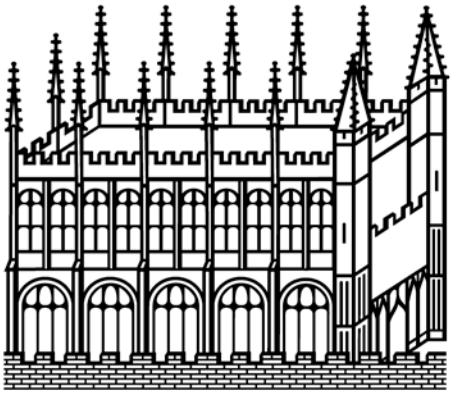

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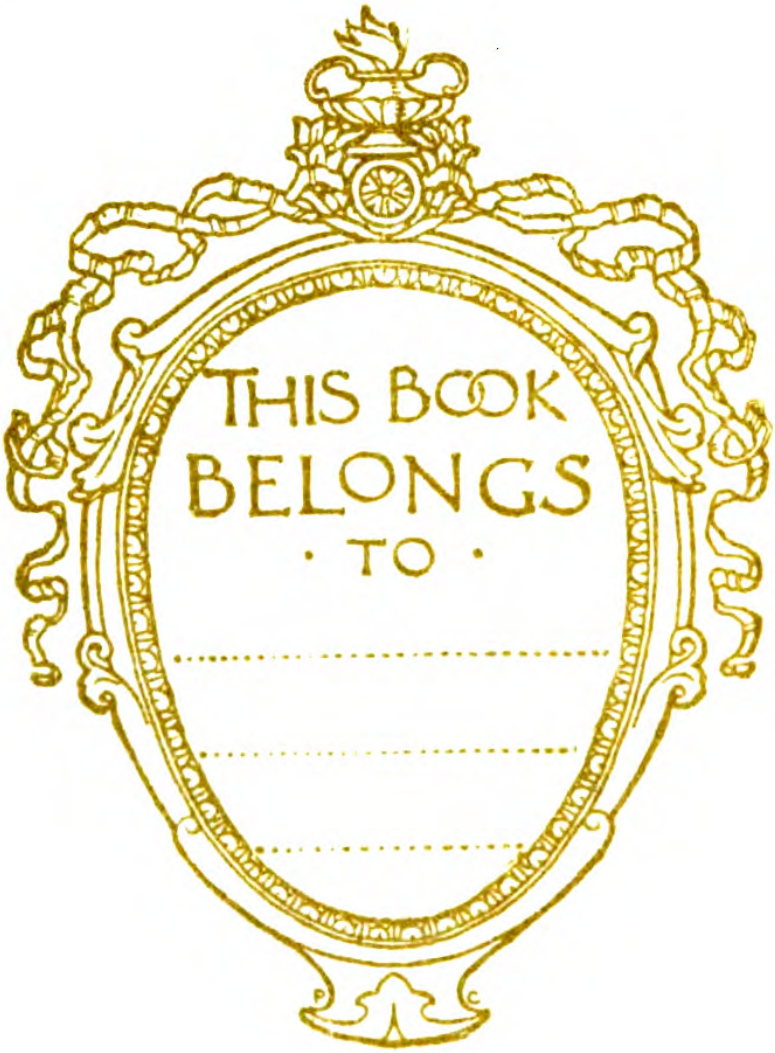

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A GOOD BOOK IS THE PRECIOUS LIFE-BLOOD OF A MASTER SPIRIT
Milton
PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

The KINGS TREASURIES
OF LITERATURE

GENERAL EDITOR
SIR A·T· QUILLER COUCH

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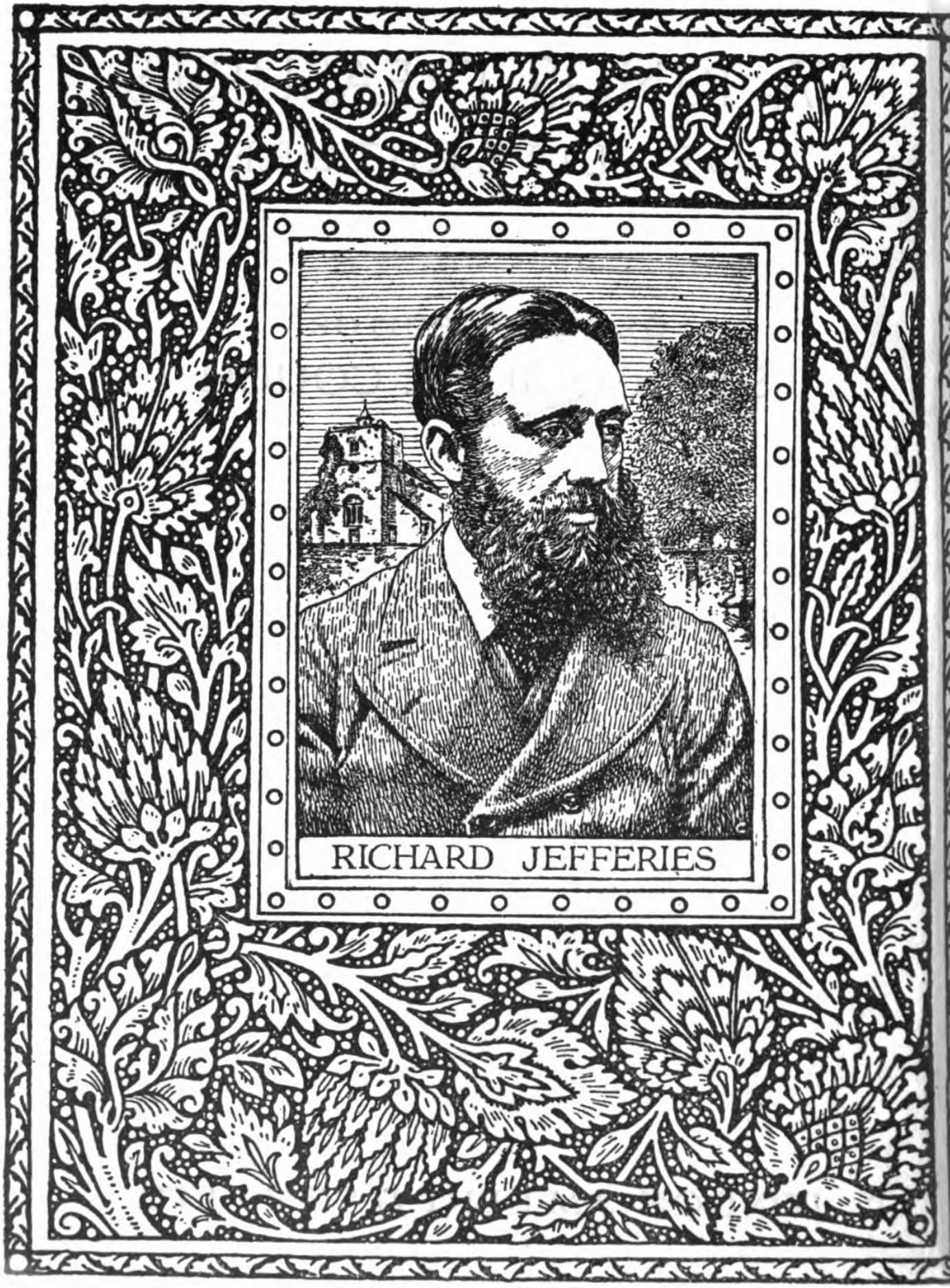
RICHARD JEFFERIES

BEVIS & MARK
FROM BEVIS
BY
RICHARD JEFFERIES

EDITED BY
GUY N. POCOCK
M.A.

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MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
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INTRODUCTION

Before you read this book you ought to know something about the man who wrote it. You will understand the book better and appreciate Bevis himself more if you read what I am going to tell you about him.

Richard Jefferies was the name of the author, and he is, of course, the same as Bevis. He was one of those rare persons whose boyhood is much more important than their manhood. For most of us the boy is father of the man, and our boyhood is a preparation for being grown-up. But with Richard Jefferies it was the other way about, and manhood simply an opportunity for writing down the things he had felt and observed as a boy. In a sense he lived his life upside-down, and grew younger as he grew older.

It happened in this way. He was born in the farmhouse of Coate in Wiltshire at the foot of the Downs: a jolly farmhouse with a garden and trees round it, and wide fields, and above all a great lake. There he spent his boyhood, and there his father taught him to swim and sail and shoot, and to look at nature with seeing eyes. But he was not a happy boy. He was proud and unbending; and so masterful that though he was slight and small, all the other boys did what he told them to do almost without question. They did not like him for it; nor did the grown-ups, who thought him cold and hard. And so, in spite of the fact that he had a younger brother—as you will see—and a host of other boys to play with, he was really a lonely boy, and was thrown back more and more on himself.

But strangely enough, the more lonely he became, the deeper companionship he found. For now all the birds,

the little English wild animals, the fishes, and the insects, all the trees, the hedgerows, the wild flowers, and the grass, took on for him a new meaning as he studied and understood them more and more. In the end it was not only that he understood them better, and with a more minute intimacy and accuracy than any man in England. It was almost as if he had a secret understanding with nature; and he loved nature with all his being.

And so when he grew up he began, as it were, to live backwards. All this vast store of nature-knowledge that he had stored up as a boy he began to put down in his books. All the wonderful times he had had; all the real and half-make-believe adventures round and about the old reservoir at home, all the woodcraft and country and weather lore that he had learned for himself, the like of which have never been written. He lived his boyhood all over again—but it was his boyhood a little bit glorified, and with most of the unhappiness cut out; the boyhood he would have liked to live, and very nearly did—but not quite.

Now what kind of a book is *Bevis*, from which the following chapters are taken? It is not a novel, for it has no plot; nor a life, for it only covers a very little bit of Bevis's life—or Richard Jefferies's life, which is the same thing—and that little bit is idealized. Nor is it a series of stories all about the same people, like *Dream Days* and *The Golden Age*. No, the fact is, this book is unique: there is nothing quite like it. I would call it a little prose epic—the epic of boyhood.

And what a boyhood it is! The keynote of it is freedom, and never were boys so little interfered with by grown-ups. Bevis's father, the governor, for instance, is little more than an excuse for teaching Bevis to swim and sail. It is their wisdom to let the boys grow up in their own way—the natural way—with freedom to learn by making mistakes, trial and failure, and ultimate success. 'There is

always something you can do,' says Bevis very early in the book, and that is the keynote throughout.

And note this, that of all the wonderful things they did in, and on, and about the New Sea, there is nothing that any intelligent boy cannot learn to do, as these boys did. Of all the wonderful things they saw, there is nothing any observant boy cannot see—if he has the luck to live where there is still wild nature to be observed. The habits and homes and the cries of birds and little animals; the behaviour of fish, of flies, and other tiny things; the sedges, the grass, the hedgerows—all these things, and innumerable others, Bevis learnt to know as Richard Jefferies learnt them when he was a boy—and as every boy who is not pent up in a city can learn if he will only look as Jefferies looked.

Then there was all the lore of the wind to be learnt, and the wind upon water; and ice upon the lake; and the lore of the clouds and sun magic and, above all, the wonder of the stars and the night sky. I think you will feel in the last chapter in this book, called 'Bevis's Zodiac,' more than in any other the workings of the boy's mind.

If you are ever down by Swindon in Wiltshire you should visit Coate Farm as I have done—they call it 'Caught' down there. You should sit in the window-seat of Richard's own room at the top of the house from which he would watch the swallows; and walk over the fields where Richard, or Bevis, walked with his bow or his gun; and climb the trees he climbed, and above all you should sail on the wonderful lake on which Bevis learned to sail, and on the shore of which the great Battle of Pharsalia was fought. And then, I think, you will see what I mean when I say that *Bevis* is the story of Richard Jefferies's boyhood as he would have liked it to be, with all the loneliness cut out.

GUY N. POCOCK.

1937.

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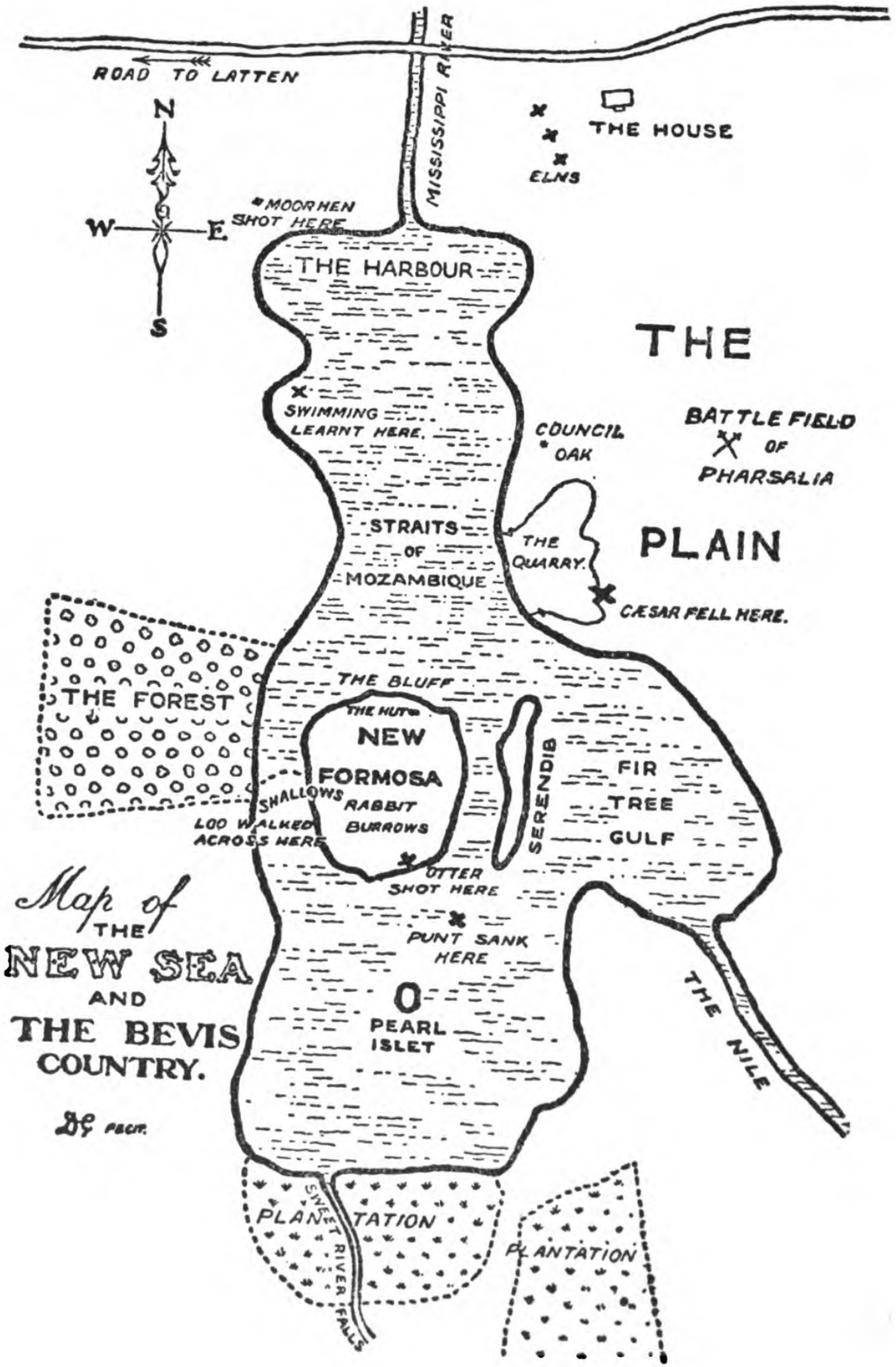
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THE FOREST
THE HUT
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RABBIT BURROWS
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SERENDIB
FIR TREE GULF
OTTER SHOT HERE
PUNT SANK HERE
PEARL ISLET
THE NILE
PLANTATION
SWEET RIVER FALLS
PLANTATION
Map of THE NEW SEA AND THE BEVIS COUNTRY.

BEVIS AND MARK

CHAPTER I

BEVIS AT WORK

ONE morning a large wooden case was brought to the farmhouse, and Bevis,[1] impatient to see what was in it, ran for the hard chisel and the hammer, and would not consent to put off the work of undoing it for a moment. It must be done directly. The case was very broad and nearly square, but only a few inches deep, and was formed of thin boards. They placed it for him upon the floor, and, kneeling down, he tapped the chisel, driving the edge in under the lid, and so starting the nails. Twice he hit his fingers in his haste, once so hard that he dropped the hammer, but he picked it up again and went on as before, till he had loosened the lid all round.

After labouring like this, and bruising his finger, Bevis was disappointed to find that the case only contained a picture which might look very well, but was of no use to him. It was a fine engraving of 'An English Merry-making in the Olden Time,' and was soon hoisted up and slung to the wall. Bevis claimed the case as his perquisite, and began to meditate what he could do with it. It was dragged from the house into one of the sheds for him, and he fetched the hammer and his own special little hatchet, for his first idea was to split up the boards. Deal splits so easily, it is a pleasure to feel the fibres part, but upon consideration he thought it might do for the roof of a hut, if he could fix it on four stakes, one at each corner.

