." Roger did so, finding the man too weak to lift the mug to his lips, and almost too far gone to swallow. Having recovered somewhat, he continued in a weak voice, taking a packet from his pocket: "And now, here is the packet of papers, and the cipher is with them. Keep them safely by you, and part with them under no circumstances or conditions whatever. If you do this your fortune is certain."

He ceased speaking, and his head fell heavily back on his hard couch.

Roger sprang for more brandy, and lifted the poor fellow's head, but he appeared lifeless. Roger wetted his lips with the spirit, and presently they parted sufficiently to enable the lad to pour a little into his mouth. This was gradually swallowed, and Roger poured in a little more, which was also taken; and in a few seconds a heavy sigh escaped the lips of the sufferer, and his eyes opened. But there was a glaze over them that told its own tale. The white lips opened, and Roger, bending down, heard the last words that Evans ever spoke.

"God bless you, sir," he said, "and keep you safe! Keep your promise to me, sir. Good-bye! I die now, and am glad!" The eyes went duller still, the lips ceased to move, the body seemed to stiffen, and grew suddenly cold. Roger knew that the end had come, that the poor fellow's troubles were at last over, and that he was at rest.

Roger remained for some moments sitting, and lost in thought; then, rising, he placed the blanket over the dead man's face and went outside the hut. He determined to go and find his two sailors, and inform them of what had happened, so that they might come and assist him in burying the body at once; for in that climate it was necessary to bury a body as soon as possible after death, for sanitary reasons.

The lad had not gone very far from the hut when he remembered that he was still holding the packet of papers in his hand; so he slipped them into the pocket where he always kept the other cipher. But as he did so he paused for a moment and then drew the papers forth again, determined there and then to compare the two ciphers, for he felt almost positive in his own mind that the two ciphers would be found to be identical. He therefore sat down at the foot of a palm-tree in the shade, and, undoing the packet, compared the two papers, finding, as he anticipated, that the ciphers were written in exactly the same terms. "Therefore," thought Roger, "the spy of Alvarez managed after all to evade the musket-balls fired at him, and succeeded in conveying the cipher to Alvarez. No wonder that the Spaniard was so anxious to find his papers that day in the cabin of the *Gloria del Mundo*!"

Having satisfied himself on this point, he returned the papers to his pocket, buttoned up his jacket again, and continued on his way to find the sailors. They presently made their appearance, thus saving him the trouble of searching for them, and he saw that they were laden with as much fish as they could carry. They explained that they had caught far more than was necessary for present use, but that they intended to try the experiment of drying it in the sun, even as they had done with the turtle's flesh, thus—in the event of success—providing a store of food against any contingency that might arise.

Roger, of course, returned with the men, and on the way back recounted to them the fact of poor Evans's death, and of his desire to bury the body at once.

The three were soon back at the hut, and, choosing a spot at some distance from it, dug a grave in the sand with sharpened pieces of wood, as they had no other implements. The hole having presently been made sufficiently deep, they returned to the palm-grove, and laying a blanket on the floor, placed the inanimate body thereon. Then, Bevan taking one end of the blanket and Irwin the other, they carried the corpse away to its lonely grave, and reverently laid it therein. This done, Roger, kneeling by the grave-side, said a prayer, whilst the seamen stood by with bared heads, after which the sand was shovelled back, and a small mound raised over the grave.

The death of Evans affected the three survivors more or less during the remainder of the day; they were all very silent and thoughtful, and turned in early to sleep. About midnight Roger awoke with a vague sense of some impending evil. He turned and turned again upon his hard couch, but found it impossible to sleep. After a time he began to feel that there was a something missing to which he had been accustomed. He racked his brain over and over again, vainly trying to remember what it was, but for some time without success. Then it came suddenly upon him that the usual faint reflection of the

glow which the big fire at the beach had been wont to throw round the hut was absent. Quickly getting into a few clothes, he stepped out of the hut, and saw that the moon in her first quarter was rising high in the heavens, giving just sufficient light for him to distinguish objects faintly. He therefore did not take the lantern with him, but at once walked away down to the beach, where he found the fire out and cold. They had forgotten to replenish it before turning in for the night. He took out his tinder-box, in order to get a light, when he happened to look up, and to seaward. And there, before his astonished gaze, he saw a vessel riding at anchor about two miles from the shore. In the first paroxysm of his joy, Roger was about to call aloud, imagining the craft to be one of the vessels of Cavendish's squadron; but on looking again, and studying the craft more closely, he saw that she was altogether different from any of the vessels in the fleet. He was wondering who or what she could be, when Evans's description of a certain ship flashed across his mind. Yes, there she certainly was, exactly as Evans had described—the black, long, and low-lying hull, the flush deck, the schooner rig, and the enormously tall, tapering, and raking spars! Yes, in that moment Roger knew her for what she was.

She was the pirate schooner of Jose Leirya!

The man had doubtless missed his papers, and, guessing who had taken them, had come back to secure them. Evidently knowing the bad landing, Leirya was waiting for daylight before attempting to send his boats ashore.

“Six hours more of darkness!” thought Roger, and he bounded back to the hut as fast as he could go. He awoke the two seamen, and told them all in a few words. They were naturally overwhelmed with consternation, not knowing what to do. But said Roger: “I have a plan that may possibly save us. We must put all our provisions back in the casks, and bury them in the sand. Then we must hide everything that we brought ashore, leaving out only poor Evans's belongings. The new hut we must, of course, leave—they will think that Evans built that himself,—but we must remove from it every trace of our own presence on the islet. Then, poor fellow, we must unearth his body and lay it in the hut, covering him up. When they come ashore in the morning, as of course they will, they will see that he is recently dead, and will not dream that he has been once buried already, if we are careful to remove all traces. It will naturally be thought that he died here alone and untended. We must be very careful to efface every sign of our presence here, and leave only such things as Evans had when we arrived, or may be reasonably supposed to have collected from the beach. Then, as to hiding ourselves—At the extreme seaward end of the rocks, where you to-day caught your fish, there is a hollow big enough to conceal a dozen men; I particularly noticed it when I was on the spot. We must take some food and water, and hide there until the pirates leave. They will not attempt to land at that place, for the reason that a boat could not be safely put alongside the rocks; and if we carefully hide everything belonging to ourselves they will not suspect that anyone else is here, and will not search. Now we must be quick, for our lives depend upon it. If we are found we shall certainly die horribly. Quick now, men! we must do everything that has to be done, and be safely hidden before daybreak, or we

shall be seen.”

CHAPTER TWELVE. NARROW ESCAPES OF THE CASTAWAYS—THE SQUADRON HEAVES IN SIGHT AGAIN.

The seamen needed no second bidding. From Roger's description it could be none other than the pirate vessel, and both knew what their fate would be if they were so unfortunate as to be discovered by the pirates. Rapidly throwing on their clothes, they came out of the hut, and an examination of the vessel over the top of the bank convinced them that Roger's statement was only too true.

“How about the flag though, sir?” said Bevan. “If they have seen that— and it is almost certain that they have—they will think there are others here, and will search. It will be no use hiding then; for if they believe anybody else to be here, they will search till they find us.”

“I think we need not greatly trouble about the flag,” responded Roger. “They will imagine that poor Evans set up the staff and flag before he died, in the hope of attracting attention; they will hardly trouble to examine it closely enough to discover that it is made of two red shirts. Besides, for aught that they know, Evans might have taken two red shirts ashore with him in his chest when he was marooned. No, it matters not if the flag has been seen. But come along, men; every moment lost now only increases our danger.”

They forthwith set to work in grim earnest, labouring for their lives. The casks were rolled out of the store, and holes were scooped in the sand for their reception. To bury them was not a long job. They took care, however, to set aside some provisions and water for their use while in hiding. Next came the job of burying their simple utensils, such as they were, and also the shell of the turtle. Then there was the gruesome task of digging up the body of poor Evans. It had to be done, and the sooner the better, as Roger said; so all three went to the unpleasant duty. The mound of sand was removed, the tilling taken out, and they presently came upon the body. The sand was brushed from the hair and clothing of the corpse, and it was then carried to the hut, placed in its previous position, and covered with the blanket in which it had been buried.

This completed their preparations for the pirates' landing—for it was certain that they would land; otherwise why should they have returned to the island? Their work had lasted longer than they thought, and away to the east the first sign of dawn was apparent by the time they had finished. They knew the marvellous rapidity with which the day comes and goes in those regions, and recognised the need for haste if they were to gain their proposed place of concealment unperceived; for there would certainly be sharp eyes on board the pirate, looking for the first sign of the marooned man. They therefore took, each man, his share of the provisions, and, keeping carefully below the concealing top of the sand-bank, started to run at their utmost speed for the ledge of rocks which was to be their refuge.

Meanwhile daylight was coming with terrible rapidity. The shore extremity of the ledge of rocks was reached after what seemed an eternity, and they began their passage out along it as fast as they could go. It was dangerous going among the rocks, but danger, frightful danger, spurred them on. Looking seaward they could make out the hull of the pirate vessel quite distinctly, and they all prayed that they might not be so easily perceived. At last they reached the hollow among the rocks, which was to be their haven of refuge, and tumbled over one another into it.

Having at length got their breath, Jake Irwin put forward the sensible suggestion that they should take their morning meal at once; and they proceeded to do so, all, however, with a very unpleasant feeling that it might quite possibly be their last. They finished with a hearty draught of brandy-and-water, to put some spirit into them after their toilsome night's work, Bevan and Irwin having taken especial care to bring a good quantity of the liquor along. Then they scrambled cautiously up and had a look at the schooner, taking care to remain well hidden themselves. They were, in their present position, much nearer to the pirate vessel than when they first saw her, and, as the sun got up and shone on her stern, they could, with some little difficulty, make out her name —the *Black Pearl*,—which was painted in large red letters across her counter. Presently signs of returning life were apparent on board, and soon afterwards a boat was filled with men and lowered. It pushed off as soon as it touched the water, and made for the shore.

How fortunate was it, thought Roger, and how much like a special dispensation of Providence for their safety, that they had forgotten to replenish the fire on the night before! Had it been burning, the pirates would have known that living beings were on the island, for Evans's body gave evidence that it had been dead too long for them to suppose that a fire lit by him would still be burning. The remains of it they certainly would see, but they would doubtless believe that Evans had made it, and that it had gone out after his death, little dreaming that at the moment when they let go their anchor the ashes could have been scarcely cold.

While these thoughts were passing through Roger's mind, the boat landed, and her people got out and proceeded quickly up the beach. A shout presently announced that they had caught sight of the new hut, toward which all hands at once wended their way. For some time nothing was seen or heard of the pirates; but eventually three of them went down to the beach again, and, entering the boat, pulled off to the ship.

“Going to inform Leirya that the victim of his cruelty is dead,” whispered Roger to Bevan; and the latter nodded.

After the boat had remained some few minutes alongside the *Black Pearl*, a man of enormous size was seen to descend the ship's side and enter her, when she again pushed off, and was pulled shorewards once more.

“I'll stake my allowance of grog for the day,” whispered Jake Irwin to the two others,

“that that man in the stern-sheets there, handlin' the tiller, is Jose Leirya hisself, comin' ashore to make sure that the man is really dead, and to secure they there papers what Evans said he stole from the cabin; that's what's brought him back, I'll warrant. It's a pity you didn't remember, sir, to take 'em from the body. Evans said they was vallyble.”

Roger, according to his promise, did not inform Jake that he had the papers in his possession at that moment.

“Ss—sh!” whispered Jake, suddenly withdrawing his head from its point of lookout, “here they come! God in heaven! why don't they go back to the ship now they see as Evans is dead? What more do they want? Surely, sir, we didn't leave nothin' about that'd show 'em we was here, did we? I thought we cleared away all our traces.”

“So we did,” replied Roger, “so far as I can remember, that is. It is perhaps only by chance that they are coming this way.”

The men came nearer and nearer, and ventured out a little way along the rocks. Presently they heard a voice at some distance away shout in Spanish: “Ha, you, Gomez, go out to the end of that ledge and see if the water is deep enough for boats to lie alongside the rocks.”

A voice replied: “Ay, ay, Captain!” from a point so close to them that its owner must have come almost to their hiding-place without the fugitives either seeing or hearing him.

The three looked at one another, and then, as if the same thought had come to each of them at the same moment, they with one accord advanced cautiously and stationed themselves behind a rock by which the man must pass to reach the edge of the ledge. Here, where they now were, everything that might transpire would be screened from the others, unless some of them were following Gomez out along the ledge. But they must risk that. Crouching low, and as silent as watching cats, they waited for the man Gomez.

In a moment or two they heard his footsteps on the rocks, and his heavy breathing. Nearer and nearer he came, and now he was almost on them! Then with a spring they had him, and he was down among the rocks before he could utter a sound. Quick as lightning Jake pushed a handful of sand and sea-weed into the Spaniard's mouth, and clapped his hand over it to prevent its ejection, Roger and Bevan at the same instant seizing the man's arms and legs. The eyes of Gomez were staring and starting out of his head with mortal terror at this utterly unexpected attack. Jake drew his knife. Roger shook his head violently in dissent, but Jake whispered hastily: “It must be, sir; we can't help it; it is his life or ours!”

Roger turned his head away, and the next moment he heard a horrible choke and gurgle, while the body writhed violently as he held the arms. A flood of something hot rushed over his hands and arms, and he felt quite sick.

“Now, sir, quick!” said Jake. “It's our only chance. There's an overhanging ledge of rock

here. We must take the provisions, and this 'ere corpse, and git into the water, floatin' under the ledge until they goes; for when this chap Gomez is found to be missin', they'll search and find us if we don't do as I say. We must risk the sharks!"

There was clearly nothing else for it; so they slipped in, taking the corpse with them, and all got under the ledge—which quite concealed them—and supported the dead body, that it might not float away and betray them.

The proceeding was fraught with danger, as sharks swarmed in those waters, and the blood that was oozing from the Spaniard's body would be almost certain to attract those monsters of the sea,—their scent for blood being very keen. The flesh of the fugitives crept, and the knowledge that one of them might be seized kept them in a state of perfectly agonising suspense. They had been in for some time, and the position was becoming unendurable when: "Gomez, Gomez, where are you? Hasten, man; we do not want to wait here all day!" came from the very ledge underneath which they were floating, and holding, meanwhile, the corpse of the man who was then being called by name.

"Where can he be, curse him?" growled the same voice. "What has become of the lazy hound? Carrajo, I will flog him when we get on board! Gomez!"

There was, of course, no reply.

"He may have fallen in and been drowned, or taken by a shark, perchance," suggested another voice.

More oaths followed, together with a lengthy dissertation on Gomez's ancestors, both immediate and remote. At this moment Bevan gave vent to a suppressed gasp, and, following his gaze, the others saw the dorsal fins of several sharks which had evidently scented the blood still draining from the body of the slain man, and were now searching for their prey. Then the concealed listeners heard—from someone who had evidently been to the edge of the ledge to search for the missing man—

"I have looked, Captain, and Gomez is nowhere to be found."

There were more awful oaths from Jose—for it was indeed that renowned and most notorious scoundrel,—and then he again spoke:

"He must have fallen in and been drowned—curses on him for a clumsy fool! Yes; and there are the sharks that have taken his worthless carcass. Come, you; we will return to the schooner. It is useless to search further for him, for he will never come back."

Meanwhile the sharks were coming ever closer and closer still, while the footsteps of the pirate and his companions were heard retreating. The minds of the hiding trio *were* much relieved at the departure of Jose Leirya and his villains, and particularly at Jose's mention of his intention to return to the vessel; but the suspense of waiting for them to retire, while the sharks were edging ever nearer and nearer, was awful. The triangular fins of these terrible monsters were now darting rapidly hither and thither, and at every

dart the voracious fish came nearer than before. Momentarily they expected to see one or more of the fins disappear below the surface, and they knew that when that happened they might anticipate seizure by the shark a few seconds later. But as yet the fins remained visible on the surface of the water.

Poor Roger was nearly fainting with anxiety and apprehension, while Bevan was rapidly becoming exhausted. At length the strain on their nerves became unendurable, and Jake Irwin said: “I don't think those fellows'll hear us now, even if we splash; and if we don't splash, they sharks'll be at us in a few minutes. Anyhow, I'm a-goin' to risk it!”

Forthwith they all began to splash vigorously, although as yet they dared not shout. The sudden commotion of the water, coming after the dead silence that had previously reigned, startled the great fish, and the fins instantly scattered in all directions, to the great relief of the fugitives. But, as Jake said: “That won't keep 'em off very long; they've smelled blood, and they'll be around again directly.”

He then swam a stroke or two, very cautiously, out from under the ledge, in order to have a peep at the pirates and ascertain whether they were still in sight. They were, but if they pushed on without stopping they would be out of sight in a few moments. But the question was—would they be able to keep the sharks at bay for that short time? It was doubtful, to say the least of it, yet they dared not move out of their hiding-place just then, or the pirates would be certain to see them making the attempt. The inaction was beginning—nay, had long since begun—to tell on their nerves, and poor Roger felt as though he could scarcely refrain from shrieking aloud, so great was the tension. And those terrible fins were again gathering about them! One by one they came edging back, ever nearer and nearer. At last the fugitives could endure it no longer, and, taking the corpse by the shoulders and turning it into a more favourable position for his purpose, Bevan said: “They'll wait no longer. Now, when I push this 'ere dead body off, jump for your lives back on to the ledge. We must risk being seen; for they sharks don't mean to be denied.”

He then gave the corpse a violent push seaward, and the three made a simultaneous scramble for the safety of the ledge. Jake was up first, and extended his hand to Roger, while behind them they heard the clashing and snapping of jaws, and the sudden rushing wash of water, as the body of Gomez was torn to pieces by the hungry monsters.

The commotion in the water was terrible, and horribly suggestive, as the sharks snapped and struggled and fought for their share of the prey; and they thought that surely the pirates must hear, and, hearing, return to see what all the noise was about. Roger was out now, and only Bevan remained in the water. Jake and Roger stretched out their hands, Bevan grasped them with his own, and, with a simultaneous pull, out he came, landing on his knees on the rock. But only just in time; for even as he left the water a huge shark, of at least twenty-five feet in length, came dashing at him with such furious determination that he ran his great snout, with its rows of shining saw-edged teeth, right up on the ledge, so close as actually to graze Bevan's body. The man, however, hastily

sprang aside, capsizing Irwin and Roger, and the three fell pell-mell into the hollow in the rocks which had served as their former hiding-place.

Safe at last; but what a narrow and providential escape! And now to discover whether the pirates had seen them. Jake climbed up to his former coign of vantage, and as soon as he clapped his eye to the peep-hole he held up his hand in warning. Roger shuddered. “After all,” thought he, “after those hairbreadth escapes, have they seen us, and are they coming back to take us?”

Jake now came creeping cautiously down, and whispered that the pirates had not gone off as far as they had anticipated; indeed they were not very far away even now. They had evidently not seen the fugitives leave the water, but they were all standing in a group, looking back toward the hiding-place, and, so far as Jake could judge, they seemed to be listening. Bevan now crawled up and had a look, and then beckoned to the rest. They climbed up alongside him, and, through the peep-hole, saw that the pirates had now relaxed their attitude of attention, and were once more walking slowly away, ever and anon taking a backward glance over their shoulders. Presently they disappeared from sight behind the rocks, and the fugitives breathed more freely.

Roger said: “If now they but go straight off to their ship we are saved. I trust they will not chance to stumble upon any of our buried provision-barrels, or they will at once suspect our presence and search until they find us; for I can see that they are not altogether easy in their minds over the strange disappearance of Gomez.”

“I don't think that's so, Master Trevose,” replied Bevan. “'Tis only our fancy. For my part, I'm convinced that they believe Gomez have fallen off the rocks and been taken by a shark. But how pale you do look sir! better have a drop of brandy.”

But, alas! there was no brandy. In their haste to escape from the jaws of the sharks both brandy and their small store of food had been dropped, and were both now, without doubt, safe in the maw of one of the monsters. Roger turned still more pale, and Bevan put his arm round his shoulder to support him. Presently his head fell back, and he went off in a dead swoon. The experiences of the last few hours had been too much for the poor lad, and overstrained nature would bear no more.

“He'll soon come round, Jake,” said Bevan. “Get a drop of water, if you can without being seen. Bring it in your hat and slop it on his face; that'll soon bring him to.”

Jake accepted the suggestion, and presently returned without having seen anything of the pirates. They soused Roger's head and shoulders with sea-water, and the boy soon recovered, feeling a little ashamed of his weakness.

“Don't you worry yourself about that, Master Roger,” replied Jake. “I've seen men stronger and older than you faint for less than what we've just gone through.”

Roger was soon himself again. They took another look round, and this time they saw Jose Leirya and his crew down on the beach, preparing to get into their boat.

“We'd better not leave this here spot until we see 'em up-anchor and get well away,” advised Jake. “For all we know they may come ashore again, and if they was to do that a'ter we'd left our hidin'-place, 'twould be all up with us.”

The others agreed to this proposal, and watched the boat pulling away to the ship. She soon got there, and was forthwith hoisted inboard, and presently the watchers saw her sails fall from the yards, while up came the anchor, the schooner canted, the sails filled, the vessel gradually gathered way—and she was off! The three felt strongly inclined to give a hearty cheer; but prudence prevailed, and they remained silent. Presently, however, they got out of the hole in which they were crouching, and made their way cautiously along the ledge, taking the utmost care to keep always out of sight of the schooner; and by and by they reached the beach, and over the top of the near-most rock saw the *Black Pearl* rapidly growing smaller in the distance. By crawling and creeping and dodging behind anything big enough to conceal them, they finally gained the back beach, and then, having the ridge between the pirate vessel and themselves, they set off at a brisk pace for the hut. When at length they reached it they found that nothing had been disturbed, but the body of Evans had evidently been searched, and was now lying upon the sand, instead of where they had left it, on its improvised couch. Their first act was to unearth the cask of brandy and take a good draught apiece, feeling that they both needed and deserved it after what they had gone through that morning.

Then Evans received his second burial. Poor fellow! his inanimate body had been put to a strange use; but they felt that, could he know, he would not in the least object.

The provisions were next got up and re-stored, and then they found time to take a look at the retreating pirate vessel. Yes, there she still was, now very small to their view, yet hardly as far off as they had expected her to be.

They continued to gaze for a few moments longer, and were just about to turn away, with relief and thankfulness in their hearts, when they saw the pirate vessel hurriedly setting some additional canvas; then suddenly she bore up and went off on the other tack, presenting her port side instead of her stern to the island.

“Now, what's the matter?” queried Jake; “he's headin' away south for La Guayra way! But what's he in such a tearin' hurry for?”

“Can't make it out at all,” answered Bevan.

They felt their sleeves plucked, and, turning round, beheld Roger pointing, but unable to speak, toward the horizon on the side of the island opposite to the pirate ship. And there, at last, they perceived the fleet, hull-up above the horizon, in plain sight, with every sail set, carrying on after the pirate at their utmost speed.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN. THEY ARE RESCUED AT LAST—CAPTURE OF THE PIRATE SHIP BLACK PEARL AND HER CAPTAIN, JOSE LEIRYA.

It was scarcely possible that Cavendish should not recognise the island—both by sight

and from his reckoning—as the one on which Roger and his little crew had been left; yet all three of the vessels comprising his squadron were cracking on in chase of the *Black Pearl*, and evincing not the least interest in the sand-bank, which they were leaving on their starboard beam.

“Well,” ejaculated Roger, “having come thus far, one at least of those ships might have hauled in and hove-to long enough to send a boat ashore and take us off. Mr Cavendish will scarcely need all three of his vessels to capture that one craft. But I expect old Cary has recognised the schooner as Leirya's ship, and the captain is determined to make sure of her, trusting that we shall be able to hold out here until he has captured her and found time to return for us. Still, the pirate may lead them a long chase, lasting perhaps for several days; and if they are going to catch him, I should like to be aboard to help in the fight with Jose.”

The seamen said nothing, but it was clear that they fully shared Roger's disappointment as they stood staring at the fleet of ships that went sailing past at a distance of some four or five miles—too far off for the castaways to be observed from their decks.

Suddenly Bevan uttered an ejaculation, and, turning, ran at full speed to the hut, and reappeared in a moment with an armful of wood from the stock which they kept for replenishing the fire. He cast this down on the beach, and, kneeling beside it, proceeded with feverish haste to strike a light from his tinder-box.

“Quick!” he exclaimed; “get some damp wood, wet sea-weed, anything you like that'll make a smoke; only for goodness' sake be quick! It's our only chance!”

The other two, infected by his excitement, at once ran to do his bidding, but they were quite at a loss to understand the reason for such violent hurry.

Having secured several armfuls of varied material, just damp enough to make a good smoke, but not sufficiently so to extinguish a fire, they returned and tossed it on the flames, which Bevan had now succeeded in causing to burn brightly.

“More! get more!” said he; “and look sharp about it! Quick! quick!”

“Yes; all right, Bevan!” laughed Roger; “but what is all this tremendous hurry for? Even if the captain does not now take us off, he will come back for us as soon as he has captured the pirate.”

“Ay, ay; but don't you see, man,” answered Bevan, forgetting in his excitement the deference due to Roger as his officer,—“don't you see, man, that the captain's notion is that the pirate have been here and captured us, and that we are now aboard that there *Black Pearl* of his'n? He'll catch her if he can, and bring her to action; but when that's done there'll be a great slaughter o' both sides, and, supposin' that the schooner isn't sunk with all hands, Mr Cavendish won't find us when he boards her. And, not findin' us, he'll believe as we have been murdered and throw'd overboard, or else he'll think that we're among the dead as'll be unrecognisable. Then, thinkin' us dead—for he'll not dream that

it's been possible for us to have hidden ourselves here and escaped these ruffians—he will continue his v'yage wi'out troublin' to come back here; and here we shall remain, perhaps till we die. That's the reason why I'm so anxious to attract their attention afore they runs out o' sight of us; for, if we're not seen now, you may depend upon it we may as well make up our minds to remain here for the rest of our lives. What would he be sending all his vessels in pursuit for, if he didn't believe as we're aboard that there *Black Pearl*. Ye see, sir, what I'm thinkin' about is this. They few barrels of food as we've got won't last us for so very long, even if we goes on short commons. And we can't always reckon on catchin' fish and turtle, or gettin' eggs, and a few months 'd find us in the same plight as was pore William Evans when we first came ashore on this here island. Oh, I pray that they may be keepin' a sharp lookout aboard they ships!"

The fire was now blazing up bravely, and the castaways industriously continued to toss on damp fuel, so that a dense column of smoke was now ascending high in the air, being sheltered from the wind by the palm-grove just behind them. The three men were careless as to the pirates seeing the smoke now, knowing that even Jose, with all his reputation for courage and daring, would not venture to return in the teeth of the British squadron, to attempt to secure them; yet they could not help speculating as to what the pirate must be thinking, or what his feelings must be, now that it was borne in upon him that people had been on the island, though he had not found them. He would, of course, be able to make a shrewd guess as to Gomez's fate, and Roger could picture to himself the fellow's disappointment and anger. For, having failed to find the papers, in search of which he had returned to the sand-bank, he would almost certainly arrive at the conviction that the unknown people on the island, who had evaded his keen eye in so mysterious a manner, had come into possession of them. To have been so near the recovery of his cherished papers, and yet to have missed them! Roger could picture the man standing on the quarterdeck of the *Black Pearl* gnashing his teeth in impotent fury, and shaking his fist at the island as he beheld the column of thick smoke rising from it. But for the swiftly-disappearing pirate none of them cared a jot, since were not their own dearly-loved ships near them? And, if God were good, would they not soon be once more treading those white decks that they knew and loved so well? Meanwhile, however, it seemed as though, even after all, there might be a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip; for, despite the smoke-signal that they were sending up, the ships were holding persistently on their course after the pirates.

More fuel was piled on, and the smoke went driving away to leeward in dense clouds. Still there was no response or sign from the ships of its having been seen, while they were now drawing rapidly away from the island.

"I reckon," said Jake, "that they're all lookin' at the chase, aboard they there craft. Why can't some of 'em take a squint aft at the island? Then they would see us, or the smoke at any rate."

As if in answer to his complaint, and immediately following upon it, they saw a stream

of flags float up from the first vessel—which, as they rightly guessed, was the ship that Mr Cavendish had taken command of as his flag-ship,—and a few moments later the answering signal was displayed from the rearmost vessel, which, evidently obeying the signal, now came round upon the opposite tack, with her bows pointing toward the island.

They were seen! At last they were seen! All their troubles and anxiety and waiting were now over; hurrah! hurrah!! hurrah!!! The three castaways seemed to lose their heads completely. They shouted, leaped into the air, shook hands, and embraced each other, cutting all kinds of capers, and, in short, behaving like very madmen in the reaction of their joy after waiting for so long in suspense. For now all recognised very clearly the truth of what Bevan had said, as to their being seen and rescued now or never. The ship approached rapidly, under the influence of the fresh breeze, seeming literally to grow out of the water, and looking, with her clouds of gaily-painted canvas, like some huge bright-plumaged tropic bird. Presently they saw her yards thrown aback, and she came up into the wind, remaining hove-to until a boat was lowered, and then slowly tacking to and fro opposite them. The watchers on the beach saw the boat lowered down the side, and the men scramble into her; then they saw the sunlight glitter on the oar-blades as they dipped into the water and the boat shot away from the parent vessel's side. She came rushing toward the beach as fast as the arms of a dozen lusty men could drive her, her coxswain standing up in the stern-sheets and peering eagerly ahead at the island. The foam curled white and high about her stem, showing the great speed at which she was being forced through the water.

Said Bevan to Jake: “The skipper have evidently give his orders that they're not to waste any time on the road, or in takin' of us off. Just look you at the speed of that there cutter! I expect, if we could only but see him, that he's stampin' up and down his quarterdeck, bitin' his nails with impatience to be away again a'ter that *Black Pearl*; and prob'ly swearin' at this boat's crew for bein' a set of lazy lubbers in not puttin' her through the water faster.” And he laughed.

A sudden thought struck Roger. “Jake and Bevan,” said he, “cut away up to the hut and get those fresh provisions down here to the beach; we have a lot of fresh meat still left, and I know how tired a ship's company gets of salt provisions. That turtle meat will prove a very welcome change of food for them. So away you go, and look sharp, for those people will not want to be kept waiting.”

Off went the two men, and presently returned with the dried turtle flesh, which they laid down on the beach in readiness to be put aboard the cutter. The small brandy cask was also conspicuously present. Jake Irwin's quick eye fell upon it. Said he to Roger:

“Before we go, sir, let's have one more drink, `to the Isla de Corsarios'; for I'm sure 't has proved a very good friend to us.”

Roger thought that there would be no harm in such a proceeding, so he raised no

objection, and Bevan, pouring out a generous allowance into their wooden beaker—which he had brought down to the beach without being asked—handed it to his officer for the latter to take the first drink. He took it, drinking the toast, and the other two followed his example, helping themselves liberally, and smacking their lips after it with much satisfaction depicted on their bronzed countenances.

The cutter was by this time quite close, and Jake, standing on a rock, pointed out by signs to the coxswain where he could come alongside and float in deep water, thus allowing them to embark easily and also put the little stock of provisions aboard. The craft came dashing up until within a few fathoms of the place indicated by Jake, and then the crew, as one man, threw in their oars, and the boat glided rapidly alongside the rocks, coming to a stand-still just opposite the spot where Jake was standing.

"Now then, jump in quick!" yelled the coxswain, who happened to be also second officer on board the *Elizabeth*, the vessel which was waiting for them to come on board. "Look sharp, our captain is in all haste to overtake the squadron before it comes up with that pirate craft yonder. You need not imagine you are going to take that stuff aboard; I cannot wait; I have not the time."

Irwin and Bevan looked somewhat taken aback at this brusque harangue, but Roger, stepping forward, said:

"I do not know you, sir, but my name is Roger Trevose, and I am an officer on board the flag-ship. This is fresh turtle meat, for the most part, and I am sure your captain would not grudge the few extra moments spent in taking that aboard."

"I beg your pardon, Mr Trevose," replied the officer; "I did not recognise you. My name is Reynolds—Ralph Reynolds, and, as you say, seeing that your cargo consists of fresh meat, I think we can spare time to take it aboard, pressed though we are for time."

In a brace of shakes the meat was transferred to the boat. Roger, following the two seamen, stepped into the boat, and she instantly shoved off. Roger sat next to Ralph Reynolds in the stern-sheets, and, as they made their way at top speed towards the ship, Reynolds said to Roger:

"Young man, let me tell you that you and your two seamen have had a very narrow escape from imprisonment on that island for the remainder of your lives! We were running up before a fine breeze, this morning, for that wretched sand-bank of yours, intending to take you off, when we saw a craft steal out from under the lee of the island. One of the men aboard at once recognised her as the *Black Pearl*—the ship of that arch-scoundrel Jose Leirya. We signalled the commodore to that effect, and he replied, ordering all the ships to make sail and chase; for, you see, there is no doubt he very naturally supposed that the pirate had carried you off with him. Of course, sooner or later we should have brought the rogue to action; but that would not have helped you, as by all accounts he is the sort of man who goes down fighting his ship to the very last, rather than surrender, and that, I fully expect, is what will happen. Then the captain, I

take it, thinking, of course, that you had gone down with the ship, would have dismissed you from his mind; and in yonder bit of an island you would have remained for the rest of your lives, or until taken off by some passing ship. The latter contingency, however, is a very unlikely one, so far as English ships are concerned, since the island is unknown to the English. And I have a notion that you would find it much more comfortable to die there, than be taken off by a Spanish vessel and delivered into the clutches of the Dons. The fact is, that all hands were too busily engaged in watching the chase to take much notice of your island. But here we are alongside. Now, men, up you come on deck smartly, and get that boat hoisted in. Hook on the falls there, and up with her!"

Reynolds sprang up the side ladder and, reaching the deck, closely followed by Roger, saluted the captain, who was waiting for him at the gangway, and reported himself.

"Very well," said the captain, "get that boat lifted out the water. She must be hauled up and secured after we have swung the yards and are once more on the move. Up helm, Mr Widdicombe, and get way on her!"

Then he turned to Roger and welcomed him on board the ship; commiserating with him on his discomforts while on the sand-bank, and congratulating him upon his as yet unexplained and inexplicable escape from the pirates. He then recommended Roger to the care of one of his officers, and, directing Jake and Bevan to take up their quarters and duties with the other seamen until such time as they could be transferred to their own craft, turned away to give orders and attend to the sailing of his ship.

Even as the cutter had dashed alongside, the vessel, as though impatient to resume the chase, had paid off and had begun to move through the water, her bows having been turned in the direction of the other ships, and the craft herself merely thrown into the wind for a moment to lessen her way while the boat came up to her and the falls were hooked on. Then the helm was put up and the ship was away on her old course once more, cracking on and showing every stitch of canvas to the freshening breeze, in full and eager pursuit of her consorts and the pirate, the latter now being hull-down on the southern horizon with nothing below her topsail-yard showing. The flag-ship was the leading ship of the three pursuing vessels; and she was distant some nine miles from the *Elizabeth. El Capitan*—or the *Tiger* as she was now named—was two miles astern of the flag-ship, and some seven miles ahead of the *Elizabeth*; the latter vessel therefore had some considerable distance to cover before she could overtake her consorts. Night was now beginning to fall, and the masts of the *Black Pearl* gradually disappeared from the sight of those aboard the *Elizabeth* ; but the flag-ship, being so far in advance, still had the pirate well in view; and now she lighted her three poop-lanterns as a guide to the *Tiger*, which in turn lighted hers to pilot the way for the *Elizabeth*. The darkness soon falls in those regions, and in a very few minutes, as it seemed, night enveloped them like a pall. There was no moon, and, the night being cloudy, no stars were visible; the blackness, consequently, was intense.

All that could be seen was the triangle of lights in the flag-ship, very dim in the distance,

and those on the *Tiger*, shining somewhat more brightly because nearer at hand. The captain of the *Elizabeth* commanded that no lanterns should be lighted on board his ship, and indeed that no lights of any kind should be shown on board at all.

"For," said he, "we sail somewhat faster than the *Tiger* and the *Good Adventure*, and can see their lights, so that we can tell where they are. But it is in my mind to have a little sport with good Mr Cavendish, by letting him find us alongside him at daybreak. We will, therefore, carry on as hard as our spars and gear will suffer us, all through the night; and, not to give the others an inkling of our purpose, will edge away to the westward sufficiently to enable us to pass the *Tiger* about a mile to starboard of her, and the same with the flag-ship."

At this time it was about two bells in the first dog-watch, and they could therefore reckon on some ten hours of complete darkness— sufficient, as the captain believed and hoped, to allow them to overtake the other two ships of the squadron. They continued to crack on; and, as the skipper had enjoined the maintenance of strict silence, the ship seemed to those on board to resemble some dim phantom vessel, leaping ghost-like from wave to wave before the strengthening wind. No sound whatever was to be heard on board save the "swish" of the water alongside, the low roar of the bow-wave as she plunged through it and turned it aside from her bows, the weird crying of the wind through her maze of rigging aloft, and the occasional "cheep" of parral or block-sheave to the 'scend of the ship.

At about ten o'clock, much to the captain's satisfaction, the lights at the stern of the *Tiger* could be much more distinctly seen; and he judged that she could at that time be only some four miles distant, showing that in the past three hours they had gained some three miles on her, which was good sailing. They were also, at this time, a good mile to the westward of the starboard quarter of the *Tiger*, and, if anything, edging a trifle more to starboard of her as they went along. The reason for this was that the captain did not wish to pass the *Tiger* at a less distance than a mile; because, although it certainly was a very dark night, on even the blackest of nights, if the weather be clear, there is always a certain "loom" or faint image of a ship thrown against the sky; and this loom would be visible to sharp eyes unless the *Elizabeth* kept some distance away from her consort.

Little by little they crept up, overtaking the *Tiger*; and bit by bit her triangle of lights at the stern was becoming merged into one; then the one light became gradually eclipsed, until at length they could not see it at all, and by one o'clock in the morning they knew that they must be running parallel with the *Tiger* and at a distance of about a mile and a half on her starboard beam.

It was possible now to make out the light of her battle-lanterns in her interior, shining through her open port-holes, through which the gun muzzles also showed, all in readiness for the attack as soon as the pirate was brought to bay. As they opened her up, and came abreast of her, they could see that she was lit up fore-and-aft, and it became perfectly clear that not only was she cleared for action, but that her captain had given

orders to his men to sleep at their quarters, and thus be ready for the fight at a moment's notice.

Having overtaken the *Tiger*, the *Elizabeth* began to draw ahead perceptibly, and the brilliantly lighted interior of her consort was soon eclipsed, while the bright triangle of lights at the stern of the *Good Adventure* now showed up clearly about two and a half miles distant, broad on the port bow.

Captain Pryce was in great glee, for, if all went well, his little jest would be a brilliant success, and by daybreak his would be the foremost vessel of the squadron, and therefore the first to come up with the *Black Pearl*.

But where was the pirate? It seemed certain that the flag-ship must have her in view, since she was standing steadily along on her course; but not a sign of the schooner could be made out by the people on board the *Elizabeth*.

"Surely," said the captain, who, in his keenness, was spending the night on deck, "we ought by this time to be able to see something of that craft, a binnacle light, or a glimmer of some sort, to show us where she is! We are nearly abreast of the flag-ship, and I cannot see a trace of the *Black Pearl*; yet Mr Cavendish seems to be standing on with perfect confidence, which he would hardly do were she not within his view. Still, it may be that he has lost her, and is merely trusting that she will hold her course, and has the hope of sighting her at daybreak."

He had barely finished speaking, when Roger, who had been gazing long and earnestly into the dusky blackness to the south-west, came up beside him and said in a low tone of voice:

"Sir, I have been looking for some time over in that direction, and within the last few minutes it has come to me that there is a black something over there—can you not see it, sir?—that is growing very rapidly bigger!"

"You are very right, Mr Trevose," replied the captain; "you have done well to tell me. There is, indeed, something away there; I can make out the loom of a vessel's sails quite plainly. Now, who or what may she be? Ah! I have it. The flag-ship is sailing at haphazard after all. The pirate has doubled and, putting out all lights, has trusted to his luck to run past the squadron in the darkness. What good fortune for us that he doubled to starboard, and that I took it into this noddle of mine to have a jest against the commodore to-night! Had he turned the other way he would certainly have escaped, as there is no ship over there to see him, while here are we, with all lights out, and he will run right into our arms in a few moments. Let her go off a couple of points, Mr Reynolds."

Orders were now given by passing the word instead of by drum or whistle, and in a few minutes the men were all standing silently at quarters, with battle-lanterns lighted but carefully masked, and everything ready to pour in a deadly broadside as the pirate came abreast of their ship.

As she approached, the poop-lanterns on the stern of the *Elizabeth* were lighted to serve as a guide to the *Tiger's* people, who, for their part, were vastly astonished at their sudden appearance, and a light was also displayed in the port mizzen rigging, to enable the flag-ship to distinguish friend from foe.

Of course all disguise and concealment was now at an end; the pirate had seen them, but —too late! She was now less than a cable's length distant from the *Elizabeth*, and as she was bearing up, and before even her men could leap to their quarters, the *Elizabeth* had luffed and delivered her starboard broadside with murderous effect. Down came the mainmast, severed just above the deck, bringing the fore-topgallant-mast with it; down on her crowded decks crashed the wreckage, adding its own quota of killed and wounded to that effected by the guns of the English vessel.

The flag-ship had already borne up, and now came foaming down to the scene of the combat, with the *Tiger* lumbering along astern.

The pitchy blackness of the night was illuminated redly and vividly by the flashes of the guns. The *Black Pearl*, finding escape impossible, had determined to fight to the bitter end. Her guns were run out, and they at once opened a galling and well-directed fire upon the *Elizabeth*, which replied in kind, and the night air resounded with the report of cannon and small-arms, and was rent with cries, groans, and screams from the wounded, and shouts and oaths from all.

The flag-ship now arrived on the scene, and, taking a wide sweep and luffing up with main-topsail aback under the stern of the *Black Pearl*, poured in a raking broadside that traversed the whole length of the pirate's decks, leaving them a very shambles of dead and wounded.

The artillery tight did not last very long. Anxious to capture Jose Leirya alive, Cavendish —perhaps not too well advisedly—laid his ship alongside the schooner, and poured his men on to the pirate's decks.

Seeing this, the captain of the *Elizabeth*, not to be behindhand, did the same. Ordering his men away from the guns, and forming them up, he led them in person over the side on to the decks of the *Pearl*, which was by this time a scene of dreadful carnage. Blood was everywhere; her planking was so slimy with it that men slipped and fell in it. It ran in little rivulets from the scuppers.

Roger, who followed close upon the heels of the captain, thought involuntarily of William Evans's description of how Jose Leirya had captured this very vessel, cutting her out from under San Juan fort in Puerto Rico; and his tale of how freely the blood flowed on these same decks then.

But he had no time for mere thought; his attention was wholly taken up with the fighting, and the problem of how to avoid being impaled or cut down by some furious pirate.

The villains knew that they were fighting with halters round their necks, and laid about them like very demons from the pit. Cut and thrust, cut and thrust, they came at the Englishmen, and, headed by Jose himself, for several moments swept the invaders before them.

Roger was, as ever, well in the front rank of the combatants, and was carrying himself right manfully, when he saw one of his countrymen slip and fall in a pool of blood, losing his sword as he fell. A burly black-bearded ruffian, whom he had been engaging, instantly set his foot on the prostrate body, and shortened his hanger to thrust him through; but Roger, who was engaged with another pirate, nimbly evaded the blow aimed at him, and, with one spring, like a young leopard, was on the would-be slayer, and, taking him before he could turn, passed his sword through the pirate's body with such force that it penetrated to the hilt, while both rescuer and corpse went rolling to the deck together. Roger disencumbered himself from the dead body, and, setting his foot upon it, pulled violently at his sword to get it free again.

Then another hand was laid over his on the hilt of the weapon, and a well-known voice said in his ear: “Pull, Roger, lad, pull, and out she'll come.” And out she did come; and Roger faced round right into the arms of his friend Harry.

“What, Harry,” said he joyfully, “you here! So you were the man whom I was lucky enough to rescue from that black-bearded rascal just now. How on earth did you get here?”

“Yes, lad,” replied Harry; “you have saved my life again, and I am once more in your debt. And as for how I got here, why, how otherwise than over the bulwarks from my ship? I might rather ask how you came here. But we must leave our experiences until a more convenient season, or we shall not live to see the end of this good fight.”

The pirates were fighting now with the fury of desperation, and, encouraged by the bull voice of Jose Leirya—who seemed to bear a charmed life,—they prepared to form up into line and attempt with one furious charge to sweep the English from the decks of their beloved schooner.

The Englishmen, however, who were more or less separated and scattered about the decks, each engaging his own antagonist, saw the move, and themselves retreated to their own main body in order to strengthen it for the threatened rally of the pirates.

At this moment Harry and Roger found themselves isolated from their own countrymen, and in great danger, as the whole surviving pirate crew was between them and their friends.

Luckily for them, however, only four of the enemy turned their attention to the two friends, the others being too busy preparing to attack the English main body to think about them. Yet, even as it was, the odds were quite unequal enough—four stalwart men in the very prime of life, and hardened by years of toil and activity on the seas, against two youngsters who were but little more than boys!

Harry and Roger knew, of course, that they were fighting for their lives, and as both had their long swords as against the shorter weapon of the pirates, they contrived to keep them at a safe distance for some time.