Away he went with his hatchet down to the withy-bed

[1] The e in Bevis is short.

by the brook (where he intended to build the hut) to cut some stakes and get them ready. The brook made a sharp turn round the withy-bed, enclosing a tongue of ground which was called in the house at home the 'Peninsula,' because of its shape and being surrounded on three sides by water. This piece of land, which was not all withy, but partly open and partly copse, was Bevis's own territory, his own peculiar property, over which he was autocrat and king.

He flew at once to attack a little fir, and struck it with the hatchet: the first blow cut through the bark and left a 'blaze,' but the second did not produce anything like so much effect; the third, too, rebounded, though the tree shook to its top. Bevis hit it a fourth time, not at all pleased that the fir would not cut more easily, and then, fancying he saw something floating down the stream, dropped his hatchet and went to the edge to see.

It was a large fly struggling aimlessly, and as it was carried past a spot where the bank overhung and the grasses drooped into the water, a fish rose and took it, only leaving just the least circle of wavelet. Next came a dead dry twig, which a wood-pigeon had knocked off with his strong wings as he rose out of the willow-top where his nest was. The little piece of wood stayed awhile in the hollow where the brook had worn away the bank, and under which was a deep hole; there the current lingered, then it moved quicker, till, reaching a place where the channel was narrower, it began to rush and rotate, and shot past a long green flag bent down, which ceaselessly fluttered in the swift water. Bevis took out his knife and began to cut a stick to make a toy boat, and then, throwing it down, wished he had a canoe to go floating along the stream and shooting over the bay; then he looked up the brook at the old pollard willow he once tried to chop down for that purpose.

The old pollard was hollow, large enough for him to stand

inside on the soft, crumbling 'touchwood,' and it seemed quite dead, though there were green rods on the top, yet it was so hard he could not do much with it, and wearied his arm to no purpose. Besides, since he had grown bigger he had thought it over, and considered that even if he burnt the tree down with fire, as he had half a mind to do, having read that that was the manner of the savages in wild countries, still he would have to stop both ends with board, and he was afraid that he could not make it watertight.

And it was only the same reason that stayed his hand from barking an oak or a beech to make a canoe of the bark, remembering that if he got the bark off in one piece the ends would be open and it would not float properly. He knew how to bark a tree quite well, having helped the woodmen when the oaks were thrown, and he could have carried the short ladder out and so cut it high enough up the trunk (while the tree stood). But the open ends puzzled him; nor could he understand nor get any one to explain to him how the wild men, if they used canoes like this, kept the water out at the end.

Once, too, he took the gouge and the largest chisel from the workshop, and the mallet with the beechwood head, and set to work to dig out a boat from a vast trunk of elm thrown long since, and lying outside the rickyard, whither it had been drawn under the timber-carriage. Now, the bark had fallen off this piece of timber from decay, the surface of the wood was scored and channelled by insects which had eaten their way along it. But though these little creatures had had no difficulty, Bevis with his gouge and his chisel and his mallet could make very little impression, and though he chipped out pieces very happily for half an hour, he had only formed a small hole. So that would not do; he left it, and the first shower filled the hole he had cut with water, and how the savages dug out their canoes with flint choppers he could not think, for he could

not cut off a willow twig with the sharpest splinter he could find.

Of course, he knew perfectly well that boats are built of plank, but if you try to build one you do not find it so easy; the planks are not to be fitted together by just thinking you will do it. That was more difficult to him than gouging out the huge elm trunk; Bevis could hardly smooth two planks to come together tight at the edge or even to overlap, nor could he bend them up at the end, and altogether it was a very cross-grained piece of work this making a boat.

Pan, the spaniel, sat down on the hard, dry, beaten earth of the workshop, and looked at Bevis puzzling over his plane and his pencil, his footrule, and the paper on which he had sketched his model; then up at Bevis's forehead, frowning over the trouble of it; next Pan curled round and began to bite himself for fleas, pushing up his nostril and snuffling and raging over them. No. This would not do; Bevis could not wait long enough; Bevis liked the sunshine and the grass under foot. Crash fell the plank and bang went the hammer as he flung it on the bench, and away they tore out into the field, the spaniel rolling in the grass, the boy kicking up the tall dandelions, catching the yellow disk under the toe of his boot and driving it up in the air.

But though thrown aside like the hammer, still the idea slumbered in his mind, and as Bevis stood by the brook, looking across at the old willow, and wishing he had a boat, all at once he thought what a capital raft the picture packing-case would make! The case was much larger than the picture which came in it; it had not perhaps been originally intended for that engraving. It was broad and flat: it had low sides; it would not be watertight, but perhaps he could make it—yes, it was just the very thing. He would float down the brook on it; perhaps he would cross the Longpond.

Like the wind he raced back home, up the meadow, through the garden, past the carthouse to the shed where he had left the case. He tilted it up against one of the uprights or pillars of the shed, and then stooped to see if daylight was visible anywhere between the planks. There were many streaks of light, chinks which must be caulked, where they did not fit. In the workshop there was a good heap of tow; he fetched it, and immediately began to stuff it in the openings with his pocket-knife. Some of the chinks were so wide, he filled them up with chips of wood, with the tow round the chips, so as to wedge tightly.

The pocket-knife did not answer well. He got a chisel, but that cut the tow, and was also too thick; then he thought of an old table-knife he had seen lying on the garden wall, left there by the man who had been set to weed the path with it. This did much better, but it was tedious work, very tedious work; he was obliged to leave it twice—once to have a swing, and stretch himself; the second time to get a hunch, or cog, as he called it, of bread and butter. He worked so hard he was so hungry. Round the loaf there were indentations, like a cogged wheel, such as the millwright made. He had one of these cogs of bread cut out, and well stuck over with pats of fresh butter, just made and fresh from the churn, not yet moulded and rolled into shape, a trifle salt, but delicious.

Then on again, thrusting the tow in with the knife, till he had used it all, and still there were a few chinks open. He thought he would get some oakum by picking a bit of rope to pieces: there was no old rope about, so he took out his pocket-knife and stole into the wagon-house, where, first looking round to be sure that no one was about, he slashed at the end of a cart-line. The thick rope was very hard, and it was difficult to cut it; it was twisted so tight, and the rain and the sun had toughened it besides, while the surface was case-hardened by rubbing against the straw of the loads it had bound. He haggled it off at last, but

when he tried to pick it to pieces he found the larger strands unwound tolerably well, but to divide them and part the fibres was so wearisome and so difficult that he did not know how to manage it. With a nail he hacked at it, and got quite red in the face, but the tough rope was not to be torn to fragments in a minute; he flung it down, then he recollected someone would see it, so he hurled it over the hedge into the lane.

He ran indoors to see if he could find anything that would do instead, and went up into the bench-room where there was another carpenter's bench (put up for amateur work), and hastily turned over everything; then he pulled out the drawer in his mamma's room, the drawer in which she kept odds and ends, and having upset everything, and mixed her treasures, he lighted on some rag which she kept always ready to bind round the fingers that used to get cut so often. For a makeshift this, he thought, would do. He tore a long piece, left the drawer open, and ran to the shed with it. There was enough to fill the last chink he could see; so it was done. But it was a hundred and twenty yards to the brook, and though he could lift the case on one side at a time, he could not carry it.

He sat down on the stool (dragged out from the workshop) to think; why, of course he would fasten a rope to it, and so haul it along! Looking for a nail in the nail-box on the bench, for the rope must be tied to something, he saw a staple which would do much better than a nail, so he bored two holes with a gimlet, and drove the staple into the raft. There was a cord in the summer-house by the swing, which he used for a lasso—he had made a running noose, and could throw it over anything or anybody who would keep still—this he fetched, and put through the staple. With the cord over his shoulder he dragged the raft by main force out of the shed, across the hard, dry ground, through the gate, and into the field. It came very hard, but it did come, and he thought he should do it.

The grass close to the rails was not long, and the load slipped rather better on it, but farther out into the field it was longer, and the edge of the case began to catch against it; and when he came to the furrows it was as much as he could manage, first to get it down into the furrow, next to lift it up a little, else it would not move, and then to pull it up the slope. By stopping awhile and then hauling he moved it across three of the furrows, but now the cord quite hurt his shoulder, and had begun to fray his jacket. When he looked back he was about thirty yards from where he had started, not half-way to the gateway, through which was another meadow, where the mowing grass was still higher.

Bevis sat down on the sward to rest, his face all hot with pulling, and almost thought he should never do it. There was a trail in the grass behind where the raft had passed like that left by a chain harrow. It wanted something to slip on; perhaps rollers would do like those they moved the great pieces of timber on to the saw-pit. As soon as he had got his breath again, Bevis went back to the shed, and searched round for some rollers. He could not find any wood ready that would do, but there was a heap of poles close by. He chose a large, round willow one, carried the stool down to it, got the end up on the stool, and worked away like a slave till he had sawn off three lengths.

These he took to the raft, put one under the front part, and arranged the other two a little way ahead. Next, having brought a stout stake from the shed, he began to lever the raft along, and was delighted at the ease with which it now moved. But this was only on the level ground and down the slope of the next furrow, so far it went very well, but there was a difficulty in getting it up the rise. As the grass grew longer, too, the rollers would not roll; and quite tired out with all this work, Bevis flung down his lever, and thought he would go indoors and sit down and play at something else.

First he stepped into the kitchen, as the door was open; it was a step down to it. The low white-washed ceiling and the beam across it glowed red from the roasting-fire of logs split in four, and built up on the hearth; the flames rushed up the vast, broad chimney—a bundle of flames a yard high, whose tips parted from the main tongues and rose disjointed for a moment by themselves: the tiny panes of yellowish-green glass, too, in the window reflected the light. Such a fire as makes one's lips moist at the thought of the juicy meats and the subtle sweetness imparted by the wood fuel, which has a volatile fragrance of its own. Bevis thought he would get the old iron spoon, and melt some lead, and cast some bullets in the mould—he had a mould, though they would not let him have a pistol—he knew where was there a piece of lead-pipe, and a battered bit of guttering that came off the house.

Or else he would put in a nail, make it white hot, and hammer it into an arrowhead, using the wrought-iron fire-dog as an anvil. The heat was so great, especially as it was a warm May day, that before he could decide he was obliged to go out of the kitchen, and so wandered into the sitting-room. His fishing-rod stood in the corner where he had left it; he had brought it in because the second joint was splitting, and he intended (as the ferrule was lost) to bind it round and round with copper wire. But he did not feel much inclined to do that either; he had half a mind to go up in the bench-room, and take the lock of the old gun to pieces to see how it worked. Only the stock (with the lock attached) was left; the barrel was gone.

While he was thinking he walked into the parlour, and seeing the bookcase open—the door was lined within with green material—put his hand involuntarily on an old grey book. The covers were grey and worn and loose; the back part had come off; the edges were rough and difficult to turn over, because they had not been cut by machinery; the margin, too, was yellow and frayed. Bevis's fingers

went direct to the rhyme he had read so often, and in an instant everything around him disappeared, room and bookcase and the garden without, and he forgot himself, for he could see the 'bolde men in their deeds,' he could hear the harper and the minstrel's song, the sound of trumpet and the clash of steel; how—

> As they were drinking ale and wine
> Within Kyng Estmere's halle:
> When will ye marry a wyfe, brother,
> A wyfe to glad us all?

How the kyng and 'Adler younge' rode to the wooing, and the fight they had, fighting so courageously against crowds of enemies—

> That soone they have slayne the Kempery men,
> Or forst them forth to flee.

Bevis put himself so into it, that he did it all, *he* bribed the porter, *he* played the harp, and drew the sword; these were no words to him, it was a living picture in which he himself acted.

He was inclined to go up into the garret and fetch down the old cutlass that was there among the lumber, and go forth into the meadow and slash away at 'gix' and parsley and burdocks, and kill them all for Kempery men, just as he cut them down before when he was St. George. As he was starting for the cutlass he recollected that the burdocks and the rest were not up high enough yet, the Paynim scoundrels had not grown tall enough in May to be slain with any pleasure, and a sense that you were valiantly swording. Still there was an old wooden bedstead up there, on which he could hoist up a sail, and sail away to any port he chose, to Spain, or Rhodes, or where the lotus-eaters lived. But his mind, so soon as he had put down the grey book, ran still on his raft, and out he raced to see it again, fresh and bright from the rest of leaving it alone for a little while.

CHAPTER II

THE LAUNCH

As he came near a butterfly rose from the raft, having stayed a moment to see what this could be among the dandelions and buttercups, but Bevis was too deeply occupied to notice it. The cord was of no use; the rollers were of no use; the wheelbarrow occurred to him, but he could not lift it on, besides it was too large, nor could he have moved it if it would go on. Pan was not strong enough to help him haul, even if he would submit to be harnessed, which was doubtful. The cart-horses were all out at work, nor, indeed, had they been in the stable, would he have dared to touch them.

What he wanted to do was to launch his raft before any one saw or guessed what he was about, so that it might be a surprise to them and a triumph to him. Especially he was anxious to do it before Mark came; he might come across the fields any minute, or along the road, and Bevis wished to be afloat, so that Mark might admire his boat, and ask permission to step on board. Mark might appear directly; it was odd he had not heard his whistle before. Full of this thought, away went Bevis back to the house, to ask Polly the dairymaid to help him; but she hunted him out with the mop, being particularly busy that day with the butter, and quite deaf to all his offers and promises. As he came out he looked up the field, and remembered that John was stopping the gaps, and was at work by himself that day; perhaps he would slip away and help him.

He raced up the meadow and found the labourer, with his thick, white, leather gloves and billhook, putting thorn bushes in the gaps, which no one had made so much as Bevis himself.

'Come and help me,' said Bevis. Now John was willing

enough to leave his work and help Bevis to do anything—for anything is sweeter than the work you ought to do—besides which he knew he could get Bevis to bring him out a huge mug of ale for it.

But he grinned and said nothing, and simply pointed through the hedge. Bevis looked, and there was the bailiff with his back against the great oak, under which he once went to sleep. The bailiff was older now, much older, and though he was so stout and big he did not do much work with his hands. He stood there, leaning his back against the oak, with his hazel staff in his hand, watching the stone-pickers, who were gathering up the bits of broken earthenware and rubbish from among the cowslips out of the way of the scythe; watching, too, the plough yonder in the arable field beyond; and with his eyes now and then on John. While those grey eyes were about, work, you may be sure, was not slack. So Bevis pouted, and picked up a stone, and threw it at the bailiff, taking good care, however, not to hit him. The stone fell in the hedge behind the bailiff, and made him start, as he could not think what creature it could be, for rabbits and weasels and other animals and birds move as silently as possible, and this made a sharp tap.

Bevis returned slowly down the meadow, and as he came near the house, having now given up hope of getting the raft to the brook, he caught sight of a cart-horse outside the stable. He ran and found the carter's lad, who had been sent home with the horse; the horse had been hauling small pieces of timber out of the mowing-grass with a chain, and the lad was just going to take off the harness.

'Stop,' said Bevis, 'stop directly, and hitch the chain on my raft.'

The boy hesitated; he dared not disobey the carter, and had been in trouble for pleasing Bevis before.

'This instant,' said Bevis, stamping his foot; 'I 'm your master.'

'No; that you beant,' said the boy slowly, very particular as to facts; 'your feyther be my master.'

'You do it this minute,' said Bevis, hot in the face, 'or I 'll *kill* you; but if you 'll do it I 'll give you—sixpence.'

The boy still hesitated, but he grinned; then he looked round, then he turned to the horse's head—unwilling, for the animal thought he was going to the manger—and did as Bevis told him. Behind the strong cart-horse the raft was nothing, it left a trail all across the grass right down to the brook; Bevis led the way to the drinking-place, where the ground sloped to the water. The boy, once embarked in the business, worked with a will—highly delighted himself with the idea—and he and Bevis together pushed the raft into the stream.

'Now you hold the rope,' said Bevis, 'while I get in,' and he put one foot on the raft.

Just then there came a whistle, first a long low call, then a quaver, then two short calls repeated.

That 's Mark,' said Bevis, and in he hastened. 'Push me off,' for one edge of the raft touched the sandy shore.

'Holloa!' shouted Mark, racing down the meadow from the gateway; 'stop a minute! let me——'

'Push,' said Bevis.

The boy shoved the raft off; it floated very well, but the moment it was free of the ground and Bevis's weight had to be entirely supported, the water squirted in around the edges.

'You 'll be drownded,' said the carter's lad.

'Pooh!' said Bevis.

'I shall jump in,' said Mark, making as if he were about to leap.

'If you do I 'll hit you,' said Bevis, doubling his fists; 'I say——'

For the water rushed in rapidly, and was already half an inch deep. When he caulked his vessel, he stopped all the seams of the bottom, but he had overlooked the chinks

round the edges, between the narrow planks that formed the gunwales or sides, and the bottom to which they were fastened.

Bevis moved towards the driest side of the raft, but directly he stepped there and depressed it with his weight the water rushed after him, and he was deeper than ever in it. It came even over his boots.