Meanwhile the pirates had massed together, and the whole body of them, even to such of the wounded as could stand, and excepting only the four men who were attacking the two chums, had charged the Englishmen with irresistible fury, driving them along the deck as chaff is swept before the wind. After the first rush, however, the Englishmen rallied again, and were now slowly but surely driving the pirates back along their own deck, and recovering their lost ground. The carnage was fearful; the dead and dying were everywhere; the decks were heaped with them; both sides had lost an enormous proportion of men, and it seemed as though the fight could only end in both parties being exterminated.

Roger and Harry were still fighting doggedly for their lives; but their countrymen were now very widely separated from them, and their strength was fast-failing them in face of the furious and persistent attack of their four assailants.

They were driven back, and still back, until they were forced against the port bulwarks, and could retreat no farther. Blow after blow was aimed at them by their foes, and the best that they could do was to ward off the blows, without daring to assume the offensive.

They were at their very last gasp, and had mentally resigned themselves to death, when there came a tremendous shock, throwing the two lads off their feet only just in time to avoid the final thrusts from the two pirates, to which fortuitous circumstance they owed their lives. As they lay on the deck, struggling to regain their footing, they were trampled on and knocked over again by a swarm of men who were rushing in over the port bulwarks. It was the *Tiger's* crew, who had boarded in the very nick of time. With this reinforcement the English very quickly turned the tables; and, all massing in one body, swept the deck, compelling the few surviving pirates—among whom was the redoubtable Jose Leirya himself—to surrender at discretion.

The fierce conflict was at last over, and the pirate, long a terror in the Caribbean Sea, was a captive, while his dreaded but beautiful schooner, the *Black Pearl*, was a prize in the hands of the English.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN. EXECUTION OF THE PIRATES—A RECONNAISSANCE BY NIGHT OFF LA GUAYRA.

At the commencement of the fight the pirate vessel had been manned by a crew numbering well over one hundred men.

But now her dead lay upon her decks literally in heaps; and, alas! there were also many English bodies lying among them. Only seventeen of the crew of the *Black Pearl* remained alive, among the survivors being Jose Leirya himself. It was not due to

cowardice, or any shrinking from death on his own part, that he had survived the fight; on the contrary, he had exhibited a fine degree of courage, and it was only by an accident, for which he was in nowise responsible, that he was still alive, and was now standing, with hands lashed behind his back, scowling heavily at his captors. They, on their side, had suffered almost as severely as the pirates, having lost an enormous number of men.

The coming of the sailors from the *Tiger* in the nick of time it was that had saved the day, and turned the tide of battle in favour of the English. Roger and Harry had both had their senses trampled out of them by the headlong rush of the boarders from that ship; but, as the circumstance undoubtedly saved their lives, they were not greatly disposed to grumble at it. Both had soon recovered, and, after examining themselves to discover whether they were badly wounded or not, were now engaged in exchanging confidences and experiences, and relating to each other all that had occurred since their parting prior to the wreck on the sand-bank of Isla de Corsarios.

The captured pirate, having been bound securely, were now consigned to the care of an armed guard, who conducted them below to the hold and bade them make themselves as comfortable as they could on the ship's ballast.

The commodore then called the roll of the three vessels of his squadron, and found that he had lost no fewer than one hundred and eighty men, killed and wounded, in the engagement. As for the ships, the *Tiger* was untouched, and the flag-ship practically intact, but the *Elizabeth* had been somewhat severely mauled. Captain Cavendish's first instructions were that the vessels should at once proceed to execute such repairs as were necessary, in order that they should not be at a disadvantage in the event of a storm overtaking them. But before even this business could be undertaken came the disposal of the dead.

With so many slain to deal with, this was necessarily a brief business, and was accomplished by the simple process of tossing the lifeless bodies over the side, to find a last resting-place on the sand below, if, indeed, the multitude of sharks that were swimming round and round the four vessels did not intervene and otherwise arrange matters.

This unpleasant duty ended, the decks were washed down with water pumped up from alongside, and all sanguinary traces of the recent conflict obliterated. Then Cavendish sent the men who had performed these duties to aid their fellow-seamen in effecting the necessary repairs to those vessels that required them, whilst he and his officers made a tour of inspection of the *Black Pearl*, to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the vessel, and to secure her papers, arms, and ammunition, and any valuables that might be on board her. Roger and Harry, having had a brief chat, followed Mr Cavendish down the companion-ladder, and found themselves in the vessel's main cabin. This was most beautifully fitted up, evidently with the spoils which had been taken out of her numerous captures; but beyond the confines of the captain's cabin the entire vessel was filthily

dirty, eloquently testifying to the objectionable habits of the pirates; and everywhere they went they encountered significant traces of the recent furious combat, in the shape of splintered timbers, riven planking, blood splashes, gashes in the wood-work from sword and axe-blade, holes made by cannon-shot—havoc and destruction reigned supreme. But even this could not disguise the barbaric splendour of the fittings and furniture of the ship. Rich silken curtains were hung anywhere and everywhere where they could be fastened; thick carpets from Turkey and Persia and India were strewn wholesale on the soiled planking. Every available space on wall or bulkhead was ornamented with some trophy or another. Stars of pistols, swords, hangers, boarding-axes, and pikes were hung wherever there was room for them. Roger noticed some pieces of exquisite and priceless old tapestry beside the carriage of one of the main-deck guns, that had probably served as a curtain, but was now torn down, trampled upon, smeared with blood, and blackened with powder smoke. The officers of the vessel had evidently each enjoyed a cabin to himself, furnished according to the occupant's taste; and in every one there were articles of enormous value, while the silken cushions, thick-piled carpets, and dainty coverlets to the bunks might have led one to suppose that the cabins had been inhabited by delicate ladies rather than by savage pirates, to whom murder was an almost everyday occurrence. They all exhibited, however, as might have been expected from such a crew, the most execrable taste in arrangement. All the colours of the rainbow were combined together, and every article seemed totally out of place in all the apartments save that belonging to Jose Leirya himself.

The cabin belonging to the captain was situated at the stern of the vessel, and for windows had two large openings leading out on to a little stern gallery, where Jose could walk in privacy and be in the open air. This cabin had received the full benefit of the raking fire from the flag-ship, and presented a scene of lamentable destruction.

Instead of the two windows leading out on to the gallery there was now an enormous gaping hole, the lower edge of which was within a hand's-breadth of the water, which occasionally rippled in as the schooner rose and fell upon the swell. The rich hangings of silk and tapestry were pierced and rent; long gashes had been gouged out of the floor by the round-shot; fragments of silver and gold statues and candlesticks lay here and there scattered in confusion, and it was evident that had a single living thing been in that cabin at the moment when the broadside was delivered it could not possibly have escaped. Yet, strangely enough, there were three splendid pictures hanging still upon the cabin-walls absolutely uninjured, and these Cavendish gave orders to be at once removed and sent on board his ship.

In a magnificently inlaid and ornamented bureau there were found all the private papers belonging to Jose, together with the ship's log, both of which provided, later, the most gruesome reading.

Of valuables there were none to be found in the drawers, or hidden away, and Roger mentally decided that the man, for his own safety, had never allowed valuables to

accumulate on board the *Black Pearl*, but had always transferred them, at the first opportunity that presented itself, to his hiding-place at Lonely Inlet. But he kept his surmise to himself and Harry.

The vessel's hold, which was next investigated, contained nothing of any importance or value, and, in fact, the whole vessel yielded but small return for their careful search.

The officers now returned to the deck, to find that it was once more broad daylight; and each went back to his own vessel for breakfast. Roger, having said good-bye to the captain and officers of the *Elizabeth*, and thanked them for their kindness in taking him off the island and afterwards, pushed off to the flag-ship with Mr Cavendish and Harry. Jake Irwin and Walter Bevan, poor fellows, would rejoin their shipmates no more. They had both fallen, fighting bravely, and were now lying fathoms deep in the blue waters of the Caribbean Sea. Little did they imagine, when they left the Isla de Corsarios the day before, that death was so close to them!

After breakfast Cavendish called a council of officers in his own cabin, to discuss the fate of the surviving pirates and their schooner.

The decision was soon made as to the pirates, and it was that they should be hanged, one and all, from the yards of their own vessel. As to the vessel herself, it took somewhat longer to arrive at an agreement; but in view of the fact that she was little better than a shattered wreck, and that, even if she were to be repaired, they had lost so many hands that they could not very well spare the men to handle her, it was finally decided that she should be destroyed.

This business settled, the council broke up, and the members of it went on deck. The flag-ship's boats were then manned, and the officers of the fleet went on board the schooner. Orders had meanwhile been given, on board the vessels of the squadron, that their crews should turn up to witness the execution. The captives were then brought up on deck, and Cavendish himself read the sentence over to them, and bade them prepare for death. They met the announcement with the utmost callousness. One or two of them exchanged remarks in a low tone of voice, and one man was actually heard to laugh outright. As for Jose Leirya, he heard the sentence with absolute indifference, and, when asked whether he had anything to say, answered not a word.

A whip was now rove from each of the fore yard-arms of the *Black Pearl*, and a gun on the forecastle loaded with a blank charge. A number of men were then detailed to run aft with the tail end of the whip as soon as the noose should have been fitted round each man's neck.

Mr Cavendish decided that he would hang the captain first, so that every survivor of his crew might witness the death of their leader.

All being now in readiness, four seamen walked up to Jose Leirya and, stooping, cut the bonds that secured his feet. The pirate stood still for a moment to allow the blood to circulate once more freely through his limbs, and then, bound though his arms were, he

wrenched himself free from the grasp of the four seamen and made a furious dash towards the side of his ship, actually succeeding in scrambling on to her bulwark, with the evident intention of drowning himself, and thus evading the indignity of death by hanging.

The seamen, however, who had been hurled right and left by his herculean effort, closed upon him promptly, and, with very little ceremony, hauled him off with violence, hurling him to the deck and themselves falling on the top of him and holding him down with their weight. Yet once again he succeeded in wrenching himself free from the men's clutches and, staggering to his feet, made another dart for the ship's side. But he was pounced upon again, and once more they all fell upon the deck together.

A taunting laugh rang out from the group of bound ruffians who were awaiting their fate, and stung the English sailors to madness. That one man, and he partly bound, should keep four stalwart seamen at bay was too much for their temper. They rushed at the pirate again, and this time seized him securely; then, tripping him up, they slipped a running bowline over his ankles and hauled it taut, thus rendering the man helpless. Yet even then they could scarcely keep their grip on him, so enormous was the strength with which he turned and twisted in their grip.

At length, after an infinity of trouble, they succeeded in dragging him to the forecastle; the running noose attached to the whip was brought up to the pirate and slipped over his neck; Cavendish then gave the signal, the gun was fired, the men holding the end of the whip ran aft, the seamen holding the man sprang aside, and the pirate's body, still struggling and writhing, went flying aloft, to stop presently with a jerk as it reached the jewel-block, and dangle at the end of the fore yard-arm, still plunging and struggling with such violence that the yard itself fairly shook. It was some considerable time before the struggles ceased. The body was allowed to hang a little longer, and then the rope was cut, and the corpse plunged downward into the sea among the sharks, whose clashing teeth and noisy splashes gave conclusive evidence as to the whereabouts of the pirate's last resting-place.

The remainder of the ruffians betrayed not the slightest emotion at the terrible fate of their leader, but went silently and calmly to their doom, without struggling as their captain had done; and very soon the dread ceremony was over, and the pirates had met their deserts.

The only matter that now remained was the destruction of the notorious *Black Pearl*.

Powder and shot there were in plenty, on board the squadron; so Mr Cavendish decided to give his ships' crews a little practice in gunnery. By this time also the necessary repairs to the vessels engaged had been executed, and all was now in readiness for the resumption of the cruise. Sail was therefore made, and the vessels drew off to a distance of about three-quarters of a mile, when they hove-to and began to practise on the pirate vessel with their guns. The flag-ship was the first to make a hit, which she did between

wind and water with her bow-chaser. The other vessels then got the range, and hulled the *Black Pearl* with nearly every shot.

Harry and Roger, once more together on the flag-ship, had already recounted in detail all their adventures during the time that they were separated, the one on the sand-bank and the other on the ship driven away to leeward of the island by the storm. They were both now standing amongst the crew of the bow-chaser gun, watching the effect of every shot with the utmost interest; and Roger presently asked the captain of the gun to allow him to have a shot. The man, who was much attached to the lad by reason of many little acts of kindness received, made no demur. The gun was reloaded, and Roger, with the firing-match in his hand, cocked his eye along the chase of the piece, watching until the heaving of the ship should bring the sights to bear on the hulk. Presently the *Good Adventure* dipped to a large wave, and Roger, who was watching like a cat, applied the match. There came the sharp report of the discharge, and, as the smoke swept away, the young man had the satisfaction of seeing his shot strike the vessel right between wind and water, just at the side of a hole where two others had penetrated. This shot of his, of course, much enlarged the already large hole, through which the water of the Caribbean was now pouring like a sluice; and it was seen that the pirate vessel was on the point of foundering. Even as they watched, the craft seemed to settle visibly deeper in the water, and she rolled heavily two or three times. A few seconds later her stern was seen to lift high and her bows to point downward; steeper and steeper became the angle of her decks and then, with a slow forward movement that quickly became a diving rush, she plunged to the bottom, vanishing from their sight in a whirl and froth of water.

Such was the end of the *Black Pearl*! For years she had been the terror of all the seas around the West Indies and the coasts of New Spain. She had been a floating den of vice, murder, and every conceivable form of infamy, and now her lawless and adventurous career had terminated in her becoming a target for the guns of the avengers of the evil she had wrought, while her captain and surviving crew had swung from the yard-arm of their own vessel before she herself was destroyed. Her career of murder and terror and destruction was ended at last, and the evil spirit of those seas was laid.

All now being over, and it being no longer necessary to carry out their original intention of scouring the Mexican Gulf for the pirate—chance having so fortunately thrown him in their way,—it was decided to carry out the other part of their programme; which, it will be remembered, was to run to La Guayra and see whether there were any plate ships lying there, and, if so, to endeavour to cut them out and capture them. A course was therefore set, and the little squadron bore away to the southward and eastward in the direction of that port.

Roger and Harry had now a little time to themselves, and, having so recently witnessed the destruction of the pirate vessel and the execution of her notorious captain, the conversation naturally enough turned to the cipher which Roger had in his possession. He had already acquainted his friend with the news that the marooned man, William

Evans, had given him an exact duplicate of the cipher that he had in his possession, taken from the *Gloria del Mundo*, and the two lads now seriously turned their attention to its translation. But again it foiled them; they could make nothing of it. They did not wish to communicate the fact of it being in their possession to any third person, and ask his advice, knowing that a secret shared with others is usually a secret no longer. So he and Harry kept their knowledge to themselves, and went over the remainder of the papers which Evans had given Roger, as well as the cipher. These also proved to be of no importance to anyone but their former owner, as they merely contained notes from the log and diary of the pirate, and, indeed, consisted mainly of a skeleton account of his many atrocities, recorded for who knows what reason. The two lads could not see that any useful purpose would be served by retaining these memoranda; they therefore tore them up small, and consigned them to the deep. For this reason the history of the doings and exploits of the pirate Jose Leirya has never been written, and never will be.

As the two lads could make nothing of the cipher, they put it away, deciding not to worry their heads about the matter until some time in the future, when they should have nothing else to occupy them. The two ciphers were therefore folded up into a neat packet, and, with the assistance of a needle and thread, Harry sewed the little parcel into the lining of his friend's coat, in such a position and manner that even a rigorous search would probably fail to disclose the presence of the papers.

“Now you have them quite safe, my friend,” said Harry, “and so long as you stick to your jacket you need never be afraid of losing that cryptogram. And should anybody ever come, by any chance, to know that you have the key to Jose's treasure, he will never be able to find it, even if he attempts to rob you.”

“No, Harry, I should say not,” laughed Roger. “But I do not think I need fear that any person will try to rob me of that cipher; for, so far as I know, the only person now alive who is aware that one existed is that evil-looking fellow Alvarez, and he will imagine, doubtless, that the cryptogram went down with all the other papers in the Spanish man-of-war. And he probably thinks, too, that I also went down with her. At any rate it was not his fault that I did not.”

“Well,” objected Harry, “I am not so sure about his thinking you were drowned on that occasion, for, when we sent him and the other Spaniards ashore at Lonely Inlet, I saw him looking very hard at you, and I believe he recognised you, for he spoke to another man beside him, and tapped his own pocket. The other fellow then looked at you, as though to make sure of recognising you again, and nodded to Alvarez as they both went down the side. Yes, I am pretty sure that Alvarez recognised you, and I think it not unlikely that he may have some idea that you saw him looking for something in that cabin, and that when you were rescued you took with you those papers that he left behind in his fright; and, if so, he of course believes that you have that cipher in your possession at this moment.”

“Well, Harry, old lad,” laughed Roger in reply, “I do not suppose I shall ever see Alvarez

again, and if I do I shall take care that I do not fall into his power, you may be quite sure. There is one thing certain. Now that Jose and his crew are dead, that treasure will never be found except by us, and only by us if we can succeed in translating the cryptogram, for there is no one else on earth now who knows even its locality."

"Quite true, Roger, my friend," replied Harry. "But I do most sincerely hope that the possession of that paper will not bring you to any harm."

The conversation between the two lads was at this moment interrupted by the cry of "Land, ho!" from above, and both boys ran up on deck to catch the first glimpse of it.

"Hurrah!" shouted Roger in great glee. "Hurrah! this shows that we are not far from La Guayra now, and then for more fighting and adventure, and perhaps we may be able to get ashore for an hour or two."

The land could be discerned fairly clearly from the fore topmast cross-tree, to which Roger and his friend ascended. It showed as a bold headland, apparently of great height and rocky in formation.

Having satisfied their curiosity, the two came down from aloft, and, seeing one of the officers attentively looking at the fast-rising land, asked him what it might be; if it was anywhere near La Guayra, and how far away it was.

"You two youngsters seem very eager to sight land again," replied the lieutenant, smiling. "I should have thought that you, Trevose, would have had enough of land for a time, after being so very nearly left behind on that sand-bank. But, to satisfy your curiosity, I will tell you. That tall headland that you see yonder, and toward which we are now steering, is called Cape Oruba, and is the north-north-west extremity of the island of Oruba. We shall leave that island on our starboard hand, and as we pass it we ought to see the island of Curazao in the distance, which island we, of course, leave on our port hand. Then we head into the Gulf of Triste, and so on to La Guayra. Now, young men, I have posted you up in the different landmarks that we shall pass, and you can look them up for yourselves, and see where we are, from that Spanish chart that you were so thoughtful as to bring with you from the *Gloria del Mundo*."

Roger and Harry thanked the lieutenant for the information, and went below to see where was the ship's actual position.

Nothing of any interest happened here, and in three days from the time when they first sighted Oruba Point they were as close in to La Guayra as they dared venture without further investigation.

Once more a council of officers was held in Mr Cavendish's cabin, on board the flag-ship, and a plan of campaign arranged. The squadron, it was decided, was to lie-to in a little bay not many miles to the north-westward of the Port of La Guayra. There was no danger of its presence there being discovered, there being no town or port near; the cliffs rose up almost perpendicularly from the water's edge, and the little bay itself was

practically landlocked, and thus hidden from seaward. Then three boats were to be provisioned with food and water for two days, and, leaving the ships early in the afternoon, were to arrive off La Guayra about midnight or thereabout. They were to make as close an investigation of the harbour, and any ships that might be in it, as could be made with safety. They were to ascertain, if possible, whether there were any plate ships in the roadstead, and, if so, the precise positions in which they were lying. They were also to determine, as nearly as they could, what the chances of a night attack would be; whether likely to be successful or otherwise. In short, they were to accumulate all the information they could, without being seen.

The little squadron—which had been hove-to during the consultation— filled away once more, and carefully felt its way into the bay, and, after many very narrow escapes of falling foul of the rocks and sand-banks with which the entrance was encumbered, came to an anchor in safety in the spot where it was to remain until such time as the boat expedition should return. A boat was provisioned and manned by each ship in the squadron, and Roger and Harry, who were always ready for any adventure that promised a spice of danger, pleaded so eloquently to be allowed to accompany the boat sent by the flag-ship, that Mr Cavendish, after considerable demur, agreed to their going, at the same time cautioning them that even a very slight indiscretion on their part might easily involve the expedition in something nearly approaching disaster.

The next day, all being in readiness, the boats set off on their dangerous errand about two bells in the afternoon watch, immediately after the seamen had taken their mid-day meal. They were accompanied by the prayers and good wishes for success from all in the fleet, but no cheering was indulged in, lest perchance some wandering herdsman on the heights should catch the sound, look for its source, discover the lurking ships, and hasten away to the city to give it warning.

They kept as close under the huge cliffs that towered above the narrow beach as they could with safety, in order to lessen the danger of being seen to seaward, and after dark pulled slightly farther out to sea to avoid the possibility of running on some rock which they might see and avoid by daylight, but not after dark.

About nine o'clock, Roger, who was away up in the bows of the leading boat, keeping a lookout, passed the word aft to the officer in charge that they had just opened up a light, apparently on shore.

“That's our goal, then,” said the officer; “that's La Guayra! And now to find out whether there is anything in there that it may be worth our while to attack.”

He then made the signal for the other two boats to close, to give the officers in command an opportunity for a final consultation. It was presently arranged that, on entering the bay, they were to separate, and each was to scour a certain part of the harbour, and join the others again at three o'clock in the morning at the spot where they parted company, the bearings of which were to be carefully and accurately taken.

La Guayra lies in the hollow of an extensive but open roadstead, and is built at the foot of a range of huge mountains, which tower up into the clouds behind it, and at the back of which lies Caracas, now the capital of Venezuela.

It was to the extremity of this roadstead that the three boats had now come, and the twinkling lights of the town were clearly discernible at some distance.

Anxiously they scanned the bay for any sign of ships lying there, and after a few moments they were able to make out certain detached sparks of light, which they felt certain were the riding-lights of a number of vessels. It now remained for them to pull quietly and unobtrusively shoreward, and ascertain what the vessels were, and, as far as possible, discover their strength, and how they lay for protection from the shore batteries.

The oars were therefore muffled with pieces of cloth that had been brought for the purpose, and, orders having been given that no light was to be shown in any of the boats for any purpose whatever, they separated, all making for the several points agreed upon before starting.

The boat belonging to the flag-ship had the position of honour, and therefore of most danger. She was to take a middle course, and pull down to the foot of the bay, close inshore, and right under the guns of the batteries; a task so dangerous that, should they by any misfortune be seen, there would be no hope or possibility of escape for them. In dead silence they pulled slowly along, peering carefully about them, and getting ever nearer and nearer to the town. The lights began to show more clearly, and large objects ashore to assume a somewhat definite outline. The dark background of the mighty mountains behind the town could be made out towering far above them, their heads seemingly among the few stars that were that night shining.

They were creeping on and inward, steering for a cluster of lights that evidently betokened the presence of a large vessel at anchor about a mile farther in, when those same lights were suddenly obscured, and a little later there came plainly to their ears a swish of water, strongly suggestive of some vessel moving at speed. At the whispered command of the officer the boat's crew backed water simultaneously, and brought the boat to a stand-still, just in time to avoid being run down by a dark mass that came swiftly, and with no lights showing, out toward the open sea. As she passed the boat, within oar's-length, they could hear quite distinctly the sound of voices, and, to their utter amazement, the speech of those voices was English. The vessel was moving so swiftly that only a few words could be caught, and these were: “All is well so far, John, my lad; in an hour from this we shall be out of this bay, and, once on the open sea, it will take more than—” and the voice was lost in the distance.

Roger had, some time before, come aft, and was now by the side of the lieutenant.

He said in a hushed voice: “What does that mean, Mr Story? There is some strange happening abroad this night. That ship had Englishmen aboard her; yet, so far as we

know, there are no English ships beside ourselves in these seas just now. Besides, why was she carrying no lights?"

"'Pon my word, Roger, I don't know," replied Story. "As you say, there are no other English about here excepting ourselves; yet the people in possession of that craft are undoubtedly English. Ah! can it be, I wonder, that these people are English prisoners who are effecting their escape from the Spaniards to-night of all nights; and, having managed to get hold of a ship, are now clearing off? Zounds! I believe I am right, and that is what has happened. This is doubly annoying. First, because we are very short-handed ourselves, and if we could only have got those fellows to join us it would have helped us to make up our crews once more; and, secondly, because their escape will surely be discovered before long, and a search made, which will render it very awkward for us. I wish I could somehow contrive to communicate with those other two boats, and let them know; for, this having happened, it is high time for us to beat a retreat, or we shall be caught like rats in a trap! But there is no way, so we had better make the best and most of it, get what information we can, and then be off back to the rendezvous to wait for the others, and start for the ships directly they appear. Give way again, boys; but be silent for your very lives' sake."

Therewith they went swiftly and silently forward again, and shortly afterward came close alongside a ship for which they had been cautiously steering. They discovered that she was a Spanish war-vessel, and her very presence there suggested a plate fleet, which she was probably destined to convoy.

After pulling very cautiously round her, and ascertaining her strength, they made off toward another group of lights, and, on arrival there, found another war-ship. This craft was apparently a sister ship to the first one they had seen, and of the same strength.

Having ascertained this, and seeing no more lights but such as lay in the tracks of the other two boats, they turned the bows of the boat seaward, and, finding that it was well-nigh time for them to be at their rendezvous, pulled vigorously in that direction. They had taken but a few strokes when, from somewhere behind them in the town, they heard a distant clamour, suggestive of voices calling and shouting.

"Listen a moment," said Story. "Stop pulling, lads; I want to hear what that is going on behind there."

The men lay on their oars, and all strained their ears, listening. Presently the sound rose from a dull murmur to one of greater volume, and a trumpet pealed out from the shore, answered almost immediately afterwards by one from each of the warships; and suddenly, from one of the batteries, a flash of fire rushed out, illuminating for a few seconds, as does a flash of lightning, the whole bay, and then came the dull report of the gun.

"Now, men," said the lieutenant, "give way; give way for your lives! They have discovered the escape of those other fellows, and will find us also, if we are not out

quickly. Resistance to such overwhelming odds as we should meet with would be hopeless; so pull, put your backs into it and make her move!”

Lights now began to flash out from all parts of the bay, disclosing the presence of vessels which they had not supposed to be there; and, indeed, it seemed as though they were surrounded on all sides by craft of all rigs and sizes. How they had threaded their way in without falling foul of some of them now seemed a mystery. They prayed fervently that the other two boats might be making their escape while there was yet time to do so.

The men set their backs to the work and pulled like very Trojans, and the boat shot through the water. Picking out a course that would take them as far away as possible from the lights now shining all over the roadstead, the lieutenant steered with the utmost caution, for he knew that his life depended on it, together with those of the boat's crew.

At length, after what seemed an eternity, they passed out clear of the encircling ships; nothing stood between them and the open sea; and in another hour they took their bearings and pulled to the rendezvous. Luckily, and to the joy of all hands, when they arrived there one boat was already waiting, and even as they lay on their oars, the third came up from the other direction.

News was now quickly and eagerly exchanged, and it was ascertained, putting it all together, that a plate fleet consisting of three ships was indeed there, and that it was guarded by the two warships. The other craft in the bay were mostly coasting and other small vessels, about which they need not very much concern themselves when they came in to the attack. The positions of the land batteries had also been ascertained, and now nothing remained but to return to the squadron with all speed, acquaint the captain with the information obtained, and then sail for La Guayra forthwith, so as to arrive there before the plate fleet could effect its escape from the port. For, once out of sight below the horizon, they could scarcely hope to find it again except after a long and wearisome search.

Once more united, the boats began their return journey, pulling hard while the darkness lasted, so as to make a good offing by daybreak, and also to leave themselves less toil after the sun rose.

It was about four in the morning when they rounded the promontory that shut in the roadstead, and they could not reckon on more than two hours more of darkness. The men, although fatigued, held well to their work, and the boats moved along at a very good speed.

Day broke with the suddenness usual in the tropics, and, the sun rising, disclosed to their view, but a short half-mile in advance of them, the identical vessel that had made such a hurried exit from the roadstead on the previous night. This was excellent, and the English flag was at once hoisted at the staves of the three boats, to show that they were English, and not, as the people aboard the stranger would naturally suppose, Spaniards

in pursuit.

Seeing the English flag, the vessel hove-to, and the boats soon came alongside. Arriving on deck, Story asked for the captain, and a man stepped forward saying that he was an English seaman, who had originated the plan of escape, and finally contrived it. There were nearly a hundred Englishmen on board, who had been captured in small parties at various times, and had been incarcerated in the prison at La Guayra. They had nearly all been subjected to the tortures of the Holy Office, and bore the most dreadful scars as mementoes of its attentions. Many, under the influence of the torture, had recanted and abjured their own faith in order to save themselves from being burnt alive.

It appeared that for some time past they had been considering plans of escape, but the difficulties in the way were many and great, and had, of course, been immeasurably increased by their numbers. The first opportunity, therefore, had only come on the previous night, and they had made the most of it, with what success the reader has seen.

Story then informed them of the reason of the boats' presence there, and, telling them of the proposed attack on the plate fleet, invited them, subject to Cavendish's approval, to join the squadron.

They all gladly acquiesced, without a single dissentient voice, and expressed themselves as right glad of the opportunity to be revenged on their enemies, the Spaniards.

With this understanding Story took charge of the ship, and, calling the boats' crews on deck, made fast the boats themselves astern, and towed them, as, with the freshening breeze that arose with the sun, they made better progress sailing than pulling.

As a result of this arrangement they arrived sooner than they were expected, and there was much joy throughout the fleet at the news of the plate fleet, and also because of the valuable reinforcement to their strength, which was very badly needed, and which now made the crews up to almost their full complement.

The captured vessel, by means of which the prisoners had effected their escape, was only a carrack of very small tonnage; and therefore, being of no use, she was sunk.

The squadron weighed and made sail toward evening, Cavendish's purpose being to arrive after dark and attempt a surprise attack, the odds being so very greatly in favour of the enemy. Sunset, therefore, saw them under easy sail, heading along the coast toward La Guayra.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN. CAPTURE OF THE PLATE FLEET AND SACK OF LA GUAYRA—DISAPPEARANCE OF ROGER AND HARRY.

To make certain of not arriving at their destination too soon, and before the townspeople and the garrison had retired for the night, the English ships carried but a small amount of canvas, and consequently made only some two to three knots per hour.

It was a little after midnight when Roger, who was, as usual, on the lookout, and who

was credited with the sharpest pair of eyes in the ship, saw for the second time the lights of La Guayra opening up. As they came into fuller view of the town itself, and of the roadstead, they were somewhat astonished to find that both were enveloped in almost perfect darkness—there was scarcely a light to be seen, either ashore or afloat. There were one or two scattered here and there about the town, but there were none at all in the forts, and not a single glimmer was to be made out anywhere in the roadstead.

Surely it was not possible that the vessels of the plate fleet, and its two protecting warships, could have left the port and disappeared during the short time that had elapsed since the boat expedition had made its reconnaissance! At that time, too, there had been numerous other craft lying there at anchor; yet now it seemed as though the bay were deserted. Some fresh arrangement—some new plan—was obviously necessary.

The English ships showed no lights whatever, and the strictest silence was observed. The captains had received their orders beforehand, and would have known exactly what course to pursue had there been any lights showing. But now it became necessary to take fresh counsel among themselves, and decide how to act.

The flag-ship was, as usual, in the van, and Mr Cavendish ordered all the boats to be lowered and manned. These were then to spread out in line, so as to make sure of intercepting the other two vessels as they came up, and, having found them, to give orders for them to heave-to, and for their respective captains to repair on board the *Good Adventure*. The boats themselves were to return to the flag-ship as soon as these orders had been carried out.

Luckily there was no difficulty in picking up the other ships, even in the pitchy blackness that prevailed that night, and with but a few minutes' delay the officers of the fleet were once more assembled in the cabin of the flag-ship. The situation was discussed as briefly as possible, for there was no time to lose, and it was presently decided that, instead of the remainder of the fleet following the flag-ship's lead, as originally agreed, the officer of each ship who had been with the boat expedition should do his best to pilot the vessel under his care to the berth occupied by the warships. Arrived there, should the Spanish ships be present, as all on board fervently hoped would prove to be the case, they were to attack at once. Whichever of the two Spaniards might happen to be first attacked, the other would almost certainly come to the help of her consort, and the flash of the guns and noise of the tumult would serve to guide the remainder of the English squadron to the scene of the conflict.

If, on the other hand, it should be found that the warships and plate ships had made their escape, each vessel was to return to the entrance of the roadstead and await the arrival of her consorts as they too retreated from the bay, when, all having rejoined, they were to return to their former hiding-place, where fresh plans would be discussed and made.

This matter being arranged, the captains returned each to his own ship, and very shortly afterward the fleet were again under weigh and standing inshore in the same order as at

first.

Slowly and noiselessly as ghosts they glided on, each heading for the place where the pilots thought, and all hoped against hope, to find the warships lying, with behind them the plate fleet, which was the actual objective of the expedition.

The English ships had separated, and on board the flag-ship nothing could now be seen or heard of the remainder of the squadron, each pilot having taken the direction in which he personally considered the enemy to be lying. Nothing could be made out, either ashore or afloat, to guide them in the slightest degree in their search. They were, indeed, groping blindly forward in the hope of accidentally coming upon their quarry. The few lights of the town that were visible were away at the other side of it, at a long distance from them, and were so far from being of any service that they were positively misleading, to such an extent that at any moment it might happen that they would find their ship ashore.

Roger and Harry were standing in their usual position on the fore-deck, gazing eagerly ahead, each anxious to be the first to sight the enemy, when Harry caught his friend's sleeve, and, pointing into the darkness at a faint blur upon their port bow, said:

“There's something there, Roger. D'ye see it, lad? It's a ship of some sort. I can just make out her masts. We shall pass her at very close quarters. Now, I wonder if perchance she is one of the warships that we are searching for?”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a perfect volcano of flame flashed from the side of the vessel which Harry had just sighted, immediately followed by a thunderous roar, and the shot from the well-aimed broadside came crashing aboard, doing a considerable amount of execution. Men fell in every part of the ship. Cries, shrieks, groans, and curses arose from the decks, which for a moment were a perfect pandemonium of confusion.

The captain, rushing along the deck, shouted: “Steady, lads, and stand to your guns! The Spaniards expected and are ready for us; but do not forget that you are Englishmen. Pull yourselves together, men, and give them back better than we received.”

The confusion was but momentary. The crews were by this time too well disciplined to become panic-stricken, and, awaiting the word of command, they presently poured in their already-prepared broadside with great effect, for the mainmast of the war-ship was seen to quiver, totter, and finally fall with a rending crash over the side remote from the *Good Adventure*, throwing the crew of the Spaniard into momentary disorder.

As the flag-ship came up to her antagonist, she took in her sails and ranged up alongside, inshore of her. There were no batteries opposite where the vessels were lying, so that no danger was to be apprehended on that score.

Like magic, the lights flared up from all parts of the town, and aboard all the vessels in the bay, as also in the fort at the opposite extremity of the roadstead. The war-ship

herself became a blaze of illumination, as did also her consort, which could now be seen lying but a half-cable's-length distant, and which also opened a tremendous fire upon the flag-ship. The other two ships of the English squadron, meanwhile, had shifted their helms and were fast approaching, guided by the flashing of guns and the uproar of the action.

Even the ships of the plate fleet, lying near at hand, and which proved to be heavily armed, now began to open fire, as well as the distant fort; and it was soon very evident that the English fleet had entered into an engagement in which the odds were vastly against them. They had anticipated surprising the enemy; but the surprise was all the other way. Neither had they reckoned on the plate vessels being nearly so heavily armed.

The booming of cannon now resounded from all sides, and the darkness was made light by the flashes from the guns, whilst the air became thick and heavy with powder smoke. The *Elizabeth* and the *Tiger* had come upon the scene, and were attacking the second war-ship, which was resisting gallantly, supported as she was by the guns from the ships composing the plate fleet.

Indeed the English were in a very warm corner.

The flag-ship was engaging the first war-ship—the name of which they discovered to be the *Sotomayor*—yard-arm to yard-arm, and both vessels fairly reeled under the concussion as the heavy shot crashed in at one side and out at the other, while the *Good Adventure* was already on fire below from the flashes of the guns of her opponent. English sailormen, however, were ready then, as now, to meet all emergencies, and the fire was speedily quenched, only to start again, however, and be again put out.

Three times did Cavendish pour his boarders on to the decks of the *Sotomayor*, and three times they were driven back by the desperate valour and greatly superior numbers of the Spaniards.

The Spaniard had lost every mast but her foremast, and the English ship was in almost as bad a plight. Both ships were badly riddled by shot, and their crews were decimated. It seemed as though, unless some decisive move were made to end the conflict, that the combatants would be exterminated to a man.

The second war-ship, the *Villa de Mejico*, was in even worse plight than her consort, having two vessels to engage her instead of only one. She fought with the valour of desperation, however, and was packed with soldiers who had been put aboard her from the fort in anticipation of the attack.

It had somehow got to be known, although it was never discovered how, that the English were near at hand, and were suspected of contemplating an attack on the fleet; and in view of this suspicion elaborate preparations had been made for their reception.

The crews of the *Tiger* and the *Elizabeth* had several times endeavoured to board, but had been swept back to their own ships on every occasion by the combined sailors and

soldiers on the Spaniard.

Harry and Roger were, as usual, in the very thick of it, fighting side by side like the young heroes that they were, and, truth to tell, doing a considerable amount of execution.

They were pausing for a moment to take breath, when both happened to glance forward, and at once saw that the two ships, the *Good Adventure* and the *Sotomayor* with her, were drifting right down upon the second Spaniard and her antagonists. The Spaniards on the *Sotomayor*, finding themselves almost overpowered, had cut their cable purposely, to drift down with the tide on board their consort, in the hope of being able to make a better stand together than separately. But they were mistaken in their expectation. The other vessel, having had two to contend with, was in no condition to render assistance of any kind; rather, indeed, did she stand in need of help from the *Sotomayor*.

A brief minute later the flag-ship, still grappling with her quarry, was aboard the other three craft, and the confusion became worse confounded.

The Spaniards, determined to make one last desperate effort to beat off the English, rallied, and, combining their forces, forestalled their antagonists by attempting to board.

The two Spanish ships acted in concert, and hurled their soldiers and sailors aboard the three English craft; but it was a hopeless attempt from the first. The English closed up, and, forming a solid phalanx, cut them down right and left, driving them back, and quickly compelling the shattered remnant of the boarders to seek the refuge of their own decks. Nor did they stop at that, but followed them pell-mell and close on their heels in their retreat to the decks of the Spanish ships. The Spaniards fought with the courage of desperation, but their utmost efforts were unavailing; the blood of the Englishmen was now thoroughly up, and there was no stopping them. They rushed with irresistible courage and determination among the shattered and now completely disheartened remnants of the enemy, and cut them down wholesale. Mere mortal flesh and blood could no longer withstand the impetuous onslaught of the Englishmen, and presently a voice was heard from their diminished ranks shouting: “We surrender! we surrender! Mercy, mercy!”

Cavendish raised his voice in command; the slaughter ceased, and the two armadas were in the hands of the English. The Spaniards were ordered to fling down their weapons, and they obeyed.

They were then at once sent below and secured under hatches, and the victors were now free to turn their attention to the plate ships that were their primary objective.

Such boats as would swim were quickly lowered and filled with armed men, whose orders were to board the vessels, capture them out of hand, and carry them out to sea under their own canvas; after which the English vessels and their two prizes would make their way out of the roadstead as well as might be in their shattered state.

Once out of the bay, the uninjured vessels of the plate fleet would be able to tow their companions in misfortune.

At sight of the approaching boats, containing the victorious English, the crews of the plate ships were seized with uncontrollable panic, and many of them incontinently jumped overboard, whilst the remainder hurriedly lowered their boats and pulled shoreward, anxious only to escape by any means from so terrible a foe. And this they were allowed to do without let or hindrance from the English, as the latter had already quite as many prisoners as they could conveniently look after.

The vessels were boarded, and sail made; and presently the enraged population of La Guayra had the bitter mortification of seeing the plate ships sail out of the roadstead in the possession of the English.

They swore vengeance, deep and awful, should any of those “pirates”—as they always termed the English adventurers—ever fall into their hands; but the latter were equally ignorant of and indifferent to such threats.

The vessels, injured and uninjured, in due time gained the outside of the roadstead, and there hove-to, in order to effect temporary repairs.

Meanwhile Cavendish had resolved to jury-rig his vessels, and sink the two armadas in full view of the town, to make the defeat and capture still more bitter to the Spaniards.

The Spaniards were transferred from the *Sotomayor* and the *Mejico* to the English fleet, and at daylight the warships were sunk in full view of the town. The English fleet then anchored, and proceeded with their work of repair; whilst, for safety's sake, a prize crew was put on board each of the plate ships, which were then sent away to the former hiding-place at the little bay down the coast.

Whilst the repairs were going forward, Cavendish held another council, at which it was resolved to send an expedition by night to attack La Guayra itself. He argued that the Spaniards would deem them content with the capture of the plate ships, and would never expect them to land and attack the city. They would be taken by surprise; and, as the crowning event of the successful enterprise just executed, he would sack and burn the town, “to give the Spaniards something to remember him by", as he phrased it.

The sailors were only too delighted at the idea of attacking their enemies again, as also at the prospect of the plunder to be obtained at the looting and sack of the city.

The boats were therefore lowered over the side of the ships remote from the town, and lay under the vessels' lee during the day, in readiness for the attack that night.

All day long the repairs were gone on with, and after nightfall torches and lanterns were lit, to deceive the Spaniards into believing that they were working hard all through the night, and so lessen their suspicion as to the probability of any further attack.

A keen watch was kept on the town all day long, to discover whether any preparations were being made to resist attack, but nothing of the kind could be discovered.

Evidently the Spaniards, as Cavendish had anticipated, were lulled to security by the supposition that the English, having secured the plate fleet, would have no reason or incentive for returning, and fondly hoped that, as soon as the repairs to the ships were finished, they would sail away; and that would be the last they would see of the heretic dogs.

But they little knew the character of Cavendish; he was not the man to abandon any enterprise upon which he had once entered. It was a principle of his to inflict the greatest possible amount of damage on the enemy that he could; and meanwhile the town of La Guayra still remained uninjured.

Therefore—so ran his argument—La Guayra must be sacked and laid in ashes before he could consider his duty as thoroughly finished.

As a consequence, shortly after midnight the boats of the fleet stole silently out from under the sheltering lee of their parent vessels, and made swiftly and noiselessly, with muffled oars, for the town.

Roger and Harry, ready as ever for an adventure, no matter how dangerous it might be, were in the boats, and keeping a sharp lookout ahead; for by this time there were but few lights to guide them, the whole city being wrapped in darkness.

Everything ahead of and around them was perfectly quiet; not a sound disturbed the still night air save only the scarcely audible ripple of water under the boats' bows as they swept gently shoreward.

Presently there was a grating of pebbles under their keels, and the boats stopped dead.

The crews silently disembarked, and all stood still for a few moments, listening intently to ascertain whether the noise of the boats grounding on the beach had been heard. But no sound came to them, and, after waiting a little longer to make certain, the boats were gently pushed off again, each in charge of a couple of hands to take care of them, and the marauders proceeded up the beach, soon arriving on the road that ran the whole length of the town at the edge of the shingle.

The first thing to be done was to obtain possession of the fort; and, feeling their way as best they could in the dense darkness, they set off in the direction in which they knew it lay.

Up the hill they marched, and presently a black mass, somewhat darker than their surroundings, showed itself against the sky. They were there.

Stealing quietly round, they searched for the gateway, which they soon found.

Everything was now ready for the attack, and the officers went silently among the men to discover whether all were present, when it was found that not a single man was missing, or had lost his way in the dark.

Two sacks ready filled with powder, tightly pressed down, and tied at the mouth, were

now brought forward.

They were placed in position against the ponderous iron-bound door, a train was laid to them, and the men then retreated to a safe distance and lay down, waiting for the explosion.

Presently there was a flicker of light as the spark was struck, and at the same moment Roger and Harry grasped hands for a second, for bloody work was about to begin.

There was a splutter, a stream of fire ran along the ground, and, as they gazed, an enormous flash of brilliant white light blazed up, nearly blinding them, followed by a deafening report and a tremendous concussion that seemed to make the very earth tremble. And with it came the sound of wrenching iron, cracking timber, and the crash of falling masonry, and from the interior of the fort the clamour and outcry of the sudden awakening of its occupants.

But the English, with no cheer or shout to announce their approach, leaped to their feet, dashed across the intervening ground, and plunged over the fallen masonry and wreckage of the gate into the interior of the fort and into the dim radiance of hastily kindled lanterns.

Here and there they found a man, only half-awake, confusedly running to ascertain what might be the origin of the uproar, and him they cut down at once. From room to room they went, giving no quarter—knowing that they themselves would receive none,—and one by one the unhappy Spaniards were killed.

There was no organised resistance; it was every man for himself, for they had been taken most completely by surprise.

Roger, with Harry and a few more, ran at once up aloft and came out upon the battlements, where with mallet and spike they industriously proceeded to render the guns useless.

Into the touch-hole of every gun a spike nail was driven as far as it would go, thus effectually preventing the possibility of the weapon being fired until the spike was drilled out, which would necessitate the expenditure of at least an hour of hard work.

In a very short time every gun was effectually spiked, and, the capture of the fort being by this time completely accomplished, the men formed up again outside, and descended at the double to the town, which was now thoroughly awakened and alarmed.

The cathedral was to be the next place of call, the object being to remove the gold and silver plate with which it was known to be furnished.