'Let I get in,' said the boy; 'mine be water-tights.'

'Pull me back,' said Bevis.

Mark seized the rope, and he and the boy gave such a tug that Bevis, thrown off his balance, must have fallen into the brook had he not jumped ashore and escaped with one foot wet through to the ankle.

'Yaa—you!' they heard a rough voice growling, like a dog muttering a bark in his throat, and instantly the carter's lad felt a grip on the back of his neck. It was the bailiff who marched him up the meadow, holding the boy by the neck with one hand and leading the cart-horse with the other. Bevis and Mark were too full of the raft even to notice that their assistant had been haled off.

First they pulled till they had got it ashore; then they tilted it up to let the water run out; then they examined the chinks where it had come in.

'Here 's my handkerchief,' said Mark, 'put that in.'

The handkerchief, a very dirty one, was torn into shreds and forced into the chinks. It was not enough, so Bevis tore up his; still there were holes. Bevis roamed up and down the grass in his excitement, gazing round for something to stop these leaks.

'I know,' said he suddenly, 'moss will do. Come on.'

He made for a part of the meadow much overshadowed by trees, where the moss threatened to overcome the grass altogether, so well did it flourish in the coolness and moisture, for the dew never dried there even at noonday. The bailiff had it torn up by the harrow, but it was no good, it would grow. Bevis always got moss from here to put

in his tin can for the worms when he went fishing. Mark was close behind him, and together they soon had a quantity of moss. After they had filled the chinks as they thought, they tried the boat again, Bevis insisting on his right to get in first as it was his property. But it still leaked, so they drew it out once more and again caulked the seams. To make it quite tight Bevis determined to put some clay as well, to line the chinks with it like putty. So they had to go home to the garden, get the trowel out of the summer-house where Bevis kept such things, and then dig a few lumps of clay out of the mound.

There was only one place where there was any clay accessible, they knew the spot well—was there anything they did not know? Working up the lumps of clay with their hands and the water so as to soften and render it plastic, they carefully lined the chinks, and found when they launched the raft that this time it floated well and did not admit a single drop. For the third time, Bevis stepped on board, balancing himself with a pole he had brought down from the garden, for he had found before that it was difficult to stand upright on a small raft. Mark pushed him off: Bevis kept one end of the pole touching the bottom, and so managed very well. He guided the raft out of the drinking-place, which was like a little pond beside the brook, and into the stream.

There the current took it, and all he had to do was to keep it from grounding on the shallows, where the flags were rising out of the mud, or striking against the steep banks where the cowslips overhung the water. With his feet somewhat apart to stand the firmer, his brow frowning (with resolution), and the pole tight in his hands—all grimed with clay—Bevis floated slowly down the stream. The sun shone hot and bright, and he had, of course, left his hat on the sward where it had fallen off as he stooped to the caulking: the wind blew and lifted his hair: his feet were wet. But he never noticed the heat nor the wind,

nor his wet feet, nor his clayey hands. He had done it—he was quite lost in his raft.

Round the bend the brook floated him gently, past the willow where the wood-pigeon built (he was afraid to come near his nest while they were about), past the thick hawthorn bushes white with may-bloom, under which the blackbirds love to stay in the hottest days in the cool shadow by the water. Where there were streaks of white sand sifted by the stream from the mud, he could see the bottom: under the high bank there was a swirl as if the water wrestled with something under the surface: a water-rat, which had watched him coming from a tiny terrace, dived with a sound like a stone dropped quietly in: the stalks of flags grazed the bottom of the raft, he could hear them as it drew on: a jack struck and rushed wildly up and down till he found a way to slip by; the raft gave a heave and shot swiftly forward where there had once been a bay and was still a fall of two inches or so: a bush projected so much that he could with difficulty hold the boughs aside and prevent the thorns from scratching his face: a snag scraped the bottom of the boat and the jerk nearly overthrew him —he did not mind that, he feared lest the old stump had started a seam, but fortunately it had not done so.

Then there was a straight course, a broad and open reach, at which he shouted with delight. The wind came behind and pushed his back like a sail, and the little silvery ripples ran before him, and dashed against the shore, destroying themselves and their shadows under them at the same time. The raft floated without piloting here, steadily on. Bevis lifted his pole and waved his hand in triumph.

From the gateway, the carter's lad watched him; he had got away from the angry bailiff. From the garden ha-ha, near the rhubarb patch, Polly, the dairymaid watched him, gesticulating every now and then with her arms, for she had been sent to call him to dinner. Mark, wild with envy and admiration and desire to share the voyage, walked on

the bank, begging to come in, for Bevis to get out or let him join him, threatening to leap aboard from the high bank where the current drifted to the raft right under him, pulling off his shoes and stockings to wade in and seize the craft by main force; then, changing his mind, shouting to Bevis to mind a boulder in the brook, and pointing out the place.

The raft swept with steady, easy motion down the straight broad reach; Bevis did not need his pole, he stood without its help, all aglow with joy.

The raft came to another bend, and Bevis, with his pole, guided it round, and then, looking up, stamped his foot with vexation, for there was an ancient, hollow willow right in front, so bowed down that its head obstructed the fairway of the stream. He had quite hoped to get down to the Peninsula, and to circumnavigate it, and even shoot the cataract of the dam below, and go under the arch of the bridge, and away yet farther. He was not fifty yards from the Peninsula, and Mark had run there to meet him; but here was this awkward tree, and before he could make up his mind what to do, bump the raft struck the willow, then it swung slowly round and one side grounded on the bank, and he was at a standstill.

He hit the willow with his pole, but that was of no use, and called to Mark. Bevis pushed the willow with his pole, Mark pulled at a branch, and together they could shake it, but they could not move it out of the way; the stream was blocked as if a boom had been fastened across it. The voyage was over.

While they consulted, Polly came down, having failed to make them hear from the garden, and after she had shaken them each by the shoulder brought them to reason. Though she would have failed in that too had not the willow been there, not for dinner or anything would Bevis have abandoned his adventure, so bent was he always on the business he had in hand.

But the willow was obstinate, they could not get past it, so reluctantly he agreed to go home. First Polly had to fetch his hat, which was two hundred yards away on the grass by the drinking-place; then Mark had to put his shoes and stockings on, and take one off again because there was a fragment of stone in it. Next, Bevis had to step into the raft again—a difficult thing to do from the tree—in order to get the cord fastened to the staple to tie it up, not that there was the least risk of the raft floating away, still these things, as you know, ought to be done quite properly.

After he had tied the cord or painter to a branch of the willow as firmly as possible, at last he consented to come. But then catching sight of the carter's lad, he had first to give him his sixpence, and also to tell him that if he dared go near the raft, even to look at it, he would be put into the brook. Besides which, he had to wash his hands, and by the time Mark and he reached the table the rest had finished. The people looked at them rather blackly, but they did not mind or notice in the least, for their minds were full of projects to remove the willow, about which they whispered to each other.

Pan raced beside them after dinner to the ha-ha wall, down which they jumped one after the other into the meadow. The spaniel hesitated on the brink, not that he feared the leap, which he had so often taken, but reflection checked him. He watched them a little way as they ran for the brook, then turned and walked very slowly back to the house; for he knew that now dinner was over, if he waited till he was remembered, a plateful would come out for him.

CHAPTER III

THE MISSISSIPPI

THEY found the raft as they had left it, except that petals of the may-bloom, shaken from the hawthorn bushes by the breeze, as they came floating down the stream had lodged against the vessel like a white line on the water. Already, too, the roach, which love a broad shadow to play about its edge, had come underneath, but when they felt the shaking of the bank from the footsteps turned aside, and let the current drift them down. Bevis fetched his hatchet from the Peninsula and began to hack at the willow; Mark, not without some difficulty, got leave to climb into the raft and sit in the centre. The chips flew, some fell on the grass, some splashed into the brook; Bevis made a broad notch just as he had seen the men do it; and though his arm was slender, the fire behind it drove the edge of the steel into the wood. The willow shook, and its branches, which touched the water, ruffled the surface.

But though the trunk was hollow it was a long way through, and when Bevis began to tire he had only cut in about three inches. Then Mark had to work, but before he had given ten strokes, Bevis said it was of no use chopping, they could never do it, they must get the grub-axe. So they went back to the house, and carried the ungainly tool down to the tree.

It was too cumbrous for them, they pecked up a little turf, and just disturbed the earth, and then threw the clumsy thing on the grass. Next they thought of the great saw—the cross-cut—the men used, one at each end, to saw through timber; but that was out of their reach, purposely put up high in the workshop, so that they should not meddle with it or cut themselves with its terrible teeth.

'I know,' said Mark, 'we must make a fire, and burn the tree; we are savages, you know, and that is how they do it.'

'How silly you are!' said Bevis. 'We are *not* savages, and I shall not play at that. We have just discovered this river, and we are going down it on our raft; and if we do not reach some place to-night and build a fort, very likely the savages will shoot us. I believe I heard one shouting just now; there was something rustled, I am sure, in the forest.'

He pointed at the thick double-mound hedge about a hundred yards distant.

'What river is it?' said Mark. 'Is it the Amazon, or the Congo, or the Yellow River, or the Nile——'

'It is the Mississippi, of course,' said Bevis, quite decided and at ease as to that point. 'Can't you see that piece of weed there? My papa says that weed came from America, so I am sure it is the Mississippi, and nobody has ever floated down it before, and there 's no one that can read within a thousand miles.'

'Then what shall we do?'

'Oh, there 's always something you can do. If we could only get a beaver now to nibble through it. There 's always something you can do. I know,' and Bevis jumped up delighted at his idea, 'we can bore a hole, and blow it up with gunpowder!'

'Let us fetch an auger,' said Mark. 'The gimlet is not big enough.'

'Be quick,' said Bevis. 'Run back to the settlement, and get the auger; I will mind the raft and keep off the savages; and, I say, bring a spear and the cutlass; and—I SAY——'

But Mark was too far, and in too much of a hurry to hear a word. Bevis, tired of chopping, rolled over on his back on the grass, looking up at the sky. The buttercups rose high above his head, the wind blew and cooled his heated forehead, and a humble-bee hummed along: borne by the

breeze from the grass there came the sweet scent of green things growing in the sunshine. Far up he saw the swallows climbing in the air; they climbed a good way almost straight up, and then suddenly came slanting down again.

While he lay there, he distinctly heard the Indians rustling again in the forest. He raised himself on one arm, but could not see them; then recollecting that he must try to conceal himself, he reclined again, and thought how he should be able to repel an attack without weapons. There was the little hatchet, he could snatch up that and defend himself. Perhaps they would sink the raft? Perhaps when Mark returned they had better tow it back up stream, and draw it safely ashore at home, and then return to the work of clearing the obstruction. As he lay with his knees up among the buttercups he heard the thump, thump of Mark's feet rushing down the hill in eager haste with the auger. So he sat up, and beckoned to him to be quiet, and explained to him when he arrived that the Indians were certainly about. They must tow the raft back to the drinking-place. Bevis untied the cord with which the raft was fastened to the willow, and stepped on board.

'Don't pull too quick,' he said to Mark, giving him the cord; 'or perhaps I shall run aground.'

'But you floated down,' said Mark. 'Let me get in, and you tow; it 's my turn.'

'Your turn?' shouted Bevis, standing up as straight as a bolt. 'This is *my* raft.'

'But you always have everything, and you floated down, and I have not; you have everything, and——'

'You are a great story,' said Bevis, stamping so that the raft shook and the ripples rushed from under it. 'I don't have everything, and you have more than half; and I gave you my engine and that box of gun-caps yesterday; and I hate you, and you are a big story.'

Out he scrambled, and seizing Mark by the shoulders, thrust him towards the raft with such force that it was

with difficulty Mark saved himself from falling into the brook. He clung to the willow—the bark gave way under his fingers—but as he slipped, he slung himself over the raft, and dropped on it.

'Take the pole,' said Bevis, still very angry, and looking black as thunder. 'Take the pole, and steer so as not to run in the mud, and not to hit against the bank. Now then,' and putting the cord over his shoulder, off he started.

Mark had as much as ever he could do to keep the raft from striking one side or the other.

'Please don't go so fast,' he said.

Bevis went slower, and towed steadily in silence. After they had passed the hawthorn under the may-bloom, Mark said 'Bevis,' but Bevis did not answer.

'Bevis,' repeated Mark, 'I have had enough now; stop, and you get in.'

'I shall not,' said Bevis. 'You are a great story.'

In another minute Mark spoke again:

'Let me get out and tow you now.' Bevis did not reply. 'I say—I say—I say, Bevis.'

No use. Bevis towed him the whole way, till the raft touched the shallow shore of the drinking-place. Then Mark got out and helped him drag the vessel well up on the ground, so that it should not float away.

'Now,' said Bevis, after it was quite done. 'Will you be a story any more?'

'No,' said Mark, 'I will not be a story again.'

So they walked back side by side to the willow tree; Mark, who was really in the right, feeling in the wrong. At the tree Bevis picked up the auger, and told him to bore the hole. Mark began, but suddenly stopped.

'What 's the good of boring the hole when we have not got any gunpowder?' said he.

'No more we have,' said Bevis. 'This is very stupid, and they will not let me have any, though I have got some money, and I have a great mind to buy some and hide it.

Just as if we did not know how to use powder, and as if we did not know how to shoot! Oh, I know! We will go and cut a bough of alder—there 's ever so many alders by the Longpond—and burn it and make charcoal; it makes the best charcoal, you know, and they always use it for gunpowder, and we can get some saltpetre. Let me see——'

'The bailiff had some saltpetre the other day,' said Mark.

'So he did: it is in the dairy. Oh yes, and I know where some sulphur is. It is in the garden-house, where the tools are, in the orchard; it 's what they use to smother the bees with——'

'That 's on brown paper,' said Mark; 'that won't do.'

'No, it 's not. You have to melt it to put it on paper, and dip the paper in. This is in a piece, it is like a short bar, and we will pound it up and mix them all together and make capital gunpowder.'

'Hurrah!' cried Mark, throwing down the auger. 'Let 's go and cut the alder. Come on!'

'Stop,' said Bevis. 'Lean on me, and walk slow. Don't you know you have caught a dreadful fever, from being in the swamps by the river, and you can hardly walk, and you are very thin and weak? Lean on my arm and hang your head.'

Mark hung his head, turning his rosy cheeks down to the buttercups, and dragged his sturdy fever-stricken limbs along with an effort.

'Humph!' said a gruff voice.

'It 's the Indians!' cried Bevis, startled; for they were so absorbed they had not heard the bailiff come up behind them. They quite jumped, as if about to be scalped.

'What be you doing to that tree?' said the bailiff.

'Find out,' said Bevis. 'It 's not your tree: and why don't you say when you 're coming?'

'I saw you from the hedge,' said the bailiff. 'I was telling John where to cut the bushes from for the new

harrow.' That caused the rustling in the forest. 'You 'll never chop he down.'

'That we shall, if we want to.'

'No, you won't—he stops your ship.'

'It isn't a ship: it 's a raft.'

'Well, you can't get by.'

'That we can.'

'I thinks you be stopped,' said the bailiff, having now looked at the tree more carefully. 'He be main thick' —with a certain sympathy for stolid, inanimate obstruction.

'I tell you, people like us are never stopped by anything,' said Bevis. 'We go through forests, and we float down rivers, and we shoot tigers, and move the biggest trees ever seen—don't we, Mark?'

'Yes, that we do: nothing is anything to us.'

'Of course not,' said Bevis. 'And if we can't chop it down or blow it up, as we mean to, then we dig round it. Oh, Mark, I say! I forgot! Let 's dig a canal round it.'

'How silly we were never to think of that!' said Mark. 'A canal is the very thing—from here to the creek.'

He meant where the stream curved to enclose the Peninsula: the proposed canal would make the voyage shorter.

'Cut some sticks—quick!' said Bevis. 'We must plug out our canal—that is what they always do first, whether it is a canal, or a railway, or a drain, or anything. And I must draw a plan. I must get my pocket-book and pencil. Come on, Mark, and get the spade while I get my pencil.'

Off they ran. The bailiff leaned on his hazel staff, one hand against the willow, and looked down into the water, as calmly as the sun itself reflected there. When he had looked awhile he shook his head and grunted: then he stumped away; and after a dozen yards or so, glanced back, grunted, and shook his head again. It could not be done. The tree was thick, the earth hard—no such thing: his sympathy, in a dull, unspoken way, was with the immovable.

Mark went to work with the spade, throwing the turf he dug up into the brook; while Bevis, lying at full length on the grass, drew his plan of the canal. He drew two curving lines parallel, and half an inch apart, to represent the bend of the brook, and then two, as straight as he could manage, across, so as to shorten the distance, and avoid the obstruction. The rootlets of the grass held tight, when Mark tried to lift the spadeful he had dug, so that he could not tear them off.

He had to chop them at the side with his spade first, and then there was a root of the willow in the way; a very obstinate, stout root, for which the little hatchet had to be brought to cut it. Under the softer turf the ground was very hard, as it had long been dry, so that by the time Bevis had drawn his plan and stuck in little sticks to show the course the canal was to take, Mark had only cleared about a foot square, and four or five inches deep, just at the edge of the bank, where he could thrust it into the stream.