Meanwhile the tocsins were being sounded. The brazen voices of the church bells pealed out high above all the other clamour. To add to the confusion and terror, the English halted, and, fixing their arquebuses, fired a volley into a square where some troops seemed to be mustering.

Immediately upon the crash of the volley came cries and screams from the terrified populace, bearing eloquent witness to the execution wrought by the flying bullets. Then, picking up their weapons, the English flew like fiends through the town, cutting down all who had the temerity to oppose them.

The cathedral was soon reached, and they entered it.

Lights were glimmering far up the aisles, just lit by the trembling priests, who had come in by ones and twos to find out what all the uproar was about. But the English pressed on, undeterred by their presence, and, moving up the long chancel, reached the altar.

Two or three seamen made their way to the belfry, and, loosing the bell-ropes, in the madness of their excitement began to ring the bells in the steeple; and presently, clang, clang, clang, came from the tower as they hauled on the ropes. Rushing from one bell-rope to another, they started every bell in the steeple ringing, with an effect that was appalling and terrible.

As the bells gained momentum, and swung on their beams, so did the ropes attached to them fly up and down through their appointed holes in the belfry roof, with ever-increasing velocity.

Now they began to twine round each other like living, twisting serpents, and the sailors pulling them had to spring quickly aside to avoid being caught by the flying and coiling ends.

Clang! clang! The sound of the bells now became a mad jangle, and the steeple fairly rocked to their swinging.

Everywhere the people were pouring out of their houses in terror and panic, not knowing whither to turn for safety.

Those who were below in the church were now tearing all the gold and silver ornamentation from the altar, and the communion plate was scattered on the floor of the chancel.

Vainly the frightened priests strove to stay the work of destruction and violation; the seamen were deaf to all entreaty, and cut and tore the silken hangings from the altar, wrapping the costly fabric over their own tarry and soiled clothing. Every man plundered for himself only, and would allow none to rob him of his intended spoil.

Above the altar stood a life-sized figure of the Blessed Virgin Mother, exquisitely modelled in solid gold, and clothed in rich fabric that was adorned with precious stones innumerable. The sailors saw it, and leaped one after another upon the altar, drawing their swords and hacking off the gems, whilst the priests covered their eyes with horror at the desecration and sacrilege.

The eyes of the figure consisted of two magnificent sapphires of great size, and, being unable to reach these with their swords, the sailors put their weapons behind and under the image, and with a few violent wrenches it came crashing to the ground with a

thunderous noise.

As it fell, from above them in the belfry came a most awful, piercing, and agonising scream of anguish. It rose in one shrill cry above every other sound, and echoed, long-drawn out and ghastly, among the dim arches of the roof high above them.

The fearful cry rose and fell, while all below stood still, frozen into silence by the utter horror of the sound. It was as the voice of a lost soul in the most dreadful torment. As suddenly as it had arisen it ceased, and it was now noticed that the tenor bell was no longer clanging its deep mellow voice above them in the steeple.

An old priest stepped out from among his brethren.

“Cease, ye wicked men!” cried he in excellent English. “Cease, ye heretics and sacrilegious dogs, ere worse befall ye! That awful shriek was the despairing cry of a soul torn from its body in awful torment. Take warning, ye, from that man's dreadful fate; for a man it was, although ye might have deemed the voice that of a devil!

“I can tell ye his doom. He was caught up by the whirling ropes of the bells which ye have rung to your own confusion, and his body has been torn to pieces in the pipe through which the bell-rope runs. Take warning, I say, and leave this sacred place in peace!”

He spoke no more, for one of the officers, fearing the effect his words might have on the superstitious seamen, seized him by the shoulders and hustled him down the long aisle of the building and through the door into the street.

Harry and Roger could not bring themselves to take part in the shocking work of desecration, and were standing some distance away, surveying the scene with disgust, when suddenly above the bestial shouts and uproar came the cry: “Save yourselves, lads, run! There is no time to lose; the church is on fire! Run! Run!”

Startled amid their work of destruction, the men paused and looked round to see whence the voice had come, but could not discover its whereabouts.

As they looked, however, columns of smoke were seen drifting about the building and issuing from the crevices of the roof and walls.

Evidently the alarm was genuine, by whomsoever given, and the sailors made for the doors. Those who had overturned the golden figure still clung to their booty, and, raising it in their arms, half-carried and half-dragged it away with them by main force.

It was a scene of the most utter confusion; some staggered away overladen with gold and silver cups, others with costly silks and fabrics, whatever most appealed to their erratic taste.

When nearly all were out of the building, Roger and his friend awoke to the fact that they were being left alone, and ran forward to escape while there was time; but, even as they turned to go, the ground seemed to fall from beneath their feet, and they plunged

down, down, until they struck the hard ground below, the shock causing them to lose consciousness.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN. IN THE HANDS OF THE INQUISITION.

We must now move forward for a period of four months, during which time many changes have occurred.

When the men had escaped from the burning cathedral, Cavendish had mustered them in the plaza opposite, and found none missing except Roger and Harry.

These two were great favourites with the ship's company, and many willing hands had gone back to bring them out of the smoking edifice; but no traces of them could be found. It was then thought that they might have missed their way on the road down from the fort, and search was made in that direction, but without success.

The town was then thoroughly searched, yet the two friends still remained missing. Eventually, therefore, Cavendish was most reluctantly compelled to sail without them, and many were the conjectures as to what fate could possibly have befallen them.

Since that time Cavendish had taken his fleet round the Horn, and sailed up the western coast of Spanish South America, arriving eventually off the coast of Peru. At Callao he had received news that a plate ship was expected to arrive shortly from Manila on her way to Acapulco, in Mexico, and he had determined to waylay and capture her. And, at the date to which this history has now arrived, he had just intercepted and captured her off the Mexican coast, and taken out of her all her vast treasure—the finest, richest prize that has ever been taken either before or since. And at this point the exigencies of the narrative demand that he must be left.

Meanwhile, our former acquaintance, Alvarez, whom we lost sight of at the Careenage, had successfully made his way through the Cuban jungle, and, arriving at the port of Matanzas, with the remainder of the men, had sailed thence to Vera Cruz, in Mexico, where he had received a high appointment from the viceroy, which he now held.

De Soto had travelled with him to Mexico, and, for so gallant a gentleman, had been singularly unfortunate. Alvarez had found it impossible to disabuse his mind of the idea that de Soto had the cryptogram in his possession, and, remembering what had been said by him about the Holy Office, had brought the fact before the notice of that body, repeating de Soto's remarks and denouncing him as a heretic. The unfortunate man was thereupon seized, thrown into prison, and, under the direction of the villain Alvarez, dreadfully tortured, ostensibly to compel him to retract his words against the Inquisition, but really to enable Alvarez to wring from de Soto the cipher, as the price of his release from prison and torture.

The persistent and unwavering assertions of de Soto that he had not the paper, and knew naught of its whereabouts, were received with incredulity, and the unhappy man was tortured again and again to force from him the disclosure of its hiding-place.

The supposed burning of the cathedral at La Guayra had been merely a ruse to get rid of the spoilers. Several of the priests had hit upon the ingenious idea of setting fire to large quantities of damp straw in certain secluded parts of the building, and the smoke, drifting hither and thither through the interior, had caused the English to believe that the place was indeed on fire, and had occasioned their hasty flight. The disappearance of Harry and Roger, on the other hand, was purely due to chance, and had not, as might be imagined, been brought about by design.

The explanation was simple enough. It happened that the paving of one of the aisles had been undergoing repair at the time of Cavendish's attack upon the town. One of the large paving-slabs was loose, and Harry and Roger, in their haste to escape, had trodden on it, causing it to tilt, and they had fallen into the vault below; their unconscious bodies being soon afterwards discovered by the priests, when the latter went to extinguish the burning straw upon the departure of the raiders.

They were recognised by the priest who had been present in the building during its spoliation, and who had uttered the warning to the sailors; and he hastened to impart the good news that two of the pirate heretics had fallen into their hands. Thereupon the two lads were promptly delivered over to the tender mercies of the Holy Office, who did with them what they would; but their ultimate fate was to be delayed until they should have been publicly exhibited and tortured in every town of importance in New Spain, as an example of what would happen should any heretic ever again dare to set foot upon their sacred territory.

The two poor lads had been branded and tortured publicly in the plaza at La Guayra—with every refinement of cruelty that yet stopped short of permanent injury,—and thence had been sent to Mexico to undergo similar treatment in its cities; after which they were to be returned to La Guayra to undergo the final punishment of burning alive at an auto-da-fe.

Our next meeting with the two lads, therefore, is as they sit, bowed head on hands, in their small and horribly dirty cell in the building of the Holy Inquisition in the town of Vera Cruz, in Mexico.

They had already been tortured cruelly at La Guayra; but their constitutions were strong and yet unbroken, and the sea voyage from La Guayra to Vera Cruz—during which they had been carefully nursed in preparation for the endurance of further torments—had done wonders in setting them up again; to such an extent, indeed, that they were now almost their old selves, except for the recollection of their sufferings, which they would never forget, and the scars from the instruments of torture, which would remain with them for the rest of their lives.

This was the first day of their imprisonment at Vera Cruz, they having only disembarked from the ship on that same morning.

They had just partaken of the scanty meal put into the cell by an unseen jailer, and were

now occupied each with his own thoughts—which were none of the pleasantest—as they sat upon two low stones that served for chairs, which, with a larger block of stone for a table, constituted the sole furniture of the cell.

The cell itself was like a tomb. It was about ten feet long by eight broad and twelve high, lit by one small window which looked out on to a dirty, dingy quadrangle, surrounded on all sides by the buildings of the Holy Office. The unglazed window itself was barred up with stout iron bars, which were deeply sunk into the wall, the thickness of which was fully four feet, and much too thick and strong for them ever to dream of breaking through without the aid of tools, plenty of time, and no interruption. The ledge below the grating was foul, and piled high with the accumulated filth of years; and the cell walls were damp and slimy, covered with a growth of fungus nourished by the hot and steamy moisture. The building itself was some hundreds of years old, having been an Aztec temple before the Spaniards had taken it over and adapted it for its present purpose. The cell door, which had been of stone in Mexican times, consisted now of a thick and solid slab of teak, strongly bound with iron, and stout enough to resist the attack of a battering-ram.

Chancing once to glance upward and toward the door—having heard some slight sound outside,—Roger was just in time to catch sight of an eye— a dark, shining, and sinister orb—glued to a small hole in the door, which he had not before noticed, and which was apparently covered when not in use for spying purposes. It was evident that a watch, constant and strict, was to be maintained upon them, and that therefore any attempt at escape on their part, which they might be ill-advised enough to hazard, would be discovered at once and promptly frustrated. In fact, it appeared that escape was too absolutely hopeless and impossible to be thought of seriously. As Roger glanced up, the eye vanished, leaving them with the unpleasant sensation of being continually watched.

“We are being spied upon, Harry,” whispered Roger. “I saw an eye at the door just now.” And he indicated the place to his friend.

Harry rose and went toward the door, and as he did so both lads caught the sound of a retreating footstep.

“If we had anything suitable,” replied Harry, “we might close it up. But I suppose it would be quite useless for us to do so; they would only clear it out again, and very likely torture us for our pains.”

“Well,” remarked Roger, “if they do here, as they did at La Guayra—that is, always pass our food in through a trap in the wall, and never enter the cell,—we might risk doing it and see what happens. They can but open the hole once more. And we can make no plans, nor indeed can we do anything, while we are watched constantly; so we might try it at all events.”

At this moment, as they stood gazing at the tiny aperture, there was a slight click at the back of them, and, turning round quickly, they saw a platter of food and jug of water

inside the cell, and close against the wall; but of the aperture through which it had been passed they could discover no trace in that dim light, even after close and careful examination.

“It is as we thought,” said Roger; “it seems to be the custom in these Spanish prisons never to allow the prisoners to see or speak to anyone, even the jailer. You may depend upon it that we shall never have anyone entering this cell until they come to conduct us to the torture-chamber.” And he shuddered; the recollection associated with the word “torture” was exceedingly unpleasant.

“In that case,” agreed Harry, “we will try the effect of plugging that hole, and see what happens. But first we had better take our meal while we have the chance.”

Their dinner consisted of a slab of some kind of coarse, dark-coloured, ill-flavoured bread, and a bowl of maize-meal porridge such as has constituted the staple food of the natives of that part of the world for centuries.

They ate their food, but, hungry as they were, found great difficulty in swallowing the porridge, so exceedingly unpalatable was it.

Hunger, however, provides an excellent sauce, and they managed between them to finish the supply, and then emptied the water pitcher forthwith, as they were very thirsty.

“Now to hit upon a good way to stop up that villainous spy-hole,” said Harry, and looked around the cell for something which would answer the purpose.

They could see nothing suitable until their eyes fell upon the accumulation of dirt upon the window-ledge.

“Ah! I have it!” ejaculated Roger; and, climbing on Harry's shoulders, he reached down a handful of the dust.

“Now mix this,” he went on, “with that liquor left from the porridge. That contains a good deal of sticky matter, and will make this stuff hold together.”

They mixed the dirt and dust and floury water all together, and, leaving it for a time to harden slightly, found that the mass held fairly firmly together, and might make a reasonably good plug.

“We must, however, wait for darkness, Roger,” said Harry. “If we put this in after dark it will not be noticed until the morning, by which time it ought to have hardened sufficiently to prevent its being pushed out again. If we were to do it now, it would be noticed when our friend the spy comes round for a final look at us, and would doubtless be removed again before it had had a chance of setting.”

Darkness soon fell, and then the two silently and carefully pushed in the already nearly solid plug of earth. They had sufficient to fill the little opening completely, for they heard some of it patter down on to the stone floor outside.

“There,” said Harry, when they had finished, “if they do not find that before morning, it

should be hard, and then I doubt whether they will trouble to bore it out again after it has set; but we shall see."

It was now perfectly dark in the cell, for even on the most brilliant moonlight nights the light could not reach the cell, because of the high walls all round the quadrangle outside, which prevented the rays from streaming in.

Being exceedingly tired, and rather sleepy, the two friends spread their jerkins on the block of stone forming the table, as it was far too damp to lie on the floor, and were soon fast asleep in one another's arms.

They were awakened the next morning by the sound of the trap shutting after the morning's supply of food had been put in; and their first thought, before even glancing at the meal, was to see if the plug had been disturbed. To their great joy, so far as they could tell, it had not been touched; and, upon testing it, it proved to be perfectly hard and quite immovable.

"It will take them a little time to get that out, even if they try to do so," said Roger; "but I trust that they will not attempt it. If they do not, we are at least safe from observation, if not from being overheard. But, to be on the safe side, I think it would be wisdom on our part to converse only in whispers."

"I quite agree with you there," replied Harry; "one never knows who may be listening. And now let us turn our attention to breakfast, and see whether we have anything different this morning from that miserable and tasteless meal porridge and black bread."

They examined the food and found that, this time, instead of the porridge, a bunch of bananas had been provided; but, for the rest, the black bread and water were there as before, and nothing beside.

However, they ate heartily of what they found, and finished it all, feeling much refreshed after it. But ever hanging over them was the black cloud, which they could not forget; the remembrance of the tortures through which they had already passed, and the anticipation of others to follow.

They made a further careful examination of the cell; and this time, by dint of patient search, they located the aperture through which their food was thrust every day. It was constructed with much skill, and only by very close inspection could they make out the small joints indicating the position of the trap. Before they found it, some vague idea had formed itself in their minds of watching for the time when it should be opened to pass in their meals, and endeavouring to scramble through before it was closed again. It was a hare-brained scheme, and would never have suggested itself were it not for the fact that their minds had been persistently dwelling upon the chances of escape, and had become so dulled by long confinement that they were not now so clear as they had been in happier times. A second glance served to prove to them the utter futility of any attempt at escape by that means, as the size of the opening was insufficient to permit the passage of their bodies.

This discovery came as a severe disappointment to them, and they remained for some considerable time sitting on their respective stone stools, a prey to black despair and utter hopelessness.

They were aroused from their dismal reverie by hearing a stealthy footstep approaching the door.

It stopped outside, and, by leaning their heads against the wood-work, and listening intently, they heard a slight creaking sound, as of wood against wood, which, to their now alert senses, indicated that the watcher was gently pushing back the slide which concealed the spy-hole. There was then a pause, and the lads looked across at one another and could not forbear a smile, even in their state of misery and suspense, at the idea of the spy's astonishment and disappointment at finding all dark when he expected to be able to see into the cell.

Presently there ensued a slight scratching, and they knew that the spy was attempting to remove the obstruction.

Their plug, however, answered its purpose well, and showed no signs of budging.

Then the scratching noise began afresh, and somewhat more loudly, as the man became impatient of the delay, and dispensed with caution. After several ineffectual efforts on the spy's part the noise ceased, and the stealthy footsteps were heard receding in the distance.

“Well, Roger,” said Harry, when the sound of the spy's footsteps had ceased, “we got the better of him that time; did we not?”

“Ay,” responded Roger gloomily; “but we must not expect that the matter will rest there. They will be certain to return and drill that hole out again, or make a fresh one, and we are sure to be punished in some way for what we have done—either by starvation or torture. I am by no means sure that we were wise in stopping up that spy-hole, or that by doing so we have served any good purpose.”

“Oh, come now, Roger, old fellow, you must not think like that!” answered Harry. “Now that they have seen that we know they watch us, they may not attempt it again; and they would surely not do very much to us for a little thing like that. Besides, it is intolerable to think that we are being spied upon all day long, and that whatever we do or say is known. There would be absolutely no chance whatever of our making a successful attempt to escape at any time if we had not closed the hole. At any rate, it is done now, and it is no good our worrying over it; we must just wait and see what happens. If they are going to make a fresh place of observation, or punish us for what we have done, they will not defer it long; so to-day will, in my opinion, decide the matter. Meanwhile we must wait; and, while we are unobserved, we had better make the most of our time.”

“You are right, Harry, old friend,” said Roger; “but for my part I do not feel much like talking, or anything else. If we had something really useful to occupy us to pass the time

it would be different; but as it is, well—what can we do?"

"Well, I'll tell you," answered Harry. "We will wait for a little while, in order to ascertain whether they mean to do anything about this matter of closing up the spy-hole; and, if no one comes, I think we could not do better than make another attempt to translate that cryptogram of ours. We have made many attempts already, it is true, and it has always got the better of us. But then, we have never, until now, really had the time to spare to attend to it properly. Now would be a very good opportunity; we have plenty of time—which drags heavily enough, God knows. This would serve to make it pass; and if we succeed—and should be able also to effect our escape—we should then be ready to secure that treasure without delay. For although, so far as we are aware, we are the only ones who know anything whatever about the affair, delay is dangerous; someone might easily even get there before us and discover the treasure by accident. One never knows. What think you, Roger?"

"Why, Harry, lad," said Roger, brightening up considerably, "I think that it's a very good idea. I am surprised that I never thought of it myself. We had better wait a little, however, and see what happens, before we extract the paper from my jacket; we do not want to be taken by surprise."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when, from somewhere in the building, evidently some distance away, came a long wailing cry, low at first, then rising gradually higher and higher, until it became a piercing scream—the scream of a man in mortal agony.

The long-drawn shriek continued for some moments, and then died down again to a low, moaning sound; then it rose again, and changed into a series of short yapping cries of anguish, almost like the barking of a dog; then it ceased.

"What on earth is that, Harry?" ejaculated Roger, looking at his friend, on whose forehead the cold perspiration was now standing in beads. "What an awful sound!"

"I am afraid, my friend," replied Harry, "that it means that some poor mortal is undergoing torture almost greater than he can bear. What devils these inquisitors are! If I could but be at the head of a few hundred English seamen at this moment, would I not pull this place of torture about their ears; and would I not put a few of them to the torture themselves, just to teach them by experience what it feels like, and as a warning to the rest! God help that poor wretch, whoever he may be! What a fearful, awful sound it is! This is getting dreadful," he went on, as another shrill and blood-curdling scream broke on their ears, quavering as it was with the extremity of fearful agony, yet not quite so loud as before, as though the unfortunate individual were losing his strength.

"To be imprisoned here, and not to be able to do anything to help the poor fellow! Oh, they are fiends in human shape!" cried Roger, stamping his foot on the ground in impotent fury.

Then came a sound which made the lads start and look apprehensively at each other. It

was the noise of footsteps approaching down the long passage at the end of which their own cell was situated.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN. IN THE TORTURE-CHAMBER OF VERA CRUZ.

Both lads felt their hearts stop beating, and a cold chill seized their bodies as they heard the footsteps pass other cell doors without pausing, and continue down the passage towards their own.

Those dreadful cries still rang in their ears, and they felt that if the approaching person was coming to conduct them also to the torture, they could not bear it. They were still, it must be remembered, only lads, and the sound of those cries of agony had racked their nerves—as they might those of much older men—more than they themselves knew.

They felt their very hair rising on their scalps, and a sensation of deadly sickness and faintness swept over them.

Harry was the first to recover his presence of mind, and he spoke to Roger.

“Come, come, Roger, lad,” said he; “pull yourself together, my friend. If they are indeed coming for us, we must make up our minds to endure it as best we can, even as we have done before. And perchance we are mistaken, and they do not intend to torture us at all.”

Roger came out of his dismal reverie of foreboding, and his face became once more immobile. A few heartbeats and he was as well prepared as Harry for what might happen.

Once, for a moment, the footsteps paused, and their hearts gave a great bound of thankfulness. The messenger, then, was not coming for them after all!

Their sensation of relief, however, was of but brief duration.

After a pause, lasting but a few moments, those inexorable footsteps resumed their approach once more, and nearer and nearer they came toward the door of the last cell.

Roger and Harry glanced at one another, rose from their respective stools, and stood upright facing the door. They had just time to give each other a firm and reassuring hand-clasp, when the key grated in the rusty lock outside, the bolts were slipped back with a grinding noise, and the door creaked open on its hinges, disclosing, against the semi-darkness of the long corridor, the form of a man, robed from head to foot in black. Even his head and face were invisible, covered by a kind of black cloth helmet terminating in a peak, and with two slits cut in it for the eyes. Through these slits they could discern a pair of fiery orbs, shining like those of a cat in the darkness, looking full at them, as though to read their inmost thoughts.

If the mysterious visitor anticipated seeing any signs of alarm on the lads' faces, he was disappointed, for the two stood up facing him, and gave him back glance for glance.

Just for a single instant the same thought leapt through both their brains: “Why not make

a rush, knock the dark visitant down and stun him, and attempt to find our way out of the building before aught is discovered?" Indeed they both exchanged glances at that instant.

It seemed, however, as though the masked man read their thoughts; for, stepping to one side of the door, he pointed silently down the corridor, and there they saw what at first they had not observed, namely, a file of similarly masked figures on each side of the passage, standing against the walls, with naked swords in their hands.