'I have been thinking,' said Bevis, as he came back from the other end of the line, 'I have been thinking what we are, now we are making this canal?'

'Yes,' said Mark, 'what are we?—they do not make canals on the Mississippi. Is this the Suez Canal?'

'Oh no,' said Bevis. 'This is not Africa; there is no sand, and there are no camels about. Stop a minute. Put down that spade, don't dig another bit till we know what we are.'

Mark put down the spade, and they both thought very hard indeed, looking straight at one another.

'I know,' said Bevis, drawing a long breath. 'We are digging a canal through Mount Athos, and we are Greeks.'

'But was it the Greeks?' said Mark. 'Are you sure——'

'Quite sure,' said Bevis. 'Perfectly quite sure. Besides, it doesn't matter. *We* can do it if they did not, don't you see?'

'So we can: and who are you then, if we are Greeks?'

'I am Alexander the Great.'

'And who am I?'

'Oh, you—you are anybody.'

'But I *must* be somebody,' said Mark, 'else it will not do.'

'Well, you are: let me see—Pisistratus.'

'Who was Pisistratus?'

'I don't know,' said Bevis. 'It doesn't matter in the least. Now dig.'

Pisistratus dug till he came to another root, which Alexander the Great chopped off for him with the hatchet. Pisistratus dug again and uncovered a water-rat's hole which went down aslant to the water. They both knelt on the grass, and peered down the round tunnel: at the bottom where the water was, some of the fallen petals of the may-bloom had come in and floated there.

'This would do splendidly to put some gunpowder in and blow up, like the miners do,' said Bevis. 'And I believe that is the proper way to make a canal: it is how they make tunnels, I am sure.'

'Greeks are not very good,' said Mark. 'I don't like Greeks: don't let 's be Greeks any longer. The Mississippi was very much best.'

'So it was,' said Bevis. 'The Mississippi is the nicest. I am not Alexander, and you are not Pisistratus. This is the Mississippi.'

'Let us have another float down,' said Mark. 'Let me float down, and I will drag you all the way up this time.'

'All right,' said Bevis.

So they launched the raft, and Mark got in and floated down, and Bevis walked on the bank, giving him directions how to pilot the vessel, which as before was brought up by the willow leaning over the water. Just as they were preparing to tow it back again, and Bevis was climbing out on the willow to get into the raft, they heard a splashing down the brook.

'What 's that?' said Mark. 'Is it Indians?'

'No, it 's an alligator. At least, I don't know. Perhaps it 's a canoe full of Indians. Give me the pole, quick! There now, take the hatchet. Look out!'

The splashing increased; then there was a 'Yowp!' and Pan, the spaniel, suddenly appeared out of the flags by the osier-bed. He raced across the ground there, and jumped into the brook again, and immediately a moorcock, which he had been hunting, scuttled along the water, beating with his wings, and scrambling with his long legs hanging down, using both air and water to fly from his enemy. As he came near he saw Bevis on the willow, and rose out of the brook over the bank. Bevis hit at him with his pole, but missed, and Mark hurled the hatchet in vain. The moorcock flew straight across the meadow to another withy-bed, and then disappeared. It was only by threats that they stopped the spaniel from following.

Pan having got his plateful by patiently waiting about the doorway, after he had licked his chops, and turned up the whites of his eyes, to see if he could persuade them to give him any more, walked into the rickyard, and choosing a favourite spot upon some warm straw—for straw becomes quite hot under sunshine — lay down and took a nap. When he awoke, having settled matters with the fleas, he strolled back to the ha-ha wall, and, seeing Bevis and Mark still busy by the brook, went down to know what they were doing. But first going to a place he well knew to lap he scented the moorcock, and gave chase.

'Come here,' said Bevis; and, seizing the spaniel by the skin of his neck, he dragged him in the raft, stepped in quickly after, and held Pan while Mark hauled at the tow-line. But when Bevis had to take the pole to guide the raft from striking the bank Pan jumped out in a moment, preferring to swim rather than to ride in comfort, nor could any persuasion or threats get him on again. He barked along the shore, while Mark hauled and Bevis steered the craft.

Having beached her at the drinking-place on the shelving strand, they thought they had better go up the river a little way, and see if there were any traces of Indians; and, following the windings of the stream, they soon came to the hatch. Above the hatch the water was smooth, as it usually is where it is deep and approaching the edge, and Bevis's quick eye caught sight of a tiny ripple there, near one bank, so tiny that it hardly extended across the brook, and disappeared after the third wavelet.

'Keep Pan there!' he said. 'Hit him—hit him harder than that; he doesn't mind.'

Mark punched the spaniel, who crouched; but, nevertheless, his body crept, as it were, towards the hatch, where Bevis was climbing over. Bevis took hold of the top rail, put his foot on the rail below, all green and slippery with weeds where the water splashed, like the rocks where the sea comes, then his other foot further along, and so got over with the deep water in front, and the roar of the fall under, and the bubbles rushing down the stream. The bank was very steep, but there was a notch to put the foot in, and a stout hawthorn stem—the thorns on which had long since been broken off for the purpose—gave him something to hold to and by which to lift himself up.

Then he walked stealthily along the bank—it overhung the dark, deep water, and seemed about to slip in under him. There was a plantation of trees on that side, and on the other a hawthorn hedge, so that it was a quiet and sheltered spot. As he came to the place where he had seen the ripple, he looked closer, and in among a bunch of rushes, with the green stalks standing up all round it, he saw a moorhen's nest. It was made of rushes, twined round like a wreath, or perhaps more like a large green turban, and there were three or four young moorhens in it. The old bird had slipped away as he came near, and diving under the surface rose ten yards off under a projecting bush.

Bevis dropped on his knee to take one of the young birds, but in an instant they rolled out of the nest, with their necks thrust out in front, and fell splash in the water, where they swam across, one with a piece of shell clinging to its back, and another piece of shell was washed from it by the water. Pan was by his side in a minute; he had heard the splash, and seen the young moorhens, and with a whine, as Mark kicked him—unable to hold him any longer—he rushed across.

'They are such pretty, dear little things,' said Bevis, in an ecstasy of sentiment, calling to Mark. 'Lie down!' banging Pan with a dead branch which he hastily snatched up. The spaniel's back sounded hollow as the wood rebounded, and broke on his ribs. 'Such dear little things! I would not have them hurt for anything.'

Bang again on Pan's back, who gave up the attempt, knowing from sore experience that Bevis was not to be trifled with. But by the time Mark had got there the little moorhens had hidden in the grasses beside the stream, though one swam out for a minute, and then concealed itself again.

'Don't you love them?' said Bevis. 'I do. I 'll *smash* you'—to Pan, cowering at his feet.

The moorhens did not appear again, so they went back and sat on the top of the steep bank, their legs dangling over the edge above the bubbling water.

A broad, cool shadow from the trees had fallen over the hatch, for the afternoon had gone on, and the sun was declining behind them over the western hills. A broad, cool shadow, whose edges were far away, so that they were in the midst of it. The thrushes sang in the ashes, for they knew that the quiet evening, with the dew they love, was near. A bullfinch came to the hawthorn hedge just above the hatch, looked in and out once or twice, and then stepped inside the spray near his nest. A yellow-hammer called from the top of a tree, and another answered him across the

field, Afar in the mowing-grass the crake lifted his voice, for he talks more as the sun sinks.

The swirling water went round and round under the fall, with lines of white bubbles rising, and quivering masses of yellowish foam ledged on the red rootlets under the bank and against the flags. The swirling water, ceaselessly beaten by the descending stream coming on it with a long-continued blow, returned to be driven away again. A steady roar of the fall, and a rippling sound above it of bursting bubbles and crossing wavelets of the hastening stream, notched and furrowed over stones, frowning in eager haste. The rushing and the coolness, and the song of the brook and the birds, and the sense of the sun sinking, stilled even Bevis and Mark a little while. They sat and listened, and said nothing; the delicious brook filled their ears with music.

Next minute Bevis seized Pan by the neck and pitched him over into the bubbles. In an instant, before he came to the surface, as his weight carried him beneath, Pan was swept down the stream, and when he came up he could not swim against it, but was drifted away till he made for the flags, which grew on a shallow spot. There he easily got out, shook himself, and waited for them to come over.

'I am hungry,' said Mark. 'What ought we to have to eat; what is right on the Mississippi? I don't believe they have tea. There is Polly shouting for us.'

'No,' said Bevis thoughtfully; 'I don't think they do. How stupid of her to stand there shouting and waving her handkerchief, as if we could not find our way straight across the trackless prairie. I know—we will have some honey! Don't you know? Of course the hunters find lots of wild honey in the hollow trees. We will have some honey; there 's a big jar full.'

So they got over the hatch, and went home, leaving their tools scattered hither and thither beside the Mississippi. They climbed up the ha-ha wall, putting the toes of their

boots where the flat stones of which it was built, without mortar, were farthest apart, and so made steps while they could hold to the wiry grass-tufts on the top.

'Where 's your hat?' said Polly to Bevis.

'I don't know,' said Bevis. 'I suppose it 's in the brook. It doesn't matter.'

CHAPTER IV

DISCOVERY OF THE NEW SEA

NEXT morning Bevis went out into the meadow to try and find a plant whose leaves, or one of them, always pointed to the north, like a green compass lying on the ground. There was one in the prairies by which the hunters directed themselves across those oceans of grass without a landmark as the mariners at sea. Why should there not be one in the meadows here—in these prairies—by which to guide himself from forest to forest, from hedge to hedge, where there was no path? If there was a path it was not proper to follow it, nor ought you to know your way; you ought to find it by sign.

He had 'blazed' ever so many boughs of the hedges with the hatchet, or his knife if he had not got the hatchet with him, to recognize his route through the woods. When he found a nest begun or finished, and waiting for the egg, he used to cut a 'blaze'—that is, to peel off the bark—or make a notch, or cut a bough off about three yards from the place, so that he might easily return to it, though hidden with foliage. No doubt the grass had a secret of this kind, and could tell him which was the way, and which was the north and south if he searched long enough.

So the raft being an old story now, as he had had it a day, Bevis went out into the field, looking very carefully

down into the grass. Just by the path there were many plantains, but their long, narrow leaves did not point in any particular direction, no two plants had their leaves parallel. The blue scabious had no leaves to speak of, nor had the red knapweed, nor the yellow rattle, nor the white moon-daisies, nor golden buttercups, nor red sorrel. There were stalks and flowers, but the plants of the mowing-grass, in which he had no business to be walking, had very little leaf. He tried to see if the flowers turned more one way than the other, or bowed their heads to the north, as men seem to do, taking that pole as their guide, but none did so. They leaned in any direction, as the wind had left them, or as the sun happened to be when they burst their green bonds and came forth to the light.

The wind came past as he looked and stroked everything the way it went, shaking white pollen from the bluish tops of the tall grasses. The wind went on and left him and the grasses to themselves. 'How should I know which was the north or the south or the west from these?' Bevis asked himself, without framing any words to his question. There was no knowing. Then he walked to the hedge to see if the moss grew more on one side of the elms than the other, or if the bark was thicker and rougher.

After he had looked at twenty trees he could not see much difference; those in the hedge had the moss thickest on the eastern side (he knew which was east very well himself, and wanted to see if the moss knew), and those in the lane just through it had the moss thickest on their western side, which was clearly because of the shadow. The trees were really in a double row, running north and south, and the coolest shadow was in between them, and so the moss grew there most. Nor were the boughs any longer or bigger any side more than the other, it varied as the tree was closely surrounded with other trees, for each tree repelled its neighbour. None of the trees, nor the moss, nor grasses, cared anything at all about north or south.

Bevis sat down in the mowing-grass, though he knew the bailiff would have been angry at such a hole being made in it; and when he was sitting on the ground it rose as high as his head. He could see nothing but the sky, and while he sat there looking up he saw that the clouds all drifted one way, towards his house. Presently a starling came past, also flying straight for the house, and after a while another. Next three bees went over as straight as a line, all going one after another that way. The bees went because they had gathered as much honey as they could carry, and were hastening home without looking to the right or to the left. The starlings went because they had young in their nests in a hole of the roof by the chimney, and they had found some food for their fledglings. So now he could find his way home across the pathless prairie by going the same way as the clouds, the bees, and the starlings.

But when he had reached home he recollected that he ought to know the latitude, and that there were Arabs or some other people in Africa who found out the latitude of the place they were in by gazing at the sun through a tube. Bevis considered a little, and then went to the rickyard, where there was a large elder bush, and cut a straight branch between the knots with his knife. He peeled it, and then forced out the pith, and thus made a tube. Next he took a thin board, and scratched a circle on it with the point of the compasses, and divided it into degrees. Round the tube he bent a piece of wire, and put the ends through a gimlet-hole in the centre of the board. The ends were opened apart, so as to fasten the tube to the board, allowing it to rotate round the circle. Two gimlet holes were bored at the top corners of the board, and string passed through so that the instrument could be attached to a tree or post.

He was tying it to one of the young walnut trees as an upright against which to work his astrolabe, when Mark arrived, and everything had to be explained to him. After

they had glanced through the tube, and decided that the raft was at least ten degrees distant, it was clearly of no use to go to it to-day, as they could not reach it under a week's travel. The best thing, Mark thought, would be to continue their expedition in some other direction.

'Let 's go round the Longpond,' said Bevis; 'we have never been quite round it.'

'So we will,' said Mark. 'But we shall not be back to dinner.'

'As if travellers ever thought of dinner! Of course we shall take our provisions with us.'

'Let 's go and get our spears,' said Mark.

'Let 's take Pan,' said Bevis.

'Where is your old compass?' said Mark.

'Oh, I know—and I must make a map; wait a minute. We ought to have a medicine chest; the savages will worry us for physic: and very likely we shall have dreadful fevers.'

'So we shall, of course; but perhaps there are wonderful plants to cure us, and we know them and the savages don't—there 's sorrel.'

'Of course, and we can nibble some hawthorn leaf.'

'Or a stalk of wheat.'

'Or some watercress.'

'Or some nuts.'

'No, certainly not; they 're not ripe,' said Bevis, 'and unripe fruit is very dangerous in tropical countries.'

'We ought to keep a diary,' said Mark. 'When we go to sleep who shall watch first, you or I?'

'We 'll light a fire,' said Bevis. 'That will frighten the lions: they will glare at us, but they can't stand fire—you hit them on the head with a burning stick.'

So they went in, and loaded their pockets with huge double slices of bread-and-butter done up in paper, apples, and the leg of a roast duck from the pantry. Then came the compass, an old one in a brass case; Mark broke his nails opening the case, which was tarnished, and the card

at once swung round to the north, pointing to the elms across the road from the window of the sitting-room. Bevis took the bow and three arrows, made of the young wands of hazel which grow straight, and Mark was armed with a spear, a long ash rod with sharpened end, which they thrust in the kitchen fire a few minutes to harden in the proper manner.

Besides which, there was Bevis's pocket-book for the diary, and a large sheet of brown paper for the map; you see travellers have not always everything at command, but must make use of what they have. Pan raced before them up the footpath; the gate that led to the Longpond was locked, and too high to be climbed easily, but they knew a gap, and crept through on hands and knees.

'Take care there are no cobras or rattlesnakes among those dead leaves,' said Mark, when they were half-way through, and quite over-arched and hidden under brambles.

'Stick your spear into them,' said Bevis, who was first, and Mark, putting his spear past him, stirred up the heap of leaves.

'All right,' said he. 'But look at that bough—is it a bough or a snake?'

There was an oak branch in the ditch, crooked and grey with lichen, half concealed by rushes; its curving shape and singular hue gave it some resemblance to a serpent. But when he stabbed at it with his spear it did not move; and they crept through without hurt. As they stood up in the field the other side, they had an anxious consultation as to what piece of water it was they were going to discover; whether it was a lake in Central Africa, or one in America.

'I 'm tired of lakes,' said Mark. 'They have found out such a lot of lakes, and the canoes are always upset, and there is such a lot of mud. Let 's have a new sea altogether.'

'So we will,' said Bevis. 'That 's capital—we will find a new sea where no one has ever been before. Look!' —for they had now advanced to where the gleam of the

sunshine on the mere was visible through the hedge—'look! there it is; is it not wonderful?'

'Yes,' said Mark, 'write it down in the diary; here 's my pencil. Be quick; put "Found a new sea"—be quick —there, come on—let 's run—hurrah!'

They dashed open the gate, and ran down to the beach. It was a rough descent over large stones, but they reached the edge in a minute, and as they came there was a splashing in several places along the shore. Something was striving to escape, alarmed at their approach. Mark fell on his knees, and put his hand where two or three stones, half in and half out of water, formed a recess, and feeling about drew out two roach, one of which slipped from his fingers; the other he held. Bevis rushed at another splashing, but he was not quick enough, for it was difficult to scramble over the stones, and the fish swam away just as he got there. Mark's fish was covered with tiny, slippery specks. The roach had come up to leave their eggs under the stones. When they had looked at the fish they put it back in the water, and with a kind of shake it dived down and made off. As they watched it swim out they now saw three or four yards from the shore there were crowds upon crowds of fish travelling to and fro, following the line of the land.