It was of no use. Escape that way was, on the face of it, hopeless. The masked messenger read the expression on the boys' faces as they looked, and they could have sworn that a cruel smile lurked behind that black mask. Then came a voice from the figure, in pure English, without a trace of any foreign accent:

"You are both required to attend a scene of punishment. It is the order of the Grand Inquisitor, and you are required to witness it as earnest of what you yourselves will undergo here should you be foolish enough to disobey, or in any way attempt to thwart, the wishes or designs of the Holy Inquisition." Here he crossed himself. "A warning is but seldom given to heretics; so accept this one as it is meant; for your own good I tell you this. Now follow me, and be careful that you make no attempt at escape, for it is absolutely impossible for you to succeed, and you would but bring a heavy punishment on yourselves. And, above all, whatever you see or hear, keep a still tongue in your heads; do not presume to speak to anyone where you are going. If you obey implicitly it may be that you will be leniently dealt with."

The masked man turned, beckoning over his shoulder for them to follow, and then preceded them up the passage.

They were a great deal relieved to find that they were not to be this time tortured; but they knew only too well what punishment it was that they were to witness, and they felt their hearts sicken within them. They both knew that the advice they had just received was good, and resolved, if possible, to abide by it. They therefore followed their leader along the corridor in silence, while the masked men with swords fell in behind them as soon as they had passed, effectually preventing any attempt on their part at escape.

Up the passage they went, reached the end of it, and then turned to the right, afterwards climbing up a long flight of steps. This brought them to another long passage, but much wider than the one leading to their own cell. It was also covered with some kind of matting, and several doors opened into the corridor.

Along this corridor they went, and came presently to another large door, through which they passed, finding themselves in a large and lofty room.

This was somewhat dark, and, after the light through which they had just passed, they could not for a few moments discern the objects contained therein. Then, as their eyes became more accustomed to the half-light, they perceived, hanging on the wall, strange instruments of iron and wood, and in different places in the apartment were standing

curious-looking machines, the use of which they could only imagine with a shudder.

The door through which they had just entered was closed and locked, and, turning round, the two friends saw that the masked guards had vanished, as also had the guide who had conducted them thither. But the chamber was tenanted by several funereal figures in black, all with their faces hidden, and whose movements even seemed to suggest something horrible and repulsive.

In silence one of the masked figures took down an instrument from the wall, and walked to the opposite end of the room, where stood another group of men in black, with cowled heads.

The lads watched, as if fascinated, and with an inward feeling that something dreadful was about to occur. They could perceive a certain dim outline of something that looked like a framework of timber, but its complete shape was hidden from them by the figures of those who were standing in between.

All the masked men appeared to the boys to be waiting for something or someone before they proceeded with whatever they were preparing to do.

As they stood there, frozen into rigidity and silence by a dreadful and indefinable sensation of horror, they heard a fluttering sigh coming from the opposite end of the room, apparently from somewhere near the mysterious framework.

This sigh, faint at first, suddenly changed into a most fearful sound— something between a moan and the noise a man makes when the breath is suddenly driven from his body. The sound was so full of horror that they felt their blood literally curdle within them. It was all the more terrifying because they could not tell who or what it was that produced it. In spite of themselves they moved a few steps nearer, and then a sight met their eyes which turned them sick.

What they had taken for a wooden framework was indeed a framework, but one for a terrible use.

It consisted of four pieces of timber merely, two long and two short. These were fastened together in the form of a rectangle, thus producing an article somewhat resembling a bed-frame, only rather narrower; and the wood-work was much more massive. Two iron rings were fixed in the centre of each of the short pieces, and to each of these were attached stout straps of raw hide.

And there, stretched upon this framework, and supported in position solely by his hands and ankles, around which were fastened the raw hide strips attached to the rings, lay the figure of a man!

The body was perfectly naked; and as the boys looked, unable to turn their eyes away through sheer horror at the sight, which held them as though fascinated, the groups of cowled men separated and, seizing the lads, pushed them forward until they stood close to the framework and had a full view of the whole dreadful scene. A voice behind them

uttered the words:

“Look! Take warning!” But it is very doubtful whether either Harry or Roger heard the words; their brains seemed paralysed by the sight that met their eyes.

The figure was that of a man, evidently in the prime of life; the legs were stretched so far apart by the framework that it was extraordinary that flesh and blood could endure the strain and still hang together. The arms were also stretched out above the man's head to such an extent that they seemed to be literally parting from the poor body at the shoulders. The muscles had started up, and seemed to be bursting through the skin, and the flesh was stretched so tightly over the bones that it seemed a skeleton rather than a human living body upon which they gazed.

But it was not this sight of a living, breathing, sentient human body strained and stretched to the point of being torn asunder that excited the lads' commiseration and horror, and caused them inwardly to register a solemn and awful vow of vengeance upon the human fiends around them should the opportunity ever arise. No, terrible as was that sight, there were others—horrors that only the most debased and cruel imagination could possibly invent, and to which no pen could possibly do justice, even were any good purpose to be achieved by the attempted recital of them—that caused the lads' souls to revolt at once and for ever against a people that could perpetrate such diabolical cruelties.

Another deep groan issued from the lips of the hapless sufferer, and he opened his eyes, which had until now been closed, and then they saw that a certain suspicion that for some moments had been growing in their minds was but too well founded. Yes, yes! Oh, horror! it was de Soto, that noble, brave, and chivalrous Spaniard whom they had last seen retiring with the rest of their prisoners into the depths of the jungle of Cuba!

Harry uttered a little cry, and, swaying for a moment, fell heavily into the arms of Roger, who laid him gently on the stone floor.

At this, one of the cowled inquisitors stepped forward; but at that moment a door opened and a man entered, clad in rich and costly vestments, his identity unconcealed in any way by cowl or cloak.

Roger looked up, and could scarcely credit his senses.

Where—where had he seen that sinister and evil countenance before? As he looked, so did the man who had just entered look at Roger, a new light dawning in his evil eyes.

Then Roger recognised the man; he had seen him before. It was Alvarez!

The new-comer spoke in Spanish: “Has the man yet confessed?”

And one of the masked men replied: “No, your excellency; he has not as yet. But we hope that during the next torture he will speak; he is but now only just recovering from the last.”

“Continue, then,” commanded Alvarez. “But first remove those two boys to their cell, and I charge you, on your lives, to see that they escape not; for of all those whom I have ever wished to have in my power I wanted that one most”—pointing to Roger. “Therefore, keep him safe; keep both of them safe; for I shall require them soon.”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN. THE TRANSLATION OF THE CRYPTOGRAM.

In obedience to the commands of Alvarez, two of the black-cloaked men seized Roger, each of them taking him by an arm, and led him back to the cell, whilst two more followed with the unconscious body of poor Harry.

When they arrived in the cell, the men who were carrying Harry's body simply flung it down on the stone table with careless violence, and then, without glancing back, left the apartment, and, closing the door, locked and bolted it again on the outside.

Roger's first thought was for his friend, whose head had been badly cut owing to the force with which he had been flung on the stone table.

He instinctively glanced round the cell, and his eyes fell upon the jug of water, which, with their food, had been placed there during their visit to the torture-chamber. With an exclamation of thankfulness he seized upon the jug, and, stripping off his doublet, tore away the sleeve of his undershirt; then, dipping that in the water, he bound it round the head of his friend over the jagged gash.

The sensation of cold produced by the soaking bandage restored Harry to consciousness, and, heaving a sigh, he opened his eyes; then memory returned, and he gave a great shudder as he remembered the awful scene upon which he had gazed but a short time since. His wandering eye caught sight of Roger's familiar form; he called his friend to him, and Roger assisted him to his feet. Harry quickly recovered, but said that he felt rather sick and faint after what he had seen, and his head was aching rather badly.

“Oh, Roger, what fiends in human shape are those men!” he exclaimed. “They cut and slash and burn the living bodies of their fellow-men until they lose all semblance of human beings. Surely some judgment from heaven will some day fall upon them for committing such awful deeds!”

“Ay, doubtless it will; though not, perhaps, in this world,” answered Roger. “Now, if we could but find Mr Cavendish, let him know what is going on here, and march up with a hundred or two of our lads from the fleet, we would ourselves visit such a judgment upon them as would leave room for no other. But, Harry, I have somewhat to tell you, dear lad. After you had fainted at sight of poor de Soto, a man came in, recognised us both, and ordered us to be taken back here, as he would `require us both in the future'. That man was Alvarez! I see it all now. He suspects de Soto of possessing the cryptogram, and has tortured him to make him confess its whereabouts. De Soto, not having it, cannot say where it is. Now, you and I were on the *Gloria del Mundo* before she sank. I don't know whether Alvarez saw you, but he did me the honour of desiring to

slay me as I lay helpless before he left the ship. He was frustrated in his humane desire, however; but, knowing that I escaped after all from the *Gloria*, his suspicious mind will almost certainly jump to the conclusion that I have that paper, seeing that de Soto has persistently, and despite the most frightful tortures, evidently denied all knowledge of it. I can see that something of the kind is in his thoughts, because of his stringent commands for us to be `kept safe', as he will `require us in the future'. So we know what to look forward to, my friend, if we cannot make our escape. The same sort of torture as that through which poor de Soto has just passed will be ours, God help us! Now, what counsel have you to offer under the circumstances?"

"Well, my friend," answered Harry, "I should say that our best plan would be to endeavour to translate that cryptogram, commit its meaning to memory, and then destroy the paper. Then, if we are asked for it, we can say that we have it not, and allow them to search us as proof that what we say is true.

"Also, if Alvarez finds that the paper is really not in our hands, and if, in addition to that, we tell him that we know not where it is, perhaps we may avoid being tortured to make us confess its hiding-place; for I am sure that poor de Soto was tortured for no other reason than that Alvarez thought he had the cryptogram, and wished to make him confess where it is. That's my advice to you, Roger; and the sooner we set about trying to translate that cipher the sooner we shall finish and be able to destroy it, and the safer we shall be. How fortunate it is that they have not decided to bore out that spy-hole again! We shall now be able to work at the paper without danger of being seen."

"Let us, then, start on the matter at once," replied Roger, "and, as our food has only recently been brought to us, we shall not be interrupted again for some hours, unless, of course, Alvarez should send for us; but I do not think he will want to question us to-day; he has not yet finished with that poor wretch de Soto. Now, Harry, just rip up the seam of my jerkin, and get that paper out, and let us start the business at once."

Harry took out his knife, which, strangely enough, he had been permitted to retain, and, carefully cutting the stitches, removed the paper, unfolded it, and laid it open upon the stone table. Then both lads leant over the document and concentrated all their energies on the task before them.

"First of all," said Roger, "what language is it most likely to be written in? Jose Leirya was himself a Spaniard, it is true; but from what I could gather from that man William Evans, about whom I told you, his crew was invariably made up for the most part of Englishmen; so it is reasonable to assume that English would be the language he would have to employ on board his ship. He had been sailing the high seas as a pirate for a good many years; so one would imagine that at the time when he wrote that cipher he would know probably more English than Spanish. What, therefore, more natural than that he should write his secret in English? At any rate, I think we should not be far wrong in assuming that it is written in English; and so we will take it for granted that such is the case. And if we find that we are wrong, we will try some other language—

say Spanish.

“But the language is not all-important; it is the finding what signs or letters those figures stand for that will be the difficulty. Now let us have a look at the paper. There is the first line of figures.

“1581. 2227 1819 1919 2622 1820 1335 1138 1918.

“Let us take that first, and see what we can make of it. I should say that the first number, standing, as it is, by itself, is the year in which it was written, that is to say, the year 1581. Now, you observe that these figures are all in groups of four. We will say that each figure represents a letter, which is not very likely, as not all the words could possibly consist of four letters each; but they might be the initial letters of certain words, giving sufficient of the word to enable one to guess the rest. Now there are 26 letters in the alphabet. Taking A as being 1, B as 2, C as 3, and so on up to Z as 26, let us apply this to the cipher.

“By doing this with the first group, we get B B B G, or, if we take the figures in groups of two—V—something else; but there is no letter corresponding to the number 27, so that hypothesis fails. Again, B B B G is no whole word, nor even the beginning of one; evidently, therefore, we are not right in that surmise.

“Now let us add together the first and second pair of figures in every group; for it is only by testing every possible combination of these exasperating figures that we shall arrive at their meaning. By doing this we get 4 and 9, which correspond to D and I. Now that looks more promising, so let us take the next group 1819. These, added, make 9 and 10, corresponding to I and J. This gives us D I I J. That again, Harry, does not seem to mean very much, does it?”

“No,” replied Harry, “it certainly does not. Still, let us go on; we may make something out of it yet. The next group is 1919, which makes 10 and 10 or J J; and the next group makes 8 and 4, or H and D.

“Now let us put all these together. By doing so, we get D I I J J H D, which certainly does not look like any language. We can make no words out of those letters, whichever way we arrange them, so it seems that we are wrong again in our method.”

“Never mind, my friend,” said Roger, “let us still go on; it will not do to be discouraged so soon. There certainly is some translation to that mass of figures, I feel certain, and I am determined to find it. Now, how can we go about it next? I have it! Let us take each group as representing one letter instead of two or four, as we did before. What shall we then get?

“We now have 13, 19, 20, 12, 11, 12, 13, 19 for our first line, representing, in letters, M S T L K L M S.

“This, again, conveys no meaning; nor can any words be formed whichever way we arrange the letters.

“Now, instead of adding each figure separately, let us add each set of two, that is, 22 and 27 and 18 and 19, then 19 and 19, and so on, and see what we get then.”

“But,” objected Harry, “if we do that, we shall get numbers which have no corresponding letters. I mean that by doing as you suggest we should have 49, 37, 38, and our numbers corresponding to letters only go up as far as 26, which stands for Z, so that method cannot be right. It seems to me that this thing is beyond us, Roger; I do not see what we can make of such an awful jumble of figures.”

“Gently, my lad, gently,” remonstrated Roger, “we will not give it up; we may as well be worrying over this cryptogram as doing nothing, and better, because it helps to pass the time, and keeps our thoughts from— from—other things,” he ended rather lamely.

For a few moments they remained silent and cogitating. Do what they would to distract their minds from dwelling upon that ghastly scene in the torture-chamber, the picture was constantly intruding itself upon their imaginations; nor could they forget the ominous words of Alvarez when he instructed the guard to keep them safely, as he would “require them in the future.”

But, after some little time spent in this dreary form of reverie, Roger started up once more.

“Come, Harry,” said he, “it is of no use for us to give way to these miserable forebodings; let us get back to the cipher again. It will keep us from thinking; and, besides, we may not have another such favourable opportunity in the future.”

Harry did not reply, but dismissed his gloomy thoughts, though evidently with an effort, and once again the two leant over their precious paper and cudgelled their brains in the effort to find the proper translation.

“Now,” resumed Roger, “it seems to me that we may possibly be on the correct track after all with our last grouping of the figures; that is to say, adding the first two and last two figures in each group to one another, and getting a certain number. It looks to me more likely than any of the other methods we tried.”

“I confess that I am unable to see it,” answered Harry. “We have already ascertained that by that method we get, first of all, the numbers 49, 37, and 38, and, as I remarked, we have no letters corresponding to those numbers.”

“No, I agree with you there,” replied Roger. “But how are we to know that Jose selected the number 1 for his letter A, 2 for the letter B, and so on? It is not very likely that he would, as that method of procedure would make the solving of the cipher a fairly easy matter, and we should have translated it by now. It is much more likely that he took some other number for his letter A, say 15, or 40, or any number rather than 1.”

Harry retorted: “Well, in that case we are just as far off the solution as at first, for how can we possibly tell, except by experiment, what numbers correspond to the right letters? And it would take us weeks to discover it by that method.”

“I agree with you that we certainly should be a very considerable time in arriving at the solution if we tried to do it simply by experiment,” said Roger. “But I do not propose to set about it in that way. Now think, Harry, what letter occurs most frequently in the English tongue.”

“Well,” replied his friend, “I have never given any thought to the matter, so I couldn't say immediately; but I should say that the letter A occurs as often as any.”

“It certainly does often occur, as you say,” agreed Roger; “but the letter E occurs more often than any other letter, and, knowing that, I am going to look for the number that occurs most often in the cipher, and I feel sure that that number will be found to correspond to the letter E, provided always, of course, that this cryptogram is written in English.”

“Bravo, Roger,” shouted Harry; “well thought of! Now, I should never have hit upon that method if I had been worrying at this thing for ever.”

“S-s-sh—!” Roger whispered. “Be quiet, man; do you want to bring those spies and jailers upon us? For you assuredly will, if you make much of that row.”

“I am sorry,” said Harry. “For the moment I had forgotten where we were, and I felt so sure that you had hit upon the right method of translating the cipher that I shouted without thinking.”

Roger interrupted his friend: “Do not speak for a few moments. Even then I thought I caught the sound of some person outside the door; I pray Heaven that they may not come into the cell!”

The two listened most intently for some minutes, with their ears pressed up against the wall and door, but caught no sound from outside. So, after waiting a little time longer, to make perfectly certain, they both returned to the task in hand.

“Now let us go on where we left off just now,” Harry suggested. “You say that we want to find out the number that occurs most often in the cryptogram, and allow that to represent E.”

“That is so,” replied Roger. “Now, let us have a look through it again.”

They both counted up, and presently Harry, who had finished first, exclaimed—this time in a carefully lowered voice:

“Well, the number 34 occurs oftener than any other; that is, if you are adding the first two and last two figures of each group together.”

“Wait a moment,” said Roger, still busily counting. Then, after a pause, he added:

“Yes, you are right, Harry; the number 34 does occur most frequently; and we can, I am sure, take it as representing the letter E. Now, going upon that assumption, A will be represented by 30, B by 31, C by 32, D by 33, and so on. Now I believe that we have the translation in our own hands. Let us make the experiment—but we ought to write it

down as we go along, or else we shall forget part of it perhaps."

"Ay, there is the difficulty," said Harry; "we have no writing materials and nothing which we can use instead of them."

"Not so fast, not so fast, lad," his friend replied. "That is a difficulty which we must find means to overcome. Let us have a look round, and first see if there is anything that we can use for a pen. If we can find such a thing, the ink will be an easy matter afterwards."

"Indeed?" exclaimed Harry incredulously. "I pray you explain how in the world you are going to get a supply of ink?"

"Never mind," retorted Roger with a quiet smile; "you leave that to me. Get me something that will serve for a pen, and I will find the ink quickly enough."

Seeing that Roger was not going to divulge the secret of the ink, Harry joined him in a search of the cell, looking for something that would answer the purpose.

Just at that moment there was a "click", and, turning quickly round, they perceived that another meal had been pushed in through the trap-door.

"We will leave that for a time," said Roger, intent upon his search. "The food can wait; but we cannot delay with what we are now doing; for we can never know when we may be interrupted."

Harry agreed, and the search proceeded without very conspicuous success. A few fragments of straw, a quantity of woolly dust, a few tiny splinters of wood, and a small and extremely rusty nail were all that rewarded them.

"Ah!" ejaculated Harry, "I had forgotten that window-sill; there is more likely to be something in that accumulation of stuff up there than in the cell itself. Come and stand below it, so that I can mount on your shoulders, Roger; and then I can rake about there and see if I can find anything for our purpose.

"And, now that I come to think of it, we have never yet had a look out of that window. We can only see those high walls; there may be something to interest us below there, in the courtyard, or whatever it may be."

Roger moved quickly to the other end of the cell, and, standing below the grated opening, allowed Harry to clamber up his body and finally to stand upon his shoulders.

Harry then grasped the bars of the grating, to take some of the pressure off his friend's back, and began to burrow in the heap of dust and rubbish that had accumulated for years upon years on the sill. Suddenly Roger heard his name whispered softly—"Roger, Roger, Roger", and became aware of the fact that Harry was hurriedly preparing to descend from his perch. Roger eased his friend to the floor, and then asked what was the matter.

"Why," said Harry, "there is a man below who appears to be waiting there for some definite purpose; and when he saw me at the window he began to make signs, which,

unfortunately, I could not understand; and then held out his hands, as though to catch something he expected me to throw out. I cannot make out at all what it is he wants; you had better have a look, Roger."

"Yes," answered Roger, "let me get on your shoulders at once, Harry; this may be an important matter. Perchance it may be someone who is willing to help us to escape, and wishes to communicate with us."

Harry immediately helped his chum up to his own former position. Roger stood there for some considerable time, looking out, and then whispered to Harry to let him descend.

"Well, did you see him?" enquired Harry, when Roger had got down.

"Yes," replied Roger. "I just caught a glimpse of him as he vanished. He seemed to be a ragged sort of fellow, so far as I could make out. I wish he had remained a little longer; but I suspect that something must have alarmed him, and so caused him to move away. I wonder what it is he wanted! Are you certain that it was to you he was making those signs?"

"Quite certain," Harry answered. "He was looking directly at me; and when he saw that I had noticed him, he, as I said, held out his hands— so—as though to catch something that I was to throw out. But what could he have wanted us to give him? There is nothing in this cell which we could fling to him, except our meal, which, by the way, we have not yet touched. I wonder if he expected us to write anything, and throw it out to him!"

"I don't see how he could expect that," said Roger. "If we had not chanced to look out, we should never have been aware that he was there; so why should we have anything to write to an individual of whose existence we were unaware until a few moments ago?"

"True," responded Harry. "I cannot make it out at all. Did you notice which way he went?"

"Yes," answered Roger, "I did notice that. You know that the court below is enclosed by those four walls of the building? Well, there is a small gateway on the right-hand side looking from here, in the wall directly opposite, and I was just in time to see him vanish through that. It may be that he will return again, however. If it is really some person who is anxious to assist us to escape—and I cannot imagine that it would be any other—he will be sure to come back as soon as it is safe for him to do so. But I must confess that I cannot understand why he seemed to be waiting for a message. If he had been trying to get a paper or message to us it would have been a different matter; for the first arrangements for escape must come from outside, and not from us. We could do nothing without first learning what arrangements can be made by our supposititious friend outside. Left to ourselves, we can contrive no plan of escape. But the man has disappeared for the time being, and we can do naught until we get into communication with him, so let us get on with that cipher. I have found something that will do nicely for a pen. While I was standing on your shoulders, and after the mysterious man had gone, I had a look among that stuff on the window-sill, and was lucky enough to find this

feather. It has been a long time there, judging by its appearance, and must have been dropped by some bird which by this time is doubtless dead. I should say that some other prisoner was once in the habit of feeding birds from this grating; and probably it was one of them that dropped this feather, which will be of so much service to us. We can cut it into a pen, and I will now tell you where we can find our ink. Just take this knife of yours, make a small cut in my arm, and—there is plenty of ink for us, although it is red; but that does not matter."

With the knife Roger then carefully trimmed the quill of the small feather down into a fairly effective pen, and then turned his attention once more to the cipher.

Harry, who for some time past had been feeling the pangs of hunger rather severely, remonstrated with his friend.

"Look here, Roger," said he, "let us eat our dinner before going on with that translation. I am feeling very hungry."

"No, my friend," replied Roger, "there is no time like the present. For aught we know we may never have another opportunity to work on this cryptogram. Our food can wait, and we shall relish it the more when we have time to eat it; but let us get finished with this matter first."

Harry saw the wisdom of his chum's remark, and, casting one more longing glance at the food, rejoined Roger at the stone table, and both lads began to pore over the paper again.

"Now," remarked Roger, "you will notice that the lines of figures are far enough apart to allow us to write the letters corresponding to each group of them directly underneath, and that will be a great help to us; but we will write nothing until we are quite certain that we have hit upon the correct method of solving this cryptogram.

"You will remember, Harry, that by going over all the figures, we deduced that the number 34 represented the letter E. You will notice that this number, 34, is made up of many different groups of two figures, such as 17 and 17, 14 and 20, 12 and 22, 16 and 18, 15 and 19, 13 and 21, and so forth; but that, I fancy, is only done to make the solving of the cipher more difficult. Now, assuming the letter A to be 30, B to be 31, C to be 32, D to be 33, E, as we have reckoned, 34, let us apply this method to the figures and see what we get.

"We have already surmised that the number 1581 stands for no particular letter, but is really what it seems most likely to be, that is, the year in which this cryptogram was invented and written. Besides which, 15 and 81 added, according to the system we are now employing, would make 96, a number which has no letter corresponding to it.

"Now take the first group of figures, which is 2227. Divided into two groups of two figures each, and added to one another, as we intend to proceed, this makes 49. Now what letter corresponds to the number 49? We find that the letter I does. Take the next group, which is 1819. This resolves itself into 37, and H is the letter belonging to that

figure. From 1919 we get 38, and the letter I; and from 2622 comes 48, and the letter S. Now you see, Harry, that by this method we have already got the English word `This'; and from that it would seem that we are at last on the right track for translating the cryptogram. From the next two groups we get the word `is', and from the following three the word `the'. I think now, Harry, that we may begin and write down the translation as we go along; for I feel sure that we are right at last. It would be more than mere coincidence if the words `This is the' were not part of a connected and intelligible whole. So just hand me that knife, Harry, boy, and I will produce the necessary ink."

Harry did as he was requested; and, taking the weapon, Roger made a small but sufficiently deep incision in his left arm to produce the necessary amount of blood for their "ink". Dipping the improvised pen in his own blood, Roger began to write under the groups of figures the letters which corresponded to them; and, prompted by Harry, it was not long ere he had the whole translation written down. And when this was completed he wiped the blood off his arm, and hid the pen in the lining of his jerkin. Then with much satisfaction he read out the true meaning of the cryptogram which he had held for so long a time in his possession, and which Alvarez would have sold his soul to secure. It ran as follows:—

1581.

This is the key to the Treasure of me, Jose Leirya. This Treasure which is—"`of' is here understood, I suppose," put in Roger—great worth is of jewels most part of much price, taken by me in the South Seas. Many emeralds I took from a Prince of Mejico. Much gold also, buried deep hole under stone. Iron ring cave lonely inlet 75 degrees west. 20 degrees north. North-East end island Cuba. Stone 14 paces mouth 5 paces right wall entering.

"There!" said Roger in tones of exultation; "what do you say to my method now, Harry? We now have the treasure in our power, or rather when we get free once more."

"Yes," agreed Harry, "always providing that someone else has not got there before us."

"Which is not at all likely," answered Roger. "We are almost certain that this and the other are the only two copies of the cryptogram now in existence, and, as soon as we have learned by heart its translation, we will destroy the papers; and then nobody will ever come at it except by accident, which is most unlikely. Why, Harry!" he continued in excited tones; "lonely inlet must mean that very identical bay where we careened the ships, and where the savages attacked us. Just imagine, we may actually have walked over the spot where the treasure lies buried; you see it says `hole under stone iron ring cave'. It may have been the very cave that we were in when the natives besieged us, and we were rescued by the sailors. But I saw no iron ring anywhere in it; did you, Harry?"

"No," answered Harry, "I did not. But that stands for nothing, for there might have been a hundred stones and iron rings in that very cave on that occasion, and we should never have noticed them; we were otherwise much too fully occupied," he concluded with a

smile.

“I remember now,” continued Roger, “that old Cary told me a yarn about Jose Leirya—you, too, were present by the way—that night after we reached the bay; and he said that the pirate was known to have frequented those parts, and was supposed to have hidden some of his treasure somewhere about there. I thought it was only an old sailor's yarn at the time, I remember; but it seems to have been perfectly true.”

“Yes,” agreed Harry; “but I should not reckon on this treasure too much if I were you, Roger; remember we are in prison—it may be for the rest of our lives, unless that mysterious man we saw just now should really be a friend who wishes to assist us to escape. Besides, I am sure that Alvarez has a suspicion that we know something about the paper, and I cannot forget the sinister meaning of his words when he said that he would require us later. I know only too well what will happen when that time comes; and if he should treat us as he did poor de Soto—well, we should never touch that hoard, Roger.”

“Heaven preserve us both from a fate like that!” Roger ejaculated. “I would give up every hope of securing that wealth to avoid being tortured as he was. But I would not let Alvarez know where it is, even to save myself from all the agonies he could inflict upon me. I would endure even death rather than tell that villain, that cruel, inhuman scoundrel, where the treasure is; for I know quite well how he would use any money he might be able to lay his hands upon. But I won't talk about it. No, whatever may happen, Alvarez shall never know through me. What say you, Harry?”

“I am with you there, Roger,” the lad replied. “I, too, swear that I will never divulge the secret to Alvarez, whatever he may do. But excuse me, my friend; you said that, after the business with the paper had been got through with, we would have our dinner; and, as I said once before, I am hungry, so come let us fall to.”

“Wait one moment,” said Roger. “Do you think you know that translation by heart thoroughly; for I have committed it to memory, and if you have done the same we will destroy it, as it is much too dangerous a document to keep about us, now that we have incurred the suspicion of that fiend, Alvarez.”

“Yes,” answered Harry, “I know it perfectly;” and he repeated it to his friend. The paper was then at once torn up into the most minute particles. They were on the point of throwing them out of the window, but refrained, not so much because of the danger that they might be pieced together again, as that they might attract the attention of anybody who chanced to be about at the time. After a while, however, they found a deep crack between the cell wall and the floor, partly concealed by slime and dirt; and into this crack they pushed the remnants of the cryptogram, and then hid the small aperture again by covering it with more dirt scraped from the cell floor. Thus hidden it was exceedingly unlikely that anybody would ever find the pieces unless the exact spot was pointed out to him.

The two lads then turned with much lightened hearts to their meal. It was placed upon the stone table, and they began to share it between them. There was a bunch of bananas this time, a delicacy they had received but once before. Roger took them up to count and divide the fruit, when he exclaimed: “Why, whatever is this?”

“What?” asked Harry.

“Look at this,” rejoined Roger, holding something in his fingers. It was a piece of paper which had been skilfully hidden in the fruit, and on it a few lines of writing were to be seen.

CHAPTER NINETEEN. HELP FROM AN UNEXPECTED QUARTER—PLANS MADE FOR ESCAPE.

With wildly beating hearts, and with no further thoughts for their food, which was tumbled unceremoniously on to the floor, the lads tore open the folded paper, and eagerly scanned its contents. It ran as follows:—

> “To the two Englishmen at present imprisoned in the Inquisition at Vera Cruz. It is known all through the city here that the man Alvarez, who calls himself governor of the town and viceroy of the province, intends to have you both burnt alive at an auto-da-fe in the plaza five days from now. It was intended that you should be exhibited and tortured in public here, and sent back to La Guayra for final execution; but the news has come that your countryman, Cavendish, has captured a plate fleet of nineteen ships near Acapulco, and the populace demand that you should both be sacrificed in revenge, to which Alvarez has consented. Unless you can escape before the expiry of the five days you are doomed. There is one chance for you, if you can take it, and I am here to assist you. You can trust me implicitly. I am an English sailor who was made to renounce my religion through torture, and I am now in service here; but I have not forgotten my country. To escape, you must contrive to lower a thin cord from the window, the thinner the better, so that I can communicate with and send small articles to you. Leave this cord hanging from your window, at midnight on the third night from now, without fail; I can do nothing until then. I have contrived to get this message concealed in your food on this one occasion, but I shall never be able to do so again. So you must somehow or another manage to lower to the ground the thin cord of which I told you. Without that I cannot aid you.
>
> “I shall wait here for a time, so that you can throw down a note saying you have received my message; but say no more besides that. If I do not hear from you now, I shall return on the third night, and the

cord must be in its place by then. For the present, farewell!

"From a true friend."

This was a long message; but the man who wrote it had done so in such small letters that it occupied but little space. So small, indeed, was the writing that it was as much as they could do to decipher it.

When they had finishing reading this remarkable communication, the lads looked at each other for a moment in utter amazement.

Suddenly Roger ejaculated: "Ah, of course! Now I have it, Harry! The man that we saw waiting below the window—he was the person who wrote this; and he was waiting for the answer, as he said in the note. That is why he seemed to expect us to throw him something. Oh, why, why did we not think of looking sooner? But, of course, we expected nothing of the kind. Anyhow he says he will return on the third night from now. But where, Harry, are we going to get that cord that he wants us to hang from the window? Our escape hinges upon our getting it; and yet—where is it to come from? It is utterly impossible for us to get hold of a cord or line of any sort, so far as I can see. I wonder who the fellow is; and can we trust him?"

"Well," replied Harry, "you saw what he wrote in that message. In five days from now, unless we can meanwhile escape, we are doomed to die an awful death. The man would, I should say, have no object in betraying us; because, if we are already sentenced to death, they do not need any excuse for executing us. And I do not see what the man has to gain by deceiving us. No, Roger, I think the man is genuine enough; and in any case, if we are to suffer death, we may as well die in the attempt to escape as wait here for death to come to us. Is it not so, my friend?

"But perhaps we had better put off the further discussion of this until we have eaten the food. If, when they come to put in our next supply, they find this still uneaten, they may suspect that something is amiss, and remove us to another cell, or even separate us; either of which happenings would put an end for good and all to our chances of escape. Besides, we can talk as we are eating. Come, Roger, wake up, man, and fall to! Eat as much as you can, for we shall need all our strength to go through with what is before us."

Roger saw the wisdom of Harry's argument, and, replacing the food on the table, whence it had fallen in their eagerness to read the message, they set to, and very soon demolished the whole of it, replacing the platter, as usual, when they had finished, by the side of the trap, to be removed when the next meal was put in.

"Now," remarked Harry, "let us resume our discussion of this strange business, Roger. So far as I can see, the matter stands—Hullo! what's that? Did you hear that, Roger?" he suddenly interjected.

"Yes," replied Roger, "I did. What can it be, I wonder?"

There had come a slight sound from the direction of the grating, as of some hard substance striking against the iron bars.

Both lads hurried to the grating, and glanced up at it; but they could see nothing to account for the sound.

“This is most remarkable,” said Harry. “I heard the sound quite plainly. It was just like two pieces of iron striking together; and it sounded in the cell itself, or just outside the grating. Jump up on my shoulders again, Roger, and see if you can see anything or anybody about.”

Harry bent his back, and helped Roger to climb up on his shoulders. And Roger had just drawn himself upright with his face reaching to the level of the grating, when he uttered a suppressed exclamation, and half-fell, half-slid down to the floor from his perch, and started vigorously rubbing his cheek.

“Whatever is the matter with you, Roger?” ejaculated Harry somewhat crossly; “you nearly broke my back coming down like that.” Then, as he saw Roger rubbing his face, his tone changed, and he enquired anxiously, “What is it, old fellow; are you hurt?”

“No; not much, that is,” rejoined his friend. “Just as I got my head up level with the grating, and was going to look out, something hit me on the cheek with considerable force, and, losing my balance, I came tumbling down. I am sorry if I hurt you, Harry, old lad.”

As he finished speaking, both caught the sound of quick and stealthy footsteps retreating across the courtyard below, and retiring, so far as they could judge by the sound, through the gateway by which the writer of their message had disappeared.

“Ha!” said Harry; “someone has been below our window again. I wonder what it is this time? And what was it that struck you, Roger; could you tell?”

“No,” answered Roger. “I know only that something hit me hard on the cheek, and I thought for the moment that my eye was struck. No, I have not the least idea what it could have been.”

“Could it,” suggested Harry, “have been that fellow whom we saw this morning, come back again with another message; and was he trying to attract our attention, think you?”

“That I cannot say,” answered Roger; “but I certainly heard footsteps disappearing just now. Did not you?”

“Yes, I did,” answered Harry; “but I did not attach very much significance to the matter until the individual had gone. Well, we do not know what it was, and we have no time to waste; so let us give our whole attention to the matter of that message. Have you got the paper? Well, when we have finished with it, you had better hide it away somewhere safely, or, better still, destroy it altogether; for we never know when we may be searched. They may take it into their heads to do so at any moment.”

“Ay, we will do so,” agreed Roger; “'twill, as you say, be safer. But go on with what you were about to say before that interruption came.”

“Well,” resumed Harry, “as I was saying, it seems to stand like this: Alvarez, it would appear, has doomed us to die at an auto-da-fe, five days hence, in order to satisfy the demand of the people of this town for revenge, their desire for which has been aroused by the capture by Mr Cavendish of the plate fleet off Acapulco. This fact is known by everybody in the town, and consequently has come to the ears of this man, who says he is an English sailor.

“I should say that he is probably a man—one of the very few that the Dons have ever taken—captured during some action, and tortured to make him recant. He apparently did so in order to spare himself further pain, as men have done on several occasions, and he is now possibly a serving-man, or something of the kind, in the employ of some Spanish grandee or another. But he has not forgotten the fact that he is an Englishman, and, hearing that two of his fellow-countrymen are to be put to a painful death at an auto-da-fe in the Plaza in five days' time, has made up his mind to save our lives, if possible. If successful, I should say that he himself will try to get away with us.

“At very considerable risk, and doubtless with great difficulty, he has been able to get one message to us, but will not be able to do so again. So he wishes us to procure a piece of cord thin enough to escape easy detection, and hang it from our window, so that he can communicate with us as may be necessary, and so that he can perhaps send up to us certain small articles. For some reason he cannot come again until three days' hence, when he will be waiting below our grating at midnight for us to lower the line to him, when we may expect another message, and probably instructions what to do so that we may escape. Why he cannot come until midnight on the third night I cannot guess, but evidently there is something very weighty and important to prevent his doing so, otherwise, knowing that there are but five days altogether before our execution, he would commence at once to arrange for our escape without losing any time; for a delay of three days now may make all the difference whether we are to live or die.

“All this we learn from his letter; and my opinion is that we must just trust this man, and hope that he will be able to succeed in his efforts; for until we hear again from him, as to what he wishes us to do to assist him, we can do nothing—absolutely nothing. Now, the first difficulty that confronts us is the matter of that line of which he speaks, and without which, he tells us, escape is impossible. How in the world can we secure a rope or cord of any sort? We never even see our jailer, much less talk to him, so that we have no opportunity of attempting to bribe him, and it is most unlikely that we could do so, even if we could speak to him. There is nothing in the cell that we can possibly turn to account; so I do not see at all what we can do. It seems very hard to lose our lives just because we are at a loss for a small thing like a piece of cord or rope.”

“For my own part,” said Roger, “I wonder somewhat why the man did not make some suggestion as to how we might secure such a thing. Surely he must know that it is utterly

impossible for us to procure anything of the kind in prison. I wonder, now, whether that was he or not whose footsteps we heard in the yard a little time ago; and what—Why, Harry, what if that thing that hit me in the face should be another message wrapped round something to make it carry up to the window?"

"Roger," exclaimed Harry in great jubilation, "I believe you have hit upon the very thing. The man said he could not get another message conveyed for him. The cord is not in position so that he can send anything up by that. What more likely than that he should try to throw a note up to us through the bars? In fact it is the only way. Let us look at once. It must have fallen somewhere in the cell, I should say, since it struck you in the face. That fact shows that it came between the bars; and it would hardly rebound outside again."

And in the now fast-failing light both lads dropped on their hands and knees and began a feverish search for what might very easily make all the difference to them between living and dying a horrible and painful death. Hound and round the fast-darkening cell they crawled, but not a sign of anything could they find, until Harry, who was searching a corner where the faint light from the grating could not reach, suddenly placed his hand upon something hard, which rolled under the pressure. Clasping it tight in his fist, he rushed to the grating and looked at the article. Yes, sure enough, it was a piece of paper wrapped round a pebble. He softly called Roger to his side, and, opening the folded missive, both began to read. And, as they read, both faces became several shades paler, and their hearts beat thickly. The note ran as follows:—

> "I waited for some time below your window in the hope that you would drop an answer from it to my first letter; but I found that I was being watched, and had therefore to leave. How I shall get this present note to you I do not know, but if nobody is about I shall wrap it round a stone and try to throw it through your window. This is to tell you that Alvarez has decided to advance the day for your execution, which will take place on the day after to-morrow. Therefore you must act at once. I am myself in great danger through my attempts to help you, and if the date had not been altered should not have come until the third night from now. But there is no time to lose, so I must endeavour to come to you to-night. I may be discovered, but I must risk that. Now, attend well to what I am going to write. At midnight to-night, instead of three nights hence, I shall be here, underneath your window. You must at any cost let down a thin cord, or all my efforts will be vain. I will then attach to the cord several small files and a saw of fine temper. If the line is not strong enough to bear the weight I will tie a light line which I shall bring with me to yours; you will then haul that up first, and, making fast the end, you can then pull up the things I shall bring. If I have any more news then, I will also send up a letter to you.

With the files and saw you must cut away all the bars of your grating except one. This will leave room for you to climb through. The one bar must be left to secure a stout rope to, so that you may slide down it. The work of cutting the bars will take you all to-morrow; so after my visit to-night I shall not come again until the time arrives for you to make your escape. Be very careful to work silently, or you will be discovered, for spies are everywhere. When the bars are cut, put them back in their places, so that if anyone enters your cell they shall not notice the change.

"For your first line to lower down to me, unravel your hose or under-jerkin, or any garment you can spare without it being noticed. This will give you a long, thin line, to the end of which you must secure a light weight to prevent it from blowing about. Now, until to-night, farewell! I shall be there at midnight exactly, and you must be quite ready. Make no mistake, for this is your only chance, and any mistake will mean the loss of my life as well as your own."

This ended the letter, and Roger immediately took it from Harry's hand, and concealed it, with the first missive, in the lining of his jerkin.

"Now, Harry," said he, "we must act at once; for, as the fellow says, there is no time to lose, and it will take us all the time we have left before darkness sets in to unravel a garment to form our line. He will send us up several files, he says in the letter. Now, if we can put those two stools one on top of the other we shall both be able to stand on them and work together; which is a fortunate thing, as it will take us a long time to cut those bars, so thick are they. I hope the noise will not be heard through the walls, and draw the attention of our jailers; but we must be as silent as we can, and risk the rest. I am more glad than ever now that we closed up that spy-hole, for, had we not done so, we should certainly have been discovered already. Now, Harry, we had best begin on this under-jerkin of mine; the absence of that will not be noticed if I keep my doublet buttoned well up and over. You begin at one end and I will start at the other corner, so that, if we are pressed for time, we can break the threads off and join yours and mine together, and have twice the length we should get otherwise."

Roger stripped his jerkin off, replaced his doublet, and both set to work. By this time the daylight had nearly gone, but, as fortune would have it, a full moon rode high in the sky, and one shaft of light filtered in through the barred window. The court below, however, was in darkness, as the walls were so high that the moonbeams never struck lower than about half-way down them. In this small patch of light, then, the two lads worked for their lives.

When they began their task they considered that about three hours would suffice to complete the work. As time passed, however, it seemed to them as though their fingers were made of lead, so slow did they appear to move, to the lads' excited imagination.

Yard by yard the silk became unravelled, and was rolled carefully round Roger's finger, so that, when the time came, there might be no hitch in paying it out.

Every yard that they unravelled seemed to take them an hour in the process, and so occupied were they that it was some few moments before they became aware that at least two small pebbles had been thrown through the window, and then they only noticed it because one of the stones happened to fall directly upon the remnant of the garment upon which they were employed.

“Roger, Roger, there he is,” whispered Harry in great excitement. “Quick, quick! unwind that silk from your finger, and—Where can we find anything to tie on the end for a weight?” he added.

Roger unwound the silk as fast as he knew how, and Harry desperately searched every nook and cranny of the cell for something to secure to the end.

“I have it,” said Roger in a low tone, as he finished unwinding the silk and coiled it carefully on the stone table, so that it might run free without being entangled. “I have it. We will secure your knife to the end, Harry; it will bear that weight, I should say, and we can haul it up again when the stouter line is attached.”

“Very well,” answered Harry, producing the article in question, which was soon tied firmly to the end of the unravelled silk.

The two stools were then dragged to the window, and on these Roger mounted, whilst Harry handed up the knife with the silk tied to it.

“God grant that the line may bear the weight!” said Roger to himself, as he took the apparatus from Harry.

Then he leant forward and extended his arm so far that any person standing below would be able to see it in the moonlight, although the person himself in the courtyard would be hidden in the shadow cast by the high walls of the prison. He allowed his hand to remain for a few moments, shining white in the moonlight, in order to signify to the man below that he was in readiness, and was prepared to let down the line. As if in answer, another small pebble came clattering against the wall just below the grating, and Roger's heart stood still for a moment with deadly fear, lest any unwelcome listener might be about.

But there was no sign of such being the case, and the lad lowered carefully away until he felt the knife touch the ground.

A few seconds later he felt a gentle vibration of the silk, as the man below fastened something to it, and then came three light pulls on the line. Roger rightly took this for a signal to haul up, and immediately did so.

He hauled away with the utmost care, for he knew that his very life depended upon it, and when he had hauled in his own line he found attached to it a cord of stouter proportions, and capable of sustaining a very much heavier burden.

To be on the safe side, he at once secured the end of this second line to a bar of the grating, in case it should slip through his fingers, and handed the silken line to Harry, asking him to re-coil it for use again should it be required. Then he gave three light tugs to the line at his end, as a signal that he was ready for the next operation. Immediately he had done so, the gentle movement of the line began again, and was followed directly afterward by the three signal pulls, but stronger ones this time. Up came the cord, and this time it was evident that there was something quite heavy at the other end. Roger pulled up quickly, and presently a dark bundle made its appearance at the window. He grasped this carefully and handed it to Harry, who placed it upon the cell table.

Then the cord was sent down once more. There was a longer pause this time, and Roger was on the point of pulling up the cord, thinking that their unknown friend had finished his part of the business, when the three pulls came again, and Roger once more hoisted away on the line.

It was not so heavy on this occasion, and on taking it in through the window he found that Harry's knife and a piece of paper were the only articles that were attached.

He surmised, therefore, that nothing else was to be sent up, and read the missive before sending down the cord again. It was short and to the point this time.