There were so many, that the water seemed thick with them, and some were quite large for roach. These had finished putting their eggs under the stones, and were now swimming up and down. Every now and then, as they silently watched the roach—for they had never before seen such countless multitudes of fish—they could hear splashings further along the stones, where those that were up in the recesses were suddenly seized with panic fear without cause, and struggled to get out, impeding each other, and jammed together in the narrow entrances. For they could not forget their cruel enemies the jacks, and dreaded lest they should be pounced upon while unable even to turn.

A black cat came down the bank some way off, and they saw her swiftly dart her paw into the water, and snatch out a fish. The scales shone silver white, and reflected the sunshine into their eyes like polished metal as the fish quivered and leaped under the claw. Then the cat quietly, and pausing over each morsel, ate the living creature. When she had finished she crept towards the water to get another.

'What a horrid thing!' said Mark. 'She ate the fish alive—cruel wretch! Let 's kill her.'

'Kill her,' said Bevis; and before he could fit an arrow to his bow Mark picked up a stone, and flung it with such a good aim and with such force that although it did not hit the cat, it struck a stone and split into fragments, which flew all about her like a shell. The cat raced up the bank, followed by a second stone, and at the top met Pan, who did not usually chase cats, having been beaten for it, but seeing in an instant that she was in disgrace, he snapped at her and drove her wild with terror up a pine tree. They called Pan off, for it was no use his yapping at a tree, and walked along the shore, climbing over stones, but the crowds of roach were everywhere; till presently they came to a place where the stones ceased, and there was a shallow bank of sand shelving into the water and forming a point.

There the fish turned round and went back. Thousands kept coming up and returning, and while they stayed here watching, gazing into the clear water, which was still and illuminated to the bottom by the sunlight, they saw two great fish come side by side up from the depths beyond and move slowly, very slowly, just over the sand. They were two huge tench, five or six pounds apiece, roaming idly away from the muddy holes they lie in. But they do not stay in such holes always, and once now and then, you may see them like this as in a glass tank. The pair did not go far; they floated slowly rather than swam, first a

few yards one way and then a few yards the other. Bevis and Mark were breathless with eagerness.

'Go and fetch my fishing-rod,' whispered Bevis, unable to speak loud; he was so excited.

'No, you go,' said Mark; 'I 'll stay and watch them.'

'I shan't,' said Bevis sharply, 'you ought to go.'

'I shan't,' said Mark.

Just then the tench, having surveyed the bottom there, turned and faded away into the darker deep water.

'There,' said Bevis, 'if you had run quick!'

'I won't fetch everything,' said Mark.

'Then you 're no use,' said Bevis. 'Suppose I was shooting an elephant, and you did not hand me another gun quick, or another arrow; and suppose——'

'But *I* might be shooting the elephant,' interrupted Mark, 'and you could hand me the gun.'

'Impossible,' said Bevis; 'I never heard anything so absurd. Of course it 's the captain who always does everything; and if there was only one biscuit left, of course you would let me eat it, and lie down and die under a tree, so that I might go on and reach the settlement.'

'I *hate* dying under a tree,' said Mark, 'and you always want everything.'

Bevis said nothing, but marched on very upright and very angry, and Mark followed, putting his feet into the marks Bevis left as he strode over the yielding sand. Neither spoke a word. The shore trended in again after the point, and the indentation was full of weeds, whose broad brownish leaves floated on the surface. Pan worked about and sniffed among the willow bushes on their left, which, when the lake was full, were in the water, but now that it had shrunk under the summer heat were several yards from the edge.

Bevis, leading the way, came to a place where the strand, till then so low and shelving, suddenly became steep, where a slight rise of the ground was cut as it were through

by the water, which had worn a cliff eight or ten feet above his head. The water came to the bottom of the cliff, and there did not seem any way past it except by going away from the edge into the field, and so round it. Mark at once went round, hastening as fast as he could to get in front, and he came down to the water on the other side of the cliff in half a minute, looked at Bevis, and then went on with Pan.

Bevis, with a frown on his forehead, stood looking at the cliff, having determined that he would not go round, and yet he could not get past because the water, which was dark and deep, going straight down, came to the bank, which rose from it like a wall. First he took out his pocket-knife and thought he would cut steps in the sand, and he did cut one large enough to put his toe in; but then he recollected that he should have nothing to hold to. He had half a mind to go back home and get some big nails and drive into the hard sand to catch hold of, only by that time Mark would be so far ahead he could not overtake him and would boast that he had explored the new sea first. Already he was fifty yards in front, and walking as fast as he could. How he wished he had his raft, and then that he could swim! He would have jumped into the water and swam round the cliff in a minute.

He saw Mark climbing over some railings that went down to the water to divide the fields. He looked up again at the cliff, and almost felt inclined to leave it and run round and overtake Mark. When he looked down again Mark was out of sight, hidden by hawthorn bushes and the branches of trees. Bevis was exceedingly angry, and he walked up and down and gazed round in his rage. But as he turned once more to the cliff, suddenly Pan appeared at an opening in the furze and bramble about half-way up. The bushes grew at the side, and the spaniel, finding Bevis did not follow Mark, had come back and was waiting for him. Bevis, without thinking, pushed into the furze, and im-

mediately he saw him coming, Pan, eager to go forward again, ran along the face of the cliff about four feet from the top. He seemed to run on nothing, and Bevis was curious to see how he had got by.

The bushes becoming thicker, Bevis had at last to go on hands and knees under them, and found a hollow space, where there was a great rabbit-bury, big enough at the mouth for Pan to creep in. When he stood on the sand thrown out from it he could see how Pan had done it; there was a narrow ledge, not above four inches wide, on the face of the cliff. It was only just wide enough for a footing, and the cliff fell sheer down to the water; but Bevis, seeing that he could touch the top of the cliff, and so steady himself, never hesitated a moment.

He stepped on the ledge, right foot first, the other close behind it, and held lightly to the grass at the edge of the field above, only lightly lest he should pull it out by the roots. Then he put his right foot forward again, and drew his left up to it, and so along, keeping the right first (he could not walk properly, the ledge being so narrow), he worked himself along. It was quite easy, though it seemed a long way down to the water (it always looks very much farther down than it does up), and as he glanced down he saw a perch from the depths, and it occurred to him in the moment what a capital place it would be for perch-fishing.

He could see all over that part of the lake, and noticed two moorhens feeding in the weeds on the other side, when puff! the wind came over the field, and reminded him, as he involuntarily grasped the grass tighter, that he must not stay in such a place where he might lose his balance. So he went on, and a dragon-fly flew past out a little way over the water and then back to the field, but Bevis was not to be tempted to watch his antics, he kept steadily on, a foot at a time, till he reached a willow on the other side, and had a bough to hold. Then he shouted, and Pan,

who was already far ahead, stopped and looked back at the well-known sound of triumph.

Running down the easy slope, Bevis quickly reached the railings and climbed over. On the other side, a meadow came down to the edge, and he raced through the grass and was already half-way to the next rails when someone called 'Bevis!' and there was Mark coming out from behind an oak in the field. Bevis stopped, half-pleased, half-angry.

'I waited for you,' said Mark.

'I came across the cliff,' said Bevis.

'I saw you,' said Mark.

'But you ran away from me,' said Bevis.

'But I am not running now.'

'It is very wrong when we are on an expedition,' said Bevis. 'People must do as the captain tells them.'

'I won't do it again,' said Mark.

'You ought to be punished,' said Bevis, 'you ought to be put on half-rations. Are you quite sure you will never do it again?'

'Never.'

'Well, then, this once you are pardoned. Now, mind in future, as you are lieutenant, you set a good example. There 's a summer snipe.'

Out flew a little bird from the shore, startled as Pan came near, with a piping whistle, and, describing a semicircle, returned to the hard mud fifty yards farther on. It was a summer snipe, and when they approached, after getting over the next railings, it flew out again over the water, and making another half-circle passed back to where they had first seen it. Here the strand was hard mud, dried by the sun, and broken up into innumerable holes by the hoofs of cattle and horses which had come down to drink from the pasture, and had to go through the mud in which they sank when it was soft. Three or four yards from the edge there was a narrow strip of weeds, showing that a

bank followed the line of the shore there. It was so unpleasant walking over this hard mud, that they went up into the field, which rose high, so that from the top they had a view of the lake.

CHAPTER V

BY THE NEW NILE

'Do you see any canoes?' said Mark.

'No,' said Bevis. 'Can you? Look very carefully.'

They gazed across the broad water over the gleaming ripples far away, for the light wind did not raise them by the shore, and traced the edge of the willows and the weeds.

'The savages are in hiding,' said Bevis, after a pause. 'Perhaps they 're having a feast.'

'Or gone somewhere to war.'

'Are they cannibals?' said Mark. 'I should not like to be gnawn.'

'Very likely,' said Bevis. 'No one has ever been here before, so they are nearly sure to be; they always are where no one has been. This would be a good place to begin the map as we can see so far. Let 's sit down.'

'Let 's get behind a tree, then,' said Mark; 'else if we stay still longer perhaps we shall be seen.'

So they went a little farther to an ash, and sat down by it. Bevis spread out his sheet of brown paper.

'Give me an apple,' said Mark, 'while you draw.' Bevis did so, and then, lying on the ground at full length, began to trace out the course of the shore; Mark lay down too, and held one side of the paper that the wind might not lift it. First Bevis made a semicircle to represent the stony bay where they found the roach, then an angular point for the sandy bar, then a straight line for the shelving shore.

'There ought to be names,' said Mark. 'What shall we call this?' putting his finger on the bay.

'Don't splutter over the map,' said Bevis; 'take that apple pip off it. Of course there will be names when I have drawn the outline. Here 's the cliff.' He put a slight projection where the cliff jutted out a little way, then a gentle curve for the shore of the meadow, and began another trending away to the left for the place where they were.

'That 's not long enough,' said Mark.

'It 's not finished,' said Bevis. 'How can I finish it when we have only got as far as this? How do I know, you stupid, how far this bay goes into the land? Perhaps there 's another sea round there,' pointing over the field. 'Instead of saying silly things, just find out some names, now.'

'What sea is it?' said Mark thoughtfully.

'I can't tell,' said Bevis. 'It is most extraordinary to find a new sea. And such an enormous, big one. Why how many days' journey have we come already?'

'Thirty,' said Mark. 'Put it down in the diary, thirty days' journey. There, that 's right. Now, what sea is it? Is it the Atlantic?'

'No; it 's not the Atlantic, nor the Pacific, nor the South Sea; it 's bigger than all those.'

'It 's much more difficult to find a name than a sea,' said Mark.

'Much,' said Bevis. They stared at each other for a while. 'I know,' said Bevis.

'Well, what is it?' said Mark excitedly, raising himself on his knees to hear the name.

'I know,' said Bevis. 'I 'll lie down and shut my eyes, and you take a piece of grass and tickle me; then I can think. I can't think unless I 'm tickled.'

He disposed himself very comfortably on his back with his knees up, and tilted his straw hat so as to shade that side of his face towards the sun. Mark pulled a bennet.

'Not *too* ticklish,' said Bevis, 'else that won't do: don't touch my lips.'

'All right.'

Mark held the bending bennet (the spike of the grass) bending with the weight of its tip, and drew it very gently across Bevis's forehead. Then he let it just touch his cheek, and afterwards put the tip very daintily on his eyelid. From there he let it wander like a fly over his forehead again, and close by, but not in the ear (as too ticklish), leaving little specks of pollen on the skin, and so to the neck, and next up again to the hair, and on the other cheek under the straw hat. Bevis, with his eyes shut, kept quite still under this luxurious tickling for some time, till Mark, getting tired, put the bennet delicately on his lip, when he started and rubbed his mouth.

'Now, how stupid you are, Mark; I was just thinking. Now, do it again.'

Mark did it again.

'Are you thinking?' he asked presently.

'Yes,' whispered Bevis. They were so silent they heard the grasshoppers singing in the grass, and the swallows twittering as they flew over, and the loud midsummer hum in the sky.

'Are you thinking?' asked Mark again. Bevis did not answer—he was asleep. Mark bent over him, and went on tickling, half dreamy himself, till he nodded, and his hat fell on Bevis, who sat up directly.

'I know.'

'What is it?'

'It is not one sea,' said Bevis; 'it is a lot of seas. That 's the Blue Sea, there,' pointing to the stony bay where the water was still and blue under the sky. 'That 's the Yellow Sea, there,' pointing to the low, muddy shore where the summer snipe flew up, and where, as it was so shallow, and so often disturbed by cattle, the water was thick for some yards out.

'And what is that out there?' said Mark, pointing southwards to the broader open water where the ripples were sparkling bright in the sunshine.

'That is the Golden Sea,' said Bevis. 'It is like butterflies flapping their wings'—he meant the flickering wavelets.

'And this round here?' where the land trended to the left, and there was a deep inlet.

'It is the Gulf,' said Bevis; 'Fir-Tree Gulf,' as he noticed the tops of fir trees.

'And that up at the top yonder, right away as far as you can see beyond the Golden Sea?'

'That 's the Indian Ocean,' said Bevis; 'and that island on the left side there is Serendib.'

'Where Sinbad went?'

'Yes; and that one by it is the Unknown Island, and a magician lives there in a long, white robe, and he has a serpent a hundred feet long coiled up in a cave under a bramble bush, and the most wonderful things in the world.'

'Let 's go there,' said Mark.

'So we will,' said Bevis, 'directly we have got a ship.'

'Write the names down,' said Mark. 'Put them on the map before we forget them.'

Bevis wrote them on the map, and then they started again upon their journey. Where the gulf began they found a slight promontory, or jutting point, defended by blocks of stone; for here the waves, when the wind blew west or south, came rolling with all their might over the long, broad Golden Sea from the Indian Ocean. Pan left them while they stood here, to hunt among the thistles in an old sand quarry behind. He started a rabbit, and chased it up the quarry, so that when they looked back they saw him high up the side, peering into the bury. Sand-martins were flying in and out of their round holes. At one place there was only a narrow strip of land between the ocean and the quarry, so that it seemed as if its billows might, at any time, force their way in.

They left the shore awhile, and went into the quarry, and winding in and out the beds of nettles and thistles climbed up a slope, where they sank at every step ankle deep in sand. It led to a broad platform of sand, above which the precipice rose straight to the roots of the grass above, which marked the top of the cliff with brown, and where humble-bees were buzzing along the edge, and, bending the flowers down on which they alighted, were thus suspended in space. In the cool recesses of the firs at the head of Fir-Tree Gulf a dove was cooing, and a great aspen rustled gently.

They took out their knives and pecked at the sand. It was hard, but could be pecked, and grooves cut in it. The surface was almost green from exposure to the weather, but under that, white. When they looked round over the ocean they were quite alone: there was no one in sight either way, as far as they could see; nothing but the wall of sand behind, and the wide, gleaming water in front.

'What a long way we are from other people,' said Mark.

'Thousands of miles,' said Bevis.

'Is it quite safe?'

'I don't know,' doubtfully.

'Are there not strange creatures in these deserted places?'

'Sometimes,' said Bevis. 'Sometimes there are things with wings, which have spikes on them, and they have eyes that burn you.'

Mark grasped his knife and spear, and looked into the beds of thistles and nettles, which would conceal anything underneath.

'Let 's call Pan,' he whispered.

Bevis shouted 'Pan!' 'Pan!' came back in an echo from another part of the quarry. 'Pan!' shouted Bevis and Mark together. Pan did not come. They called again and whistled; but he did not come.

'Perhaps something has eaten him,' said Mark.

'Very likely,' said Bevis. 'We ought to have a charm.

Don't forget next time we come to bring a talisman, so that none of these things can touch us.'

'I know,' said Mark. 'I know.' He took his spear and drew a circle on the platform of sand. 'Come inside this. There, that 's it. Now stand still here. A circle is magic, you know.'

'So it is,' said Bevis. 'Pan! Pan!'

Pan did not come.

'What 's in those holes?' said Mark, pointing to some large rabbit-burrows on the right side of the quarry.

'Mummies,' said Bevis. 'You may be sure there are mummies there, and very likely magic writings in their hands. I wish we could get a magic writing. Then we could do anything, and we could know all the secrets.'

'What secrets?'

'Why, all these things have secrets.'

'All?'

'All,' said Bevis, looking round and pointing with an arrow in his hand. 'All the trees, and all the stones, and all the flowers——'

'And these?' said Mark, picking up a shell.

'Yes, once; but can't you see it is dead, and the secret, of course, is gone. If we had a magic writing.'

'Let 's buy a book,' said Mark.

'They are not books; they are rolls, and you unroll them very slowly, and see curious things, pictures that move over the paper——'

Boom!

They started. Mark lifted his spear, Bevis his bow. A deep, low, and slow sound, like thunder, toned from its many mutterings to a mighty sob, filled their ears for a moment. It might have been very distant thunder, or a cannon in the forts far away. It was one of those mysterious sounds that are heard in summer when the sky is clear and the wind soft, and the midsummer hum is loud. They listened, but it did not come again.

'What was that?' said Mark at last.

'I don't know; of course it was something magic.'

'Perhaps they don't like us coming into these magic places,' said Mark. 'Perhaps it is to tell us to go away. No doubt Pan is eaten.'

'I shall not go away,' said Bevis, as the boom did not come again. 'I shall fight first'; and he fitted his arrow to the string. 'What 's that!' and in his start he let the arrow fly down among the thistles.

It was Pan looking down upon them from the edge above, where he had been waiting ever since they first called him, and wondering why they did not see him. Bevis chancing to glance up defiantly as he fitted his arrow to shoot the genii of the boom, had caught sight of the spaniel's face peering over the edge. Angry with Pan for making him start, Bevis picked up a stone and flung it at him, but the spaniel slipped back and escaped it.

'Fetch my arrow,' said Bevis, stamping his foot.

Mark went down and got it. As he came up the sandy slope he looked back.

'There 's a canoe,' he said.

'So it is.'

A long way off there was a black mark, as it were, among the glittering wavelets of the Golden Sea. They could not see it properly for the dazzling gleam.

'The cannibals have seen us,' said Mark. 'They can see miles. We shall be gnawn. Let 's run out of sight before they come too near.'

They ran down the slope into the quarry, and then across to the fir trees. Then they stopped and watched the punt, but it did not come towards them. They had not been seen. They followed the path through the firs, and crossed the head of the gulf.

A slow stream entered the lake there, and they went down to the shore, where it opened to the larger water. Under a great willow, whose tops rose as high as the firs,

and an alder or two, it was so cool and pleasant, that Mark as he played with the water with his spear, pushing it this way and that, and raising bubbles, and a splashing as a whip sings in the air, thought he should like to dabble in it. He sat down on a root and took off his shoes and stockings, while Bevis, going a little way up the stream, flung a dead stick into it, and then walked beside it as it floated gently down. But he walked much faster than the stick floated, there was so little current.

'Mark,' said he, suddenly stopping, and taking up some of the water in the hollow of his hand, 'Mark!'

'Yes. What is it?'

'This is fresh water. Isn't it lucky?'

'Why?'

'Why, you silly, of course we should have died of thirst. *That's* the sea' (pointing out). 'This will save our lives.'

'So it will,' said Mark, putting one foot into the water and then the other. Then looking back, as he stood half up to his ankles, 'We can call here for fresh water when we have our ship—when we go to the Unknown Island.'

'So we can,' said Bevis. 'We must have a barrel and fill it. But I wonder what river this is,' and he walked back again beside it.

Mark walked further out till it was over his ankles, and then till it was half as deep as his knee. He jumped up both feet together, and splashed as he came down, and shouted. Bevis shouted to him from the river. Next they both shouted together, and a dove flew out of the firs and went off.

'What river is this?' Bevis called presently.

'Oh!' cried Mark suddenly; and Bevis glancing round saw him stumble, and, in his endeavour to save himself, plunge his spear into the water as if it had been the ground, to steady himself; but the spear, though long, touched nothing up to his hand. He bent over. Bevis held his breath, thinking he must topple and fall headlong; but somehow

he just saved himself, swung round, and immediately he could, ran out upon the shore. Bevis rushed back.

'What was it?' he asked.

'It 's a hole,' said Mark, whose cheeks had turned white, and now became red, as the blood came back. 'An awful deep hole—the spear won't touch the bottom.'

As he waded out at first on shelving sand he laughed, and shouted, and jumped, and suddenly, as he stepped, his foot went over the edge of the deep hole; his spear, as he tried to save himself with it, touched nothing, so that it was only by good fortune that he recovered his balance. Once now and then, in the autumn, when the water was very low, dried up by the long summer heats, this hole was visible and nearly empty, and the stream fell over a cataract into it, boiling and bubbling, and digging it deeper. But now, as the water had only just begun to recede, it was full, so that the stream ran slow, held back and checked by their sea.

This hollow was quite ten feet deep, sheer descent, but you could not see it, for the shore seemed to slope as shallow as possible.

Mark was much frightened, and sat down on the root to put on his shoes and stockings. Bevis took the spear, and going to the edge, and leaning over and feeling the bottom with it, he could find the hole, where the spear slipped and touched nothing, about two yards out.

'It is a horrid place,' he said. 'How should I have got you out? I wish we could swim.'

'So do I,' said Mark. 'And they will never let us go out in a boat by ourselves—I mean in a ship to the Unknown Island—till we can.'

'No; that they won't,' said Bevis. 'We must begin to swim directly. My papa will show me, and I will show you. But how should I have got you out if you had fallen? Let me see; there 's a gate up there.'

'It is so heavy,' said Mark. 'You could not drag it

down, and fling it in quick enough. If we had the raft up here.'

'Ah, yes. There is a pole loose there—that would have done.' He pointed to some railings that crossed the stream. The rails were nailed, but there was a pole at the side, only thrust into the bushes. 'I could have pulled that out and held it to you.'

Mark had now got his shoes on, and they started again, looking for a bridge to cross the stream, and continue their journey round the New Sea. As they could not see any they determined to cross by the railings, which they did without much trouble, holding to the top bar, and putting their feet on the second, which was about three inches over the water. The stream ran deep and slow; it was dark, because it was in shadow, for the trees hung over from each side. Bevis, who was first, stopped in the middle and looked up it. There was a thick hedge and trees each side, and a great deal of fern on the banks. It was straight for a good way, so that they could see some distance till the boughs hid the rest.

'I should like to go up there,' said Mark. 'Some day, if we can get a boat under these rails, let us go up it.'

'So we will,' said Bevis. 'It is proper to explore a river. But what river is this?'

'Is it the Congo?' said Mark.

'Oh! no. The Congo is not near this sea at all. Perhaps it 's the Amazon.'

'It can't be the Mississippi,' said Mark. 'That 's a long way off now. I know—see, it runs slow, and it 's not clear, and we don't know where it comes from. It 's the Nile.'

'So it is,' said Bevis. 'It is the Nile, and some day we will go up to the source.'

'What 's that swimming across there?' said Mark.

'It is too far; I can't tell. Most likely a crocodile. How fortunate you did not fall in.'

When they had crossed, they whistled for Pan, who had been busy among the fern on the bank, sniffing after the rabbits which had holes there. Pan came and swam over to them in a minute. They travelled on some way and found the ground almost level and so thick with sedges and grass and rushes that they walked in a forest of green up to their waists. The water was a long way off beyond the weeds. They tried to go down to it, but the ground got very soft and their feet sank into it; it was covered with horsetails there, acres and acres of them, and after these shallow water hidden under floating weeds. Some coots were swimming about the edge of the weeds too far to fear them. So they returned to the firm ground and walked on among the sedges and rushes. There was a rough path, though not much marked, which wound about so as to get the firmest footing, but every now and then they had to jump over a wet place.

'What immense swamps,' said Mark; 'I wonder wherever we shall get to.'

Underfoot there was a layer of the dead sedges of last year which gave beneath their weight, and the ground itself was formed of the roots of sedges and other plants. The water had not long since covered the place where they were, and the surface was still damp, for the sunshine could not dry it, having to pass through the thick growth above and the matted stalks below. A few scattered willow bushes showed how high the water had been by the fibres on the stems which had once flourished in it and were now almost dried up by the heat. A faint, malarious odour rose from the earth, drawn from the rotting stalks by the hot sun. There was no shadow, and after a while they wearied of stepping through the sedges, sinking a little at every step, which much increases the labour of walking.

The monotony, too, was oppressive, nothing but sedges, flags, and rushes, sedges and horsetails, and they did not seem to get much farther after all their walking. First

they were silent: labour makes us quiet; then they stopped and looked back. The perfect level caused the distance to appear more than it really was, because there was a thin, invisible haze hovering over the swamp. Beyond the swamp was the gulf they had gone round, and across it the yellow sand-quarry facing them. It looked a very long way off.

CHAPTER VI

CENTRAL AFRICA

'WE shall never get round,' said Mark, 'just see what a way we have come, and we are not half up one side of the sea yet.'

'I wonder how far it is back to the quarry,' said Bevis. 'These sedges are so tiresome.'

'We shall never get round,' said Mark, 'and I am getting hungry, and Pan is tired of the rushes too.'

Pan, with his red tongue lolling out at one side of his mouth, looked up, showed his white tusks and wagged his tail at the mention of his name. He had ceased to quest about for some time; he had been walking just at their heels in the path they made.

'We *must* go on,' said Bevis, 'we *can't* go back; it is not proper. Travellers like us never go back. I wish there were no more sedges. Come on.'

He marched on again. But now they had once confessed to each other that they were tired, this spurt soon died away, and they stopped again.

'It is as hot as Central Africa,' said Mark, fanning himself with his hat.

'I am not sure that we are not in Central Africa,' said Bevis. 'There are hundreds of miles of reeds in Africa, and as we have crossed the Nile very likely that 's where we are.'

'It 's just like it,' said Mark; 'I am sure it 's Africa.'

'Then there ought to be lions in the reeds,' said Bevis, 'or elephants. Keep your spear ready.'

They went on again a little way.

'I want to sit down,' said Mark.

'So do I,' said Bevis; 'in Africa, people generally rest in the middle of the day for fear of sunstrokes.'

'So they do; then we ought to rest.'

'We can't sit down here,' said Bevis; 'it is so wet, and it does not smell very nice: we might have the fever, you know, if we stopped still long.'

'Let 's go to the hedge,' said Mark, pointing to the hedge which surrounded the shore and was a great way on their left hand. 'Perhaps there is a prairie there. And I am so thirsty, and there is no water we can drink; give me an apple.'

'But we must not go back,' said Bevis; 'I can't have that; it would never do to let the expedition fail.'

'No,' said Mark. 'But let us sit down first.'

Bevis did not quite like to leave the sedges, but he could not gainsay the heat, and he was weary, so they left the rough path and went towards the hedge, pushing through the sedges and rushes. It was some distance, and as they came nearer and the ground very gradually rose and became drier, there was a thick growth of coarse grass between the other plants, and presently a dense mass of reed-grass taller than their shoulders. This was now in bloom, and the pollen covered their sleeves as they forced a way through it. The closer they got to the hedge the thicker the grasses became, and there were now stoles of willow, and tall umbelliferous plants called 'gix,' which gave out an unpleasant scent as they rubbed against or pushed them down and stepped on them. It was hard work to get through, and when at last they reached the hedge they were almost done up.

Now there was a new difficulty, the hedge had grown so

close and thick it was impossible to creep through it. They were obliged to follow it, searching for a gap. They could not see a yard in front, so that they could not tell how far they might have to go. The dust-like pollen flying from the shaken grasses and the flowering plants got inside their nostrils and on the roofs of their mouths and in their throats, causing an unbearable thirst and tickling. The flies, gathering in crowds, teased them, and would not be driven away. Now and then something seemed to sting their necks, and, striking the place with the flat hand, a stoatfly dropped, too bloated with blood, like a larger gnat, to attempt to escape the blow.

Pushing through the plants they tumbled into a hollow which they did not see on account of the vegetation till they stepped over the edge and fell into it. Mark struck his knee against a stone, and limped; Bevis scratched his hands and wrist with a bramble. The hollow was a little wet at the bottom, not water, but soft sticky mud, which clung to their feet like gum; but they scrambled out of it quickly, not really hurt, but out of breath and angry. They were obliged to sit down, crushing down the grasses, to rest a minute.

'Let 's go back to the path in the sedges,' said Mark.

'I shan't,' said Bevis savagely. He got up and went on a few steps, and then took out his knife. 'Couldn't we cut a way through the bushes?' he asked. They went nearer the hedge and looked, but it had been kept thick that cattle might not stray into the marsh. The outside twigs could be cut, of course, but hawthorn is hard and close-grained. With such little tools as their pocket-knives it would take hours—very likely they would break them.

'If we only had something to drink,' said Mark. They had no more apples. Though it was a marsh, though they were on the shore, there was not a drop of water; if they went back to the sedges they could not get at the water, they would sink to the knees in mud first. The tall reed-

grass and 'gix,' and other plants which so impeded their progress, were not high enough to protect them in the least from the sun. The hedge ran north and south, and at noonday gave no shadow. As they went slowly forward, Mark felt the ground first with his spear to prevent their falling into another hollow. They pulled rushes, and bit the soft, white part which was cool to the tongue. But the stalks of plants and grass, each so easily bent when taken by itself, in the mass like this began to prove stronger than they were.

They had to part them with their arms first, like swimming, and then push through, and the ceaseless resistance wore out their power. Even Bevis at last agreed that it was not possible, they must go back to the path in the sedges on their right. After standing still a minute to recover themselves they turned to the right and went towards the sedges. In about twenty yards Mark, who had been sounding with his spear, touched something that splashed, he stopped and thrust again, there was no mistake, it was water. On going nearer, and feeling for the bottom with the spear, Mark found it was deep too, he could not reach the bottom. The grasses grew right to the edge, and the water itself was so covered with weeds that, had they not prodded the ground before they moved, they would have stepped over the brink into it. The New Sea, receding, had left a long, winding pool in a hollow which shut them off from getting to the path in the sedges unless by returning the weary way they had come.

'This is dreadful,' said Mark, when they had followed the water a little distance and were certain they could not cross. 'We can't get out and we can't go back; I am so tired, I can't push through much longer.'

'We must go on,' said Bevis; 'somehow or other we must go on.' He too dreaded the idea of returning through the entangled vegetation. It was less dense on the verge of the pool than by the hedge, and by feeling their way with

the spear they got on for a while. Thirsty as he was, Mark could not drink from the weed-grown water; indeed, he could not see the water at all for weeds and green scum, and if he pushed these aside with his spear the surface bubbled with marsh gases. Bevis, too, persuaded him not to drink it. Slowly they worked on, the marsh on one side and the hedge on the other.

'Look,' said Mark presently. 'There 's a willow; can't we climb up and see round?'

'Yes,' said Bevis; and they changed their course to get to it; it was nearer the hedge. They felt the ground rise, it was two yards higher by the willow, and harder; when the sea came up, the spot, in fact, was an islet. There were bushes on it, brambles, and elder in flower; none of these grow in water itself, but flourish on the edge. There were several tall willow poles. Bevis put down his bow and arrows, took off his jacket (the pockets of which were stuffed full of things), took hold of a pole, and climbed up. Mark did the same with another. The poles were not large enough to bear their weight very high; they got up about six or eight feet.

'There 's Sinbad's Island,' said Mark, pointing to the right. Far away, beyond the sedges and the reeds, there was a broad strip of clear water, and across it the Island of Serendib. 'If we only had a canoe.'

'Perhaps we could make one,' said Bevis. 'They make them sometimes of willow—and from oak, only we have nothing to cover the framework; sometimes they weave the rushes so close as to keep out water——'

'I can plait rushes,' said Mark; 'I can plait eight; but they would not keep out water. What 's over the hedge?'

They looked that way; they could see over the thick, close hawthorn, but behind it there rose tall ash poles, which shut out the view completely.

'It 's a thick double mound, said Bevis. 'There 's ash in the middle; like that in our field, you know.'

In front they could see nothing but the same endless reed-grass, except that there were more bushes and willows interspersed among it, showing that there must be numerous banks. Tired of holding on to the poles, which had no boughs of size enough to rest on, they let themselves gradually slide down. As they descended Mark spied a dove's nest in one of the hawthorn bushes; tired as he was he climbed up the pole again, and looked into it from a higher level. There was an egg in it; he had half a mind to take it, but remembered that it would be awkward to carry.

'We shall never get home, he said, after he had told Bevis of the nest.

'Pooh,' said Bevis. 'Here 's something for you to drink.' He had found a great teazle plant, whose leaves formed cups round the stem. In four of these cups there was a little darkish water, which had been there since the last shower. Mark eagerly sipped from the one which had the most, though it was full of drowned gnats; it moistened his lips, but he spluttered most of it out again. It was not only unpleasant to the taste, but warm.

'I hate Africa,' he shouted; 'I *hate* it.'

'So do I,' said Bevis, 'but we 've got to get through it somehow.' He started again; Mark followed sullenly, and Pan came behind Mark. Thus the spaniel, stepping in the track they made, had the least difficulty of either. Pan's tail drooped, he was very hungry and very thirsty, and he knew it was about the time the dishes were rattling in the kitchen at home.

'Listen,' said Mark presently, putting his hand on Bevis's shoulder, and stopping him.

Bevis listened. 'I can't hear anything,' he said, 'except the midsummer hum.'

The hum was loud in the air above them, almost shrill, but there was not another sound. Now Mark had called attention to it, the noonday silence in that wild deserted place was strange.

'Where are all the things?' said Mark, looking round. 'All the birds have gone.'

Certainly they could hear none, even the brook-sparrows in the sedges by the New Sea were quiet. There was nothing in sight alive but a few swifts at an immense height above them. Neither wood-pigeon, nor dove, nor thrush called; not even a yellow-hammer.

'I know,' whispered Bevis. 'I know—they are afraid.'

'Afraid?'

'Yes; can't you see Pan does not hunt about?'

'What is it?' asked Mark in an undertone, grasping his spear tightly. 'There are no mummies here?'

'No,' said Bevis. 'It 's the serpent, you know; he's a hundred feet long; he 's come over from the Unknown Island, and he 's waiting in these sedges somewhere to catch something; the birds are afraid to sing.'

'Could he swallow a man?' said Mark.

'Swallow a man,' with curling lip. 'Swallow a buffalo easily.'

'Hush! what 's that?' A puff of wind rustled the grasses.

'It 's the snake!' said Mark, and off he tore, Bevis close behind him, Pan at his heels. In this wild panic they dashed quickly through the grasses, which just before had been so wearisome an obstacle. But the heat pulled them up in ten minutes, panting.

'Did you see him?' said Bevis.

'Just a little bit of him—I think,' said Mark.

'We 've left him behind.'

'He 'll find us by our track.'

'Let 's tie Pan up, and let him swallow Pan.'

'Where 's a rope? Have you any string? Give me your handkerchief.'

They were hastily tying their handkerchiefs together, when Mark, looking round to see if the monstrous serpent was approaching, shouted:

'There 's a tree!'

There was a large hollow willow or pollard in the hedge. They rushed to it, they clasped it as shipwrecked men a beam. Mark was first, he got inside on the 'toughwood,' and scrambled up a little way, then he worked up, his back against one side, and his knees the other. Bevis got underneath, and 'bunted' him up. Bunting is shoving with shoulder or hands. There were brambles on the top; Mark crushed through, and in a minute was firmly planted on the top.

'Give me my spear, and your bow, and your hand,' he said breathlessly.

The spear and bow were passed up: Bevis followed, taking Mark's hand just at the last. Mark put the point of his spear downwards to stab the monster. Bevis fitted an arrow to his bow. Pan looked up, but could not climb. They watched the long grasses narrowly, expecting to see them wave from side to side every instant, as the python wound his sinuous way. There was a rustling beneath, but on the other side of the hedge. Bevis looked and saw Pan, who had crept through.

'What are you going to do?' said Mark, as Bevis slung his bow on his shoulder as if it was a rifle, and began to move out on the hollow top of the tree, which as it became hollow had split, and partly arched over. Bevis did not answer: he crept cautiously out on the top, which vibrated under him; then suddenly seizing a lissom bough, he slipped off and let himself down. He was inside the hedge that had so long baffled them. Mark saw in an instant, darted his spear down and followed. So soon as he touched ground, off they set running. There were no sedges here, nothing but short grasses and such herbage as grows under the perpetual shade of ash poles, and they could run easily. The ease of motion was, in itself, a relief, after the struggle in the reed-grass. When they had raced some distance, and felt safe, they stopped.

'Why, this is a wood!' said Mark, looking round. Ash stoles and poles surrounded them on every side.

'So it is,' said Bevis. 'No, it 's a jungle.'

They walked forward and came to an open space, round about a broad spreading oak.

'I shall sit down here,' said Bevis.

But as they were about to sit down, Pan, who had woke up when he scented rabbits, suddenly disappeared in a hollow.

'What 's that?' said Mark. He went to see, and heard a sound of lapping.

'Water!' shouted Mark, and Bevis came to him. Deep down in a narrow channel there was the merest trickle of shallow water, but running, and clear as crystal. It came from chalk, and it was limpid. Pan could drink, but they could not. His hollow tongue lapped it up like a spoon; but it was too shallow to scoop up in the palm of the hand, and they had no tube of 'gix,' or reed, or oat straw, or buttercup to suck through. They sprang into the channel itself, alighting on a place the water did not cover, but with the stream under their feet they could not drink. Nothing but a sparrow could have done so.

Presently Bevis stooped, and with his hands scratched away the silt which formed the bottom, a fine silt of powdered chalk, almost like quicksand, till he had made a bowl-like cavity. The stream soon filled it, but then the water was thick, being disturbed, and they had to wait till it had settled. Then they lapped too, very carefully, with the hollow palm, taking care that the water which ran through their fingers should fall below, and not above the bowl, or the weight of the drops would disturb it again. With perseverance they satisfied their thirst; then they returned to the oak, and took out their provisions; they could eat now.

'This is a jolly jungle,' said Mark, with his mouth full.

'That 's a banyan,' said Bevis, pointing with the knuckle-end of the drumstick he was gnawing, at the oak over them. 'It 's about eleven thousand years old.'

Then Mark took the drumstick, and had his turn at it. When it was polished, Pan had it: he cracked it across with his teeth, just as the hyenas did in the cave days, for the animals never learnt to split bones, as the earliest men did. Pan cracked it very disconsolately: his heart was with the fleshpots.

Boom!

They started. It was the same peculiar sound they had heard before, and seemed to come from an immense distance. A pheasant crowed as he heard it in the jungle close by them, and a second farther away.

'What can it be?' whispered Mark. 'Is there anything here?'—glancing round.

'There may be some genii,' said Bevis quietly. 'Very likely there are some genii: they are everywhere. But I do not know what that was. Listen!'

They listened: the wood was still; so still, they could hear a moth or a chafer entangled in the leaves of the oak overhead, and trying to get out. Looking up there, the sky was blue and clear, and the sunlight fell brightly on the open space by the streamlet. There was nothing but the hum. The long, long summer days seem gradually to dispose the mind to expect something unusual. Out of such an expanse of light, when the earth is tangibly in the midst of a vast illuminated space, what may not come? —perhaps something more than is common to the senses. The mind opens with the enlarging day.

It is said the sandhills of the desert under the noonday sun emit strange sounds; that the rocky valleys are vocal; the primeval forest speaks in its depths; hollow ocean sends a muttering to the becalmed vessel; and up in the mountains the bound words are set loose. Of old times the huntsmen in our woods met the noonday spirit under the leafy canopy.

Bevis and Mark listened, but heard nothing, except the entangled chafer, the midsummer hum, and presently,

Pan snuffling, as he buried his nostrils in his hair to bite a flea. They laughed at him, for his eyes were staring, and his flexible nostrils turned up as if his face was not alive but stuffed. The boom did not come again, so they finished their dinner.

'I feel jolly lazy,' said Mark. 'You ought to put the things down on the map.'

'So I did,' said Bevis, and he got out his brown paper, and Mark held it while he worked. He drew Fir-Tree Gulf, and the Nile.

'Write that there is a deep hole there,' said Mark, 'and awful crocodiles: that 's it. Now Africa—you want a very long stroke there; write reeds and bamboos.'

'No, not bamboos, papyrus,' said Bevis. 'Bamboos grow in India, where we are now. There 's some,' pointing to a tall wild parsnip, or 'gix,' on the verge of the streamlet.

'I 'm so lazy,' said Mark. 'I shall go to sleep.'

'No you won't,' said Bevis. '*I* ought to go to sleep, and you ought to watch. Get your spear, and now take my bow.'

Mark took the bow sullenly.

'You ought to stand up, and walk up and down.'

'I can't,' said Mark, very short.

'Very well; then go farther away, where you can see more round you. There, sit down there.' Mark sat down at the edge of the shadow of the oak. 'Don't you see you can look into the channel; if there are any savages they are sure to creep up that channel. Do you see?'

'Yes, I see,' said Mark.

'And mind nothing comes behind that woodbine,' pointing to a mass of woodbine which hung from some ash poles, and stretched like a curtain across the view there. 'That 's a very likely place for a tiger: and keep your eye sharp on those nut-tree bushes across the brook—most likely you 'll see the barrel of a matchlock pushed through there.'

'I ought to have a matchlock,' said Mark.

'So you did; but we had to start with what we had, and it is all the more glory to us if we get through. Now mind you keep awake.'

'Yes,' said Mark.

Bevis, having given his orders, settled himself very comfortably on the moss at the foot of the oak, tilted his hat aside to shelter him still more, and, with a spray of ash in his hand to ward off the flies, began to forget. In a minute up he started.

'Mark!'

'Yes'; still sulky.

'There 's another oak—no, it 's a banyan up farther; behind you.'

'I know.'

'Well, if you hear any rustle there, it 's a python.'

'Very well.'

'And those dead leaves and sticks in the hole there by the stump of that old tree?'

'I see.'

'There 's a cobra there.'

'All right.'

'And if a shadow comes over suddenly.'

'What 's that, then?' said Mark.

'That 's the roc from Sinbad's Island.'

'I say, Bevis,' as Bevis settled himself down again. 'Bevis, don't go to sleep.'

'Pooh!'

'But it 's not nice.'

'Rubbish.'

'Bevis.'

'Don't talk silly.'

In a minute Bevis was fast asleep. He always slept quickly, and the heat and the exertion made him forget himself still quicker.

CHAPTER VII

THE JUNGLE

MARK was alone. He felt, without going nearer, that Bevis was asleep, and dared not wake him lest he should be called a coward. He moved a little way so as to have the oak more at his back, and to get a clearer view on all sides. Then he looked up at the sky, and whistled very low. Pan, who was half asleep too, got up slowly, and came to him; but finding that there was nothing to eat, and disliking to be stroked and patted on such a hot day, he went back to his old place, the barest spot he could find, mere dry ground.

Mark sat, bow and arrow ready in his hand, the arrow on the string, with the spear beside him, and his pocket-knife with the big blade open, and looked into the jungle. It was still and silent. The chafer had got loose, and there was nothing but the hum overhead. He kept the strictest watch, scarce allowing himself to blink his eyes. Now he looked steadily into the brushwood he could see some distance, his glance found a way through between the boughs, till presently, after he had searched out these crevices, he could command a circle of view.

Like so many slender webs his lines of sight thus drawn through mere chinks of foliage radiated from a central spot, and at the end of each he seemed as if he could feel if anything moved as much as he could see it. Each of these webs strained at his weary mind, and even in the shade the strong glare of the summer noon pressed heavily on his eyelids. Had anything moved, a bird, or moth, or had the leaves rustled, it would have relieved him. This expectation was a continual effort. His eyes closed, he opened them, frowned and blinked; then he reclined on one arm as an easier position. His eyes closed, the shrill

midsummer hum sounded low and distant, then loud, suddenly it ceased—he was asleep.

The sunburnt woodbine, the oaks dotted with coppery leaves where the second shoot appeared, the ash poles rising from the hollow stoles, and whose pale sprays touching above formed a green surface, hazel with white nuts, stiff, ragged thistles on the stream bank, burrs with brown-tipped hooks, the hard dry ground, all silent, fixed, held in the light.

The sun slipped through the sky like a yacht under the shore where the light wind coming over a bank just fills the sails, but leaves the surface smooth. Through the smooth blue the sun slipped silently, and no white fleck of foam cloud marked his speed. But in the deep, narrow channel of the streamlet there was a change—the tiny trickle of water was no longer illuminated by the vertical beams, a slight slant left it to run in shadow.

Burr! came a humble-bee whose drone was now put out as he went down among the grass and leaves, now rose again as he travelled. Burr! The faintest breath of air moved without rustling the topmost leaves of the oaks. The humble-bee went on, and disappeared behind the stoles.

A little flicker of movement happened among the woodbine, not to be seen of itself, but as a something interrupting the light like a larger mote crossing the beam. The leaves of the woodbine in one place were drawn together and coated with a white web, and a tiny bird came to take away the destroyer. Then mounting to a branch of ash he sang, 'Sip, sip—chip, chip.'

Again the upper leaves of the oak moved and jostling together caused a slight sound. Coo! coo! there was a dove beyond the hazel bushes across the stream. The shadow was more aslant and rose up the stalks of the rushes in the channel. Over the green surface of the ash sprays above, the breeze drew and rippled it like water. A jay came into the farther oak and scolded a distant mate.

Presently Pan awoke, nabbed another flea, looked round and shook his ears, from which some of the hair was worn by continual rubbing against the bushes under which he had crept for so many years. He felt thirsty, and remembering the stream, went towards it, passing very lightly by Bevis, so closely as to almost brush his hat. The slight pad, pad of his paws on the moss and earth conveyed a sense of something moving near him to Bevis's mind. Bevis instantly sat up, so quickly, that the spaniel, half alarmed, ran some yards.

Directly Bevis sat up he saw that Mark had fallen asleep. He thought for a moment, and then took a piece of string from his pocket. Stepping quietly up to Mark he made a slip-knot in the string, lifted Mark's arm and put his hand through the loop above the wrist, then he jerked it tight. Mark scrambled up in terror—it might have been the python:

'Oh! I say!'

Before he could finish, Bevis had dragged him two or three steps towards an ash pole, when Mark, thoroughly awake, jerked his arm free, though the string hung to it.

'How dare you?' said Bevis, snatching at the string, but Mark pushed him back. 'How dare you? you 're a prisoner.'

'I 'm not,' said Mark very angrily.

'Yes, you are; you were asleep.'

'I don't care.'

'I will tie you up.'

'You shan't.'

'If you sleep at your post, you have to be tied to a tree, you know you have, and be left there to starve.'

'I won't.'

'You must, or till the tigers have you. Do you hear? stand still!'

Bevis tried to secure him, Mark pushed him in turn.

'You 're a wretch.'

'I hate you!'

'I 'll kill you!'

'I 'll shoot you!'

Mark darted aside and took his spear; Bevis had his bow in an instant and began to draw it. Mark, knowing that Bevis would shoot his hardest, ran for the second oak. Bevis in his haste pulled hard, but let the arrow slip before he could take aim. It glanced upon a bough and shot up nearly straight into the air, gleaming as it went—a streak of light—in the sunshine. Mark stopped by the oak, and before Bevis could fetch another arrow, poised his spear and threw it. The spear flew direct at the enemy, but in his haste Mark forgot to throw high enough, he hurled it point-blank, and the hardened point struck the earth and chipped up crumbling pieces of dry ground; then it slid like a serpent some way through the thin grasses.

Utterly heedless of the spear, which in his rage he never saw, Bevis picked up an arrow from the place where he had slept, fitted the notch to the string and looked for Mark, who had hidden behind the other oak. Guessing that he was there, Bevis ran towards it, when Mark shouted to him:

'Stop! I say, it 's not fair; I have nothing, and you 'll be a coward.'

Bevis paused, and saw the spear lying on the ground.

'Come and take your spear,' he said directly, 'I won't shoot.' He put his bow on the ground. Mark ran out, and had his spear in a moment. Bevis stooped to lift his bow, but suddenly in his turn cried:

'Stop! Don't throw; I want to say something. Let 's have a war.'

'That would be first-rate,' said Mark, 'and have a great battle.'

'An awful battle,' said Bevis, 'the biggest and most awful ever known.'

'Like Waterloo?'

'Pooh!'

'Agincourt?'

'Pooh!'

'Mal—Mal,' said Mark, trying to think of Malplaquet.

'Oh! more than anything,' said Bevis; 'somebody will have to write a history about it.'

'Shall we wear armour?'

'That would be bow-and-arrow time. Bows and arrows don't make any banging.'

'No more they do. It wants lots of banging and smoke—else it 's nothing.'

'No; only chopping and sticking.'

'And smashing and yelling.'

'No—and that 's nothing.'

'Only if we have rifles,' said Mark thoughtfully; 'you see, people don't see one another; they are so far off, and nobody stands on a bridge and keeps back all the enemy all by himself.'

'And nobody has a triumph afterwards with elephants and chariots, and paints his face vermilion.'

'Let 's have bow-and-arrow time,' said Mark; 'it 's much nicer—and you sell the prisoners for slaves and get heaps of money, and do just as you like, and plough up the cities that don't please you.'

'Much nicer,' said Bevis; 'you very often kill all the lot and there 's nothing silly. I shall be King Richard and have a battleaxe—no, let 's be the Normans.'

'Wouldn't King Arthur do?'

'No; he was killed, that would be stupid. I 've a great mind to be Charlemagne.'

'Then I shall be Roland.'

'No; you must be a traitor.'

'But I want to fight on your side,' said Mark.

'How many are there we can get to make the war?'

They consulted, and soon reckoned up fourteen or fifteen.

'It will be jolly awful,' said Mark; 'there will be heaps of slain.'

'Let 's have Troy,' said Bevis.

'That 's too slow,' said Mark; 'it lasted ten years.'

'Alexander the Great—let 's see; whom did he fight?'

'I don't know; people nobody ever heard of—nobody particular, Indians and Persians and all that sort.'

'I know,' said Bevis; 'of course! I know. Of course, I shall be Julius Caesar!'

'And I shall be Mark Antony.'

'And we will fight Pompey.'

'But who shall be Pompey?' said Mark.

'Pooh! there 's Bill, and Wat, and Ted; anybody will do for Pompey.'

CHAPTER VIII

SWIMMING

'PUT your hands on the rail. Hold it as far off as you can. There—now let the water lift your feet up behind you.'

Bevis took hold of the rail, which was on a level with the surface, and then leaning his chest forward upon the water, felt his legs and feet gradually lifted up, till he floated. At first he grasped the rail as tight as he could, but in a minute he found that he need not do so. Just to touch the rail lightly was enough, for his extended body was as buoyant as a piece of wood. It was like taking a stick and pressing it down to the bottom, and then letting it go, when it would shoot up directly. The water felt deliciously soft under him, bearing him up far more gently than the grass, on which he was so fond of lying.

'Mark!' he shouted. 'Do like this. Catch hold of the rail—it 's capital!'

Mark, who had been somewhat longer undressing than impatient Bevis, came in and did it, and there they both floated, much delighted. The water was between three

and four feet deep. When Bevis's papa found that they could not be kept from roaming, and were bent on boating on the Longpond, which was a very different thing to the shallow brook, where they were never far from shore, and out of which they could scramble, he determined to teach Bevis and his friend to swim. Till Bevis could swim, he should never feel safe about him; and unless his companion could swim too, it was of no use, for in case of accident, one would be sure to try and save the other, and perhaps be dragged down.

They had begged very hard to be allowed to have one of the boats in order to circumnavigate the New Sea, which it was so difficult to walk round; and he promised them if they would really try and learn to swim, that they should have the boat as a reward. He took them to a place near the old quarry they had discovered, in one corner of Fir-Tree Gulf, where the bottom was of sand, and shelved gently for a long way out; a line of posts and rails running into the water, to prevent cattle straying, as they could easily do where it was shallow like this. The field there, too, was away from any road, so that they could bathe at all times. It was a sunny morning, and Bevis, eager for his lesson, had torn off his things, and dashed into the water, like Pan.

'Now try one hand,' said his 'governor.' 'Let one hand lie on the water—put your arm out straight—and hold the rail with the other.'

Bevis, rather reluctantly, did as he was told. He let go with his right hand, and stretched it out—his left hand held him up just as easily, and his right arm seemed to float of itself on the surface. But now, as the muscles of his back and legs unconsciously relaxed, his legs drew up under him, and he bottomed with his feet and stood upright.

'Why 's that?' he said. 'Why did I come up like that?'

'You must keep yourself a little stiff,' said the governor; 'not rigid—not quite stiff—just feel your muscles then.'

Bevis did it again, and floated with one hand only on

the rail: he found he had also to keep his left arm quite straight and firm. Then he had to do it with only two fingers on; while Mark and the governor stood still, that no ripple might enter his mouth, which was only an inch above the surface. Next, Mark was taken in hand, and learnt the same things; and having seen Bevis do it, he had not the least difficulty. The governor left them awhile to practise by themselves, and swam across to the mouth of the Nile, on the opposite side of the gulf. When he came back he found they had got quite confident; so confident, that Bevis, thinking to surpass this simple lesson, had tried letting go with both hands, when his chin immediately went under, and he struggled up spluttering.

The governor laughed. 'I thought you would do that,' he said. 'You only want a little—a very little support, just two fingers on the rail; but you must have some, and when you swim you have to supply it by your own motion. But you see how little is wanted.'

'I see,' said Bevis. 'Why, we can very nearly swim now —can't we, Mark?'

'Of course we can,' said Mark, kicking up his heels and making a tremendous splash.

'Now,' said the governor, 'come here'; and he made Bevis go on his knees in shallow water, and told him to put both hands on the bottom. He did so; and when he was on all fours, facing the shore, the water only just reached above his elbow, which was not deep enough, so he had to move backwards till it touched his chest. He had then to extend his legs behind him, till the water lifted them up, while his hands remained on the bottom. His chest rested on the water, and all his body was buoyed up in the same pleasant way as when he had hold of the rail.

By letting his arms bend or give a little, he could tell exactly how much the water would bear him up, exactly how strong it was under him. He let himself sink till his chin was in the water and it came half-way to his

lower lip, while he had his head well back, and looked up at the sycamore trees growing in the field above the quarry. Then he floated perfectly, and there seemed not the least pressure on his hands; there was a little, but so little, it appeared nothing, and he could fancy himself swimming.

'Now walk along with your hands,' said the governor.

Bevis did so; and putting one hand before the other, as a tumbler does standing on his head, moved with ease, his body floating, and having no weight at all. One hand would keep him afloat, or even one finger when he put it on a stone at the bottom so that it did not sink in as it would have done into the sand; but if he extended his right arm, it had a tendency to bring his toes down to the bottom. Mark did the same thing, and there they crawled about in the shallow water on their hands only, and the rest floating, laughing at each other. They could hardly believe that it was the water did it; it kept them up just as if they were pieces of wood. The governor left them to practise this while he dressed, and then made them get out, as they had been in long enough for one morning.

'Pan does not swim like you do,' said Mark, as they were walking home.

'No,' said the governor, 'he paddles; he runs in the water the same as he does on land.'

'Why couldn't we do that?' asked Mark.

'You can, but it is not much use; you only get along so slowly. When you can swim properly, you can copy Pan in a minute.'

The governor could not go with them again for two days on account of business; but full of their swimming, they looked in the old bookcase, and found a book in which there were instructions, and among other things they read that the frog was the best model. Out they ran to look for a frog; but as it was sunny there were none visible, till Mark remembered there was generally one where the ivy of the garden wall had spread over the ground in the corner.

In that cool place they found one, and Bevis picked it up. The frog was cold to the touch even in the summer day, so they put it on a cabbage-leaf and carried it to the stone trough in the yard. No sooner did it feel the water than the frog struck out and crossed the trough, first in one direction, and then in another, afterwards swimming all round close to the sides, but unable to land, as the stone was to it like a wall.

'He kicks,' said Mark, leaning over the trough; 'he only kicks; he doesn't use his arms.'

The frog laid out well with his legs, but kept his forelegs, or arms, still, or nearly so.

'Now, what 's the good of a frog?' said Bevis; 'men don't swim like that.'

'It 's very stupid,' said Mark; 'he 's no model at all.'

'Not a bit.'

The frog continued to go round the trough much more slowly.

'No use watching him.'

So they went away, but before they had gone ten yards Bevis ran back.

'He can't get out,' he said; and placing the cabbage-leaf under the frog, he lifted the creature out of the trough and put him on the ground. No sooner was the frog on the ground than he went under the trough in the moist shade there, for the cattle, as they drank, splashed a good deal over. When they told the governor, he said that what they had noticed was correct, but the frog was a good model in two things nevertheless; first, in the way he kicked, and, secondly, in the way he leaned his chest on the water. But a man had to use his arms so as to balance his body and keep his chin and mouth from going under, besides the assistance they give as oars to go forward.

Next morning they went to the bathing-place again. Bevis had now to hold the rail as previously, but when he had got it at arm's length he was told to kick like a frog.

'Draw your knees up close together and kick, and send your feet wide apart,' said the governor. Bevis did so, and the thrust of his legs sent him right up against the rail. He did this several times, and was then ordered to go on hands and knees in the shallow water, just as he had done before, and let his legs float up. When they floated he had to kick, to draw his knees up close together, and then strike his feet back wide apart. The thrust this time lifted his hands off the bottom on which they had been resting, lifted them right up, and sent him quite a foot nearer the shore. His chest was forced against the water like an inclined plane, and he was thus raised an inch or so. When the impulse ceased he sank as much, and his hands touched the bottom once more.

This pleased him greatly—it was quite half-swimming; but he found it necessary to be careful while practising it that there were no large stones on the bottom, and that he did not get in too shallow water, else he grazed his knees. In the water you scarcely feel these kind of hurts, and many a bather has been surprised upon getting out to find his knees or legs bruised, or even the skin off, from contact with stones or gravel, of which he was unaware at the time.

Mark had no difficulty in doing the same, it was even easier for him, as he had only to imitate, which is not so hard as following instructions. The second, indeed, often learns quicker than the first. They kicked themselves along in fine style.

'Keep your feet down,' said the governor; 'don't let them come above the surface, and don't splash. Mark, you are not drawing your knees up, you are only lifting your heels; it makes all the difference.'

He then made them hold on to the rail in the deepest water they could fathom—standing himself between them and the deeper water—and after letting their legs float, ordered them to kick there, but to keep their arms straight

and stiff, not to attempt to progress, only to practise the kick. The object was that they might kick deep and strong, and not get into the habit of shallow kicking, as they might while walking on their hands on the sand. All that lesson they had to do nothing but kick.

In a day or two they were all in the water again, and after a preliminary splashing, just to let off their high spirits—otherwise they would not pay attention—serious business began.

'Now,' said the governor, 'you must begin to use your arms. You are half independent of touching the bottom already—you can feel that you can float without your feet touching anything; now you must try to float altogether. You know the way I use mine.'

They had seen him many times, and had imitated the motion on shore, first putting the flat hands together, thumb to thumb; the thumbs in their natural position, and not held under the palm, the tips of the thumbs crossing (as sculls cross in sculling); the fingers together, but not squeezed tight, a little interstice between them matters nothing, while if always squeezed tight it causes a strain on the wrist. The flat hands thus put together held four to six inches in front of the breast, and then shot out—not with a jerk, quick, but no savage jerk, which wastes power—and the palms at the extremity of the thrust turned partly aside, and more as they oar the water till nearly vertical.

Do not attempt a complete sweep—a complete half-circle—oar them round as far as they will go easily without an effort to the shoulders, and then bring them back. The object of not attempting a full sweep is that the hands may come back easily, and without disturbing the water in front of the chest and checking progress, as they are apt to do. They should slip back, and then the thumbs being held naturally, just as you would lay your flat hand on the table, they do not meet with resistance as they do if

held under the palm. If the fingers are kept squeezed tight together when the hands are brought back to the chest, should they vary a hair's breadth from a level position they stop progress exactly like an oar held still in the water, and it is very difficult to keep them absolutely level. But if the fingers are the least degree apart, naturally, if the hand inclines a trifle, the fingers involuntarily open and the water slips through, besides which, as there is no strain, the hands return level with so much greater ease. The thrust forward is so easy—it is learnt in a moment—you can imitate it the first time you see it—that the bringing back is often thought of no account. In fact, the bringing back is *the* point, and if it be not studied you will never swim well. This he had told them from time to time on shore, and they had watched him as he swam slowly by them, on purpose that they might observe the manner. But to use the arms properly on shore, when they pass through air and meet with no resistance, is very different to using them properly in the water.

Bevis had to stand facing the shore in water as deep as his chest; then to stoop a little—one foot in front of the other for ease—till his chin nearly rested on the surface, and then to strike out with his arms. He was not to attempt anything with his feet, simply to stand and try the stroke. He put his flat hands together, pushed them out, and oared them round as he had often done on land. As he oared them round they pushed him forward so that he had to take a step on the bottom; they made him walk a step forward. This he had to repeat twenty times, the governor standing by, and having much trouble to make him return his hands to his chest without obstructing his forward progress.

Bevis became very impatient now to swim arms and legs together; he was sure he could do it, for his arms, as they swept back, partly lifted him up and pushed him on.

'Very well,' said the governor. 'Go and try. Here, Mark.'

He took Mark in hand, but before they had had one trial Bevis had started to swim, and immediately his head went under unexpectedly, so that he came up spluttering, and had to sit on the rail till he could get the water out of his throat. While he sat there in no good temper Mark had his lesson. The governor then went for a swim himself, being rather tired of reiterating the same instructions, leaving them to practise. On his return—he did not go far, only just far enough to recover his patience—he set them to work at another thing.

Bevis had to go on his hands on the bottom as he had done before, and let his limbs float behind. Then he was told to try striking out with the right hand, keeping his left on the sand to support himself. He did so, and as his arm swept back it pushed him forward just as an oar would a boat. The next time he did it he kicked with his legs at the same moment, and the impetus of the kick and the motion of his right arm together lifted his left hand momentarily off the bottom, and sent him along. This he did himself without being told, the idea of doing so would occur to any one in the same position.

'That 's right,' said the governor. 'Do that again.'

Bevis did it again and again, and felt now that he was three-parts swimming; he swam with his legs, and his right arm, and only just touched the bottom with his left hand. After he had repeated it six or seven times he lifted his left hand a little way, and made a quarter stroke with it too, and then jumped up and shouted that he could swim.

Mark had to have his lessons some yards away, for Bevis had so splashed the water in his excitement that it was thick with the sand he had disturbed. Bevis continued his trials, raising his left arm a little more every time till he could very nearly use both together. They were then both to set to work to hold on to the rail, let their limbs float, and strike out with one arm, alternately left and right, kicking at the same moment. This was to get into

the trick of kicking and striking out with the hands together. Enough had now been done for that morning.

They came up again the next day, and the governor left them this time almost to themselves to practise what they had learnt. They went on their hands on the sand, let their limbs float, and by degrees began to strike out with both hands, first lifting the left hand a few inches, then more, till presently, as they became at home in the water, they could nearly use both.

The next time they bathed the governor set Bevis a fresh task. He was made to stand facing the shore in water as deep as his chest, then to lean forward gently on it—without splash—and to strike out with both his arms and legs together. He did it immediately, at the first trial, but of course stood up directly. Next he was told to try and make two strokes—one is easily made, but the difficulty is when drawing up the knees and bringing the hands back for the second stroke. The chin is almost certain to go under, and some spluttering to follow. Bevis did his best, and held his breath, and let his head go down well till he drew some water up his nostrils, and was compelled to sit on the rail and wait till he could breathe properly again.

Mark tried with exactly the same result. The first stroke when the feet pushed from the ground was easy; but when he endeavoured to draw up his knees for the second, down went his head. The only orders they received were to keep on trying.

Two days afterwards they bathed again, but though they asked the governor to tell them something else he would not do so, he ordered them to try nothing but the same thing over and over again, to face the shore and strike out. If they liked, they could push forward very hard with their feet, if it was done without splash, and the impetus would last through two strokes, and help to keep the body up while they drew up their knees for the second stroke. Then he went for a swim across to the Nile and left them.

They tried their very hardest, and then went on their hands on the sand to catch the idea of floating again. After that they succeeded, but so nearly together that neither could claim to be first. They pushed off from the ground hard, struck out, drew up their knees and recovered their hands, and made the second stroke. They had to hold their breath while they did it, for their mouths *would* go under, but still it was done. Shouting to the governor to come back they threw themselves at the water, bold as spaniels dashing in, wild with delight.

'You can swim,' said the governor as he approached.

'Of course we can,' said Bevis, rushing out in the field for a dance on the sward, and then back splash into the water again. That morning they could hardly be got away from it, and insisted on bathing next day whether convenient or not, so the governor was obliged to accompany them. This time he took the punt, and let them row him to the bathing-place. The lake was too deep there for poling. They had been in boats with him before, and could row well; it is remarkable that there is nothing both boys and girls learn so quickly as rowing. The merest little boy of five years old will learn to handle an oar in a single lesson. They grounded the punt, and undressed on the sward where there was more room.

'Now,' said the governor, as they began to swim their two strokes again, 'now do this—stand up to your chest, and turn towards the rail, and when you have finished the second stroke catch hold of it.'

Bevis found that this was not so easy as it sounded, but after five or six attempts he did it, and then of his own motion stood back an extra yard and endeavoured to swim three strokes, and then seize it. This was very difficult, and he could not manage it that morning. Twice more the governor came with them and they had the punt, and on the second time they caught the third stroke. They pushed off, that was one stroke, swam one good stroke while floating,

and made a third partly complete stroke, and seized the rail.

'That will do,' said the governor. He was satisfied: his object from the beginning had been so to teach them that they could teach themselves. With a band beneath the chest he could have suspended them (one at a time) from the punt in deep water, and so taught them, but he considered it much better to let them gradually acquire a knowledge of how far the water would buoy them up, and where it would fail to do so, so as to become perfectly confident, but not *too* confident. For water, however well you can swim, is not a thing to be played with. They had seen now that everything could be done in water no deeper than the chest, and even less than that, so that he had reason to believe if left to themselves they would not venture farther out till quite competent. He had their solemn promise not to go into deeper water than their shoulders. If you go up to your chin, the slightest wavelet will lift you off your feet, and in that way many too venturesome people have been drowned not twelve inches from safety.

They might go to their shoulders, always on condition of facing the shore and swimming towards it. When they thought they could swim well enough to go out of their depth he would come and watch. Both promised most faithfully, and received permission to go next time by themselves, and in a short while, if they kept their word, they should have the boat.

If any ladies should chance to read how Bevis and Mark learnt to swim, when they are at the seaside will they try the same plan? Choose a smooth sea and a low tide (only to have it shallow). Kneel in the water. Place the hands on the sands, so that the water may come almost over the shoulders—not quite, say, up to them. Then let the limbs and body float. The pleasant sense of suspension without effort will be worth the little trouble it costs. On the softest

couch the limbs feel that there is something solid, a hard framework beneath, and so the Sybarites put cushions on the floor under the feet of their couches. On the surface of the buoyant sea there is nothing under the soft couch. They will find that there is no pressure on the hands. They have no weight. Now let them kick with both feet together, and the propulsion will send them forward.

Next use one arm in swimming style. Next use one arm and kick at the same time. Try to use both arms, lifting the hand from the sand a little first, and presently more. Stand up to the chest in water, stoop somewhat and bend the knee, one foot in front of the other, and use the arms together, walking at the same time, so as to get the proper motion of the hands. Place the hands on the sand again, and