It ran thus:—

“I am writing this in the courtyard below. I have sent up all the necessary tools; so you need not lower the cord again to-night. It rests with you now to cut the bars, and it must be done by midnight to-morrow night or all will be in vain. I shall be here again then, and will send up a rope thick enough to bear your weight. You must climb down this, and I will be at the bottom to receive and guide you to safety. Till to-morrow, farewell!”

When this had been read, it was placed, together with the other two missives, in the lining of Roger's doublet.

“Now, Harry, lad,” the latter whispered, “quick! let us see what there is in this bundle, and then set to work at once. No sleep to-night, my lad. When next we sleep we shall either be out of the clutches of the Inquisition, or—we shall be sleeping the last long sleep of all!”

CHAPTER TWENTY. HOW ROGER EFFECTED HIS ESCAPE.

On opening the bundle it was found to contain three files, very thin, extremely sharp, and of wonderful temper. There were also two small saws, with handles to them, and a bottle of very thick oil, to make the saws and files cut faster, and also to prevent that harsh, squeaking sound which usually arises when steel cuts against steel.

The two lads, in their eagerness, snatched the tools from the leather bag, and, replacing the stools one above the other, mounted them and began to work swiftly and silently.

“We must remember, Roger,” whispered Harry, “that we shall have to listen very

carefully for footsteps coming along that passage, and hide these tools somewhere at the first sound. Of course, if we were seen working here, or if the tools were discovered, we might just as well give up at once, for there would be no hope left."

"You are right, my friend," answered Roger. "But I do not intend that anybody shall catch us at this work; nor shall they catch sight of the tools. At the first sound of any person approaching you must jump down for your life, remove the stools, and sit down and pretend to be asleep. I will wrap the tools up quickly in their bag, and slip them into my jerkin. If we are summoned from the cell, and are likely to be searched, I shall endeavour, as we go, to drop the parcel behind the door, where it cannot be seen unless someone enters the cell and deliberately looks behind the door, which is not very likely unless they suspect us of having got hold of any tools. Now remember what I say. No more talk now, Harry; we shall require all our breath for working."

They slaved away with file and saw, never ceasing work for a moment, until their muscles utterly refused to allow their tired arms to make another movement, and then they rested for a moment to recover. Harry and Roger each worked on a separate bar of the grating, and so equal had been their efforts that each lad's bar was cut through at the same time.

"There go two nails drawn from our coffins, Roger," said Harry, and he attacked his second bar with the energy born of deserved success. Roger uttered no word, but saved all his breath, and put every ounce of his strength into his arms, cutting away with file and saw like a very madman.

As the bars were cut out they were laid carefully on the sill in front of them, so as to be at hand for replacement directly any suspicious sound was heard. All night long they worked, and with such a will that soon after daybreak next morning but two bars remained to be cut through. As usual, an hour or two after dawn they heard the click of the trap as their food was placed in the cell; but it startled them only for a moment, for they had not overlooked the fact that their food was due to arrive. Moreover, they knew that the aperture was so small that there was but just room to pass a small platter through it, and that, even if the jailer should attempt to spy on them, the window was beyond his range of vision. The sound, however, recalled the fact to their minds that they were very hungry, and that if they wished to keep up their strength they must eat. And, as Harry said, they had done good work during the night, so that they could spare the time. The tools were therefore packed up and hidden away; the bars already cut were replaced so that anybody chancing to look in should notice nothing out of the ordinary; then the stools were removed from below the window, and both lads sat down to their morning meal with keener appetites than they had known for some months past. Everything in the cell presented its usual appearance, and the twain were hastily finishing their meal when the tramp of feet was heard in the passage. No quiet, stealthy footstep this time, but a clatter of several approaching men which there was no mistaking. Roger and Harry looked at one another, dismay written all over their countenances. What was to happen

now? Had the hour for their execution been advanced again, and were they to be led out to death at once, or was their cell to be changed and all their labour rendered useless, and their chance of escape destroyed at the very last moment? These, and a hundred other surmises, chased each other rapidly through the lads' minds as they listened with bated breath to the noise of the approaching footsteps. Each, however, pulled himself together, and by the time that the cell door was opened the lads presented absolutely expressionless faces to their enemies. The door clanged open, disclosing to their sight a number of men in black robes and cowls.

“His Excellency the Viceroy requires the attendance of you both,” said one of the masked inquisitors in a deep voice and in remarkably good English. “Follow me at once.”

The man turned to lead the way. Harry followed close on his heels; but as Roger prepared to leave the cell he pretended to stumble, and when picking himself up adroitly deposited the little satchel of tools behind the open door. His action, he was much relieved to notice, attracted no attention, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the cell door closed after them, and of knowing, therefore, that the precious implements were safe for the time being.

They were led through the self-same passages and corridors by which they had walked to the torture-chamber a few days before, and their hearts sank within them, for this second journey seemed to them ominous of evil.

Yes, it was but too true. In a few minutes they reached the door of that Chamber of Horrors, passed through it, heard it shut after them, and found themselves once more in the presence of that arch-fiend, Alvarez, “Viceroy of the Province, Governor of the City, and Chief of the Holy Inquisition in the town of Vera Cruz”. They were not long left in doubt as to what was in store for them. Alvarez spoke:

“I understand that you two young men formerly belonged to the squadron of that most pestilent heretic and pirate, Cavendish; is it not so? Answer me!”

“Yes,” replied Harry, “we belonged, and consider that we still belong, to the ship of Mr Cavendish, who is no pirate, but a noble and true English gentleman.”

“Silence!” snarled Alvarez. “Do not dare to speak in that way to me! Answer my questions only, and make no remarks of your own. I say that the man Cavendish is a pirate, and that is sufficient. Now, you are both heretics, that I know, and I am shortly going to the trouble of attempting to convert you to the only true faith, through the gentle, loving, and persuasive methods applied to heretics by the most Holy Inquisition. You had an example, only the other day, of the way in which Mother Church deals with those who obey her not. She always uses the most gentle means to bring about conversion, and would lead heretics to a knowledge of the true faith by loving-kindness alone, as no doubt you noticed in the case of the man de Soto, who was undergoing the process of persuasion when you were last here.” And he gave vent to a most horrible and

grating laugh.

“I am deeply grieved to inform you,” he continued, “that de Soto persisted in denying all knowledge of a certain matter, and—well, he is dead now, rest his soul!” he added sardonically.

“Since seeing you two,” he resumed, “I have come to the conclusion that I was perhaps somewhat hasty with de Soto, and imagine it is possible that he did not possess the knowledge I credited him with, and it may be that I punished him unjustly. But that little matter is now past regret, and we have to deal with the present. The matter in hand deals with the loss of a certain document from the cabin of a Spanish war-vessel, the *Gloria del Mundo*, which ship you both doubtless remember. I thought at first that de Soto was responsible for its disappearance; but, if my memory serves me aright, you two lads left the vessel after de Soto and myself, and, from what I have gathered, I imagine that you may know something about the paper. If you know, tell me where it is, and I will spare you; but if you decide not to speak— well, you saw what de Soto suffered the other day, and his treatment was gentle compared with what yours will be unless you decide to tell me where that paper is to be found, for I am convinced that you know. Now, speak; speak—you!” Again Harry acted as spokesman, and replied:

“Senor Alvarez, we have heard what you say, and we know to what paper you refer; but we have it not. It is no longer in existence, and consequently it can never be found. You may do your worst; but though you should torture us both to death, it is not in our power, or that of any other mortal, to give you a document which does not now exist.”

“I do not believe you,” shouted Alvarez. “It cannot be so. That paper must be somewhere,” he foamed, “and I will have it if I am compelled to tear you limb from limb to get it. Will you speak, or will you not?” Alvarez literally foamed at the mouth with rage, for indeed he was nearly mad with disappointment. In spite of himself, he had an inward conviction that what Harry said was true, and that, do what he might, he would never again set eyes on that paper, the possession of which he so earnestly desired.

Revenge, however, sweet revenge, still remained, and that he could and would have. He had worked himself up to a pitch of fury that very closely approached madness; moreover, his bitter disappointment demanded alleviation through the suffering of him who had inflicted it. So, without waiting for a reply, he roared, pointing to Harry:

“Seize that lad who spoke, and put him to the torture. I will soon see whether he still refuses to speak when I command! Bind that other one, and let him see all that happens; for it will be his turn next, and he may as well know what is in store for him. Ha! ha!” and he laughed again with sardonic fury.

Both lads struggled desperately in the grip of the black-cowled inquisitors; but their struggles were fruitless, and in a few minutes Harry was lying on the floor bound, while Roger was tied in an upright position to one of the pillars of the chamber, in such a

fashion that, do as he would, he could not avoid witnessing the tortures that were to be executed upon the body of his dear friend and bosom companion from his boyhood upwards. At the last moment Roger would have intervened to save Harry, actually offering to yield up the coveted secret if Alvarez would relent. But the latter refused; his lust of blood was aroused, his passion for witnessing the agony of others must be satiated at any cost. Moreover, was not Roger in his power? He would compel the lad to witness his friend's sufferings; give him the night wherein to dwell upon them; and, next morning, first wring the secret from him under a threat of torture, and afterwards—

It is unnecessary to harrow the feelings of the reader with a description of what next took place in that ghastly chamber. Suffice it to say that the torture and examination of Harry lasted until mid-day, when it was seen that his senses had left him, and that he was no longer conscious of the dreadful injuries that were being inflicted upon him. He was then carried back to the cell and laid upon the floor, while Roger was unbound and allowed to accompany him. The door was closed and bolted, and Roger was alone with the pitiful, scarred, torn, and bleeding wreck of his friend. He fetched water from the jug and forced a few drops down Harry's throat, laved his brow, and bound up his seared and bleeding wounds as best he could. Presently Harry opened his eyes, and, seeing Roger bending over him, smiled even amid his pain.

“Do not weep, Roger, old friend,” he said, noticing the tears running down his chum's face; “they have done their utmost on me, and I shall not last out long enough to surfer at their hands again. Nay, Roger, dear lad, it is of no use. You cannot save me, and indeed I do not desire to live; for of what use would life be to one in my condition? They have torn the life so nearly from my poor body that there is but little remaining, and that little you could not save, my dear old friend. You did your best before they began upon me, and failed. No man could do more. Just put your doublet under my head to keep it off the hard stone, dear lad; and oh, Roger, do not weep so bitterly; it tears my heart to see you. I feel but little pain now, and what still remains will not be for long. Now, Roger, listen to me, my friend. I shall be gone very soon; do not, I pray you, stay grieving over my body after I am dead, for that will avail me nothing, and only involve you in my fate. Therefore, get those tools and cut away at that grating, so that you will be ready when that unknown friend of ours comes to assist you to escape. Promise me, Roger. You will win home safely; I know it; I feel that you will. And you will take care of Mary, my dear sister Mary, will you not, Roger? See that she comes to no harm, old friend. Remember the secret of that cryptogram, Roger, and fetch that treasure away; my share of it is yours, my friend. I do not tell you to give it to Mary, for I think you can guess what I mean when I say I do not think it will be necessary. Roger,” he resumed after a short silence, broken only by the deep sobs of his sorrowing companion, “Roger, dear lad, hold my hand, for it is getting very dark, and I cannot see. I like to feel that you are near me, and I have no fear.” His breathing now grew rapidly weaker, until presently only a faint fluttering sigh could be heard; then his eyes opened again, and he said: “Good-bye, Roger, I am going, dear lad and faithful comrade; good-bye, and God bless

you! Remember what I said about preparing for to-night; and do not grieve for me, for indeed I am quite happy. Good-bye!" His head fell back, his breathing ceased, and Roger knew that he was now alone. Alone in prison, and still in the hands of the Holy Office. He reverently closed the eyes of his chum, and covered his face, after which he remained seated by the side of the body of the beloved dead, lost in bitter thought and sorrowful retrospection.

He was aroused by hearing the click of the trap-door in the wall as the food was thrust in, and this recalled him to himself.

He remembered Harry's last injunction, that he was to continue the work of cutting through the bars of the grating in order to be ready to escape when midnight came. And he also remembered that Harry had given his sister Mary into his charge, and enjoined him to look after and take care of her.

How could he do this if he remained where he was, and lost his life, even as poor Harry had lost his? No, he must put away his grief and melancholy thoughts until a more convenient season. If he wished to fulfil his promises to his dead friend, he must first escape. Actuated by these reflections, he feverishly seized the tools once more and set to work on the remaining two bars of the grating. The work took longer, labouring by himself, but eventually one bar was cut through entirely, and but one more remained. The night was getting on, however. There was no means of knowing what hour it was, but he felt that it must be nearing the appointed time. He seized one of the saws and began work on the last bar, and at last cut it through also at the top. He had barely finished that part of his task when a pebble came clattering up against the wall just below the grating. The man was there already then! He left the bar for a moment and lowered away the cord, and presently he felt the now familiar jerking at the end and hauled it up. There was a missive at the end, and, unfastening it from the cord, Roger took it to the friendly patch of moonlight and read as follows:—

> "I have heard the news already, and am sorry. But I have come to save you, as it is to be your turn to-morrow. Come at once, if you can; but if you have not quite finished, I can wait a little. When you are ready, send down the cord, and I will attach the rope. You can haul that up and fasten it securely. Then climb down as quickly as you can.
>
> "We are in luck to-night. Before dark fell I noticed an English vessel in the offing. She is still there. If we can but seize a boat we shall be able to reach her, and we shall then be safe, so hasten."

Roger very quickly glanced through this communication, and prepared to finish his work on the bar, when he noticed that it was the only one remaining. In his abstraction he had already cut through one end of the last bar—the only one to which he could secure the rope. Luckily, he had cut it at the top end; so he trusted that, if the rope were fastened

securely at the bottom, it would bear his weight. He quickly lowered away his cord again, and in another minute felt the welcome tug, which signified that the means of his escape was secured at the end of the cord. He hauled away slowly, for this time the burden was heavy, but eventually he saw the end of a good stout rope make its appearance at the grating. He gathered in a sufficient length, and secured it firmly to the one remaining bar; and, as he did so, it dawned upon him that, had his rescue come but a little later, he would himself, in his grief and abstraction, have destroyed his only chance of ever being able to escape, by removing the last bar altogether.

All being now ready, Roger went over to Harry's body, and, tenderly kissing the poor white lips, said, very softly: “Good-bye, dear lad, until we meet again. I will amply avenge thee!” Then, with his knife he cut off a lock of his friend's hair, and placed it securely in his bosom. He cast one more look round the cell, and then hauled himself up into the embrasure, and, forcing his body through the opening, seized the rope, with a fervent prayer in his heart for deliverance, and began the descent. After what seemed an eternity he felt a pair of strong arms flung round him, and he was eased to the ground.

“Come along, sir,” exclaimed the unknown man in a whisper; “we have no time to lose. They seem more wakeful than usual to-night, aloft there,” pointing upward at the building with his thumb, “and they may find out your absence at any moment. Then we should both be lost, unless we were well clear of this accursed building. Now, speak no more, on your life, but do as I do, and follow me. If anybody accosts us, leave the answering to me. Cover your face as well as you can, and come along.”

He grasped Roger's hand, and together they set off through the darkness. The rope they were obliged to leave as it was, having no means of removing it. Through the little gateway—which Roger had seen this same man pass on one occasion—they went, and found themselves in another and much larger courtyard, planted with all kinds of flowering shrubs and trees. These could only be dimly seen in the darkness, but Roger judged, from their presence, that they were now going through that part of the building where the quarters of the occupants were situated. After a short time, occupied in fast walking, they came to an alleyway, or small avenue, down which they hastened, and at the end of this was a closed door of exceptionally stout and strong construction. Roger believed, seeing it closed, that their attempt at escape had met with a premature end; but no, the guide pressed a handle gently, and the door swung open, and as Roger stepped out he felt the cool salt breeze blowing on his face, and he knew that he was free at last. Free, after months of weary imprisonment, torture, and suffering; yes, free! His whole body seemed to expand to the grateful influence of the gentle sea-breeze; but his heart was very, very sad for the loss of his friend.

The two fugitives plunged onward, across streets, down alleys, and up steps, until they come to a huge open square, at the rear of which an enormous building towered high. In the middle of the square was to be made out, dimly, a pile or heap of some sort, with what looked liked a short, thick pole, standing upright above it. Roger asked his guide in

a whisper what it was. The man replied:

“This big square is the Plaza of Vera Cruz, and the large building yonder is the cathedral. That peculiar-shaped object you see there is a heap of wood and straw surrounding a stake, and on that heap, bound to that stake, you and your friend were doomed to die to-morrow!”

Roger felt his flesh creep, and hurried forward at an increased rate of speed. Presently, after going down a very narrow and steep street, Roger perceived that they had reached the beach, and he heard the dull “boom” of the surf as it rolled in and broke on the sand.

The guide now spoke to him. “Do you see a small light out there, well away in the offing?”

“I think I can see something of the kind,” replied Roger.

“Well,” explained the man, “that vessel is my old ship, the *Elizabeth*. I was aboard her last time she came out here, and I was captured during one of her actions. She is one of Mr Cavendish's vessels. I hear that he left her in these seas to harry the Spaniards, whilst he took the rest of the fleet round the other side, where he has just captured their plate fleet. I shall be right glad to get back aboard her again.”

“What!” exclaimed Roger in astonishment; “is that the dear old *Elizabeth*? Why, I know her captain and crew well. Many is the time I have been aboard her.”

“Is that so, sir?” queried the man. “Then you will know old Cary, perhaps, who used to be aboard her.”

“Ay,” replied Roger, “I know him well; but he was on the flag-ship, the *Stag Royal*, and not the *Elizabeth*, when I saw him last.”

“Well,” said the sailor, “in any case we must not waste time—hark, hark, there go the bells! They have discovered your escape. Now we must be moving, for our very lives. This way.”

And he hurried along a quay wall, which formed one of the arms of a little harbour where small craft might lie.

The bells were indeed clanging wildly, and the noise was deafening. Voices were to be heard now—snouts and cries; though whether the people were yet on their track or not they could not tell. Along the wall they hastened at a run, until they came to a small lateen-rigged vessel, secured to the farthest end of the mole, and with her one huge sail roughly furled round the yard. They dashed on board, cut the ropes through, and the sailor, swarming up the rigging, cut the lashings, and the foot of the lateen sail dropped down on deck. Roger hauled the sheet aft and made it fast, then sprang to the tiller, and the little craft began to move away from the mole under the influence of the breeze.

“Lucky we found no one aboard,” gasped the sailor, whose name was Mathews; “but then I did not expect that there would be anybody about; they never leave a watch on

these little craft."

Roger still grasped the helm, and steered through the harbour's mouth for the tiny point of light, which was the beacon of their safety, while Mathews busied himself with the sail, and with making all snug on deck.

Although the town of Vera Cruz itself was still in darkness, away to the eastward the first streaks of day were already showing, and the light on the English man-of-war lying in the offing was growing fainter. Away behind them, from the direction of the mole, the two fugitives could hear a sound as of many people in pursuit, and presently a dark patch detached itself from the darkness, and appeared to be following them; and soon they made it out to be the sail of a vessel very similar to the one they had so unceremoniously captured. She was a much larger craft, and after a while there could be no doubt that she was overhauling them. But they were now drawing well out toward the English vessel, although the latter had not yet sighted them, and the issue, so far, hung on the race between the two feluccas. The pursuing vessel crept up closer and ever closer, and Roger and Mathews began to picture themselves as adorning that bonfire in the plaza after all.

But now the English ship seemed to awake to what was going forward, and to take in the situation at once. That one felucca was flying and the other pursuing they could see at a glance. There was a puff of white smoke from her side, and a shot flew screaming over their heads and plunged into the water just in front of the pursuing felucca. Still she held on, gaining remorselessly. Her crew began to fire at the fugitives, compelling them to steer in a crouching position below the bulwarks. By an occasional backward glance Roger saw her gradually creeping up, and wondered why the English ship did not fire again; then he discovered that his own vessel was in the line of fire. The Spaniards had cleverly managed to get exactly behind him, so that the English could not fire without hitting the foremost vessel. Therefore Roger risked his life and liberty in a desperate manoeuvre. With a sweep of the tiller he put the helm hard over, and the little vessel bounded away on the opposite tack, leaving her pursuer without shelter. The English ship—the crew of which were evidently waiting for something of the sort to happen—took immediate advantage of her opportunity, and let fly her whole broadside, luckily bringing down the pursuer's mast. After that the fugitives were safe, and half an hour later were on board the old *Elizabeth*, Roger talking to the captain and his fellow-officers, and Mathews below, relating marvellous adventures to his former mess-mates. Roger gave a full and graphic account of all that had happened to himself and Harry, and told of his poor friend's death.

Luckily it turned out that the *Elizabeth* was on her way from the Indies to England, and had only anchored during the night in the hope of sighting one more prize; so it was by the merest chance that Roger escaped after all. The captain now made sail, and pointed his vessel's bows for home. The voyage lasted just three months, and they met with no single enemy on the whole way.

The ship sailed into Plymouth Sound one bright summer's morning, and, after his long absence, Roger looked once more on the country of his birth. Taking leave of the captain and officers the moment that the ship was moored and he was at liberty, he made his way up the river, as once before, to his home.

He found all his people alive and well, and great and long-continued were the rejoicings at his safe return; but poor Mary Edgwyth remained for a long time quite inconsolable at the loss of her dearly-loved brother.

But time heals all wounds, and when at length Roger asked her a certain question, her sorrow had sufficiently abated to admit of her saying "Yes" by way of answer.

Prior to this, however, Roger fitted out a small expedition on his own account, and sailed for Lonely Inlet, in order to secure the treasure of Jose Leirya.

He found it, strangely enough, in the identical cave where Harry and he had kept the savages at bay, and its value proved to be vastly greater than even he had imagined, despite all that he had heard regarding it.

Roger remained in those seas only long enough to secure the treasure, upon successfully accomplishing which he turned his bows once again for home, arriving in the summer, even as he had done before. Meanwhile the lapse of time had so far ameliorated Mary's sorrow for the loss of her brother that there was nothing now to prevent the marriage taking place, and on a certain lovely summer's morning Roger and Mary were united in Plympton Church; and their married life was all that their best friends could desire for them.

With part of the treasure Roger fitted out a few small ships of his own, which he sent to the Indies to harry the Dons and avenge the death of his friend; but he did not himself go with the expeditions, saying that, unless his country required his services, he would remain at home and take care of Mary.

In due course a little son came to them, whom they named Harry, in remembrance of the one who was gone; and with the arrival of the little new-comer all sorrowful memory of the past was finally wiped out, leaving only the future to be looked forward to, bright and rose-coloured.

Thus, after all the deeds of horror and bloodshed by which the treasure of Jose Leirya had been accumulated, that same treasure was productive of good at last; for by Roger's judicious use of it, and his generous yet discriminative charity, he healed as many hurts perhaps as had been inflicted in the accumulation of it.

The story of those expeditions fitted out by Roger against his hated enemies the Spaniards, and of the dire and terrible vengeance that they wrought upon Alvarez, constitute in themselves a very complete history, teeming with adventure, which the present chronicler hopes some day to place upon record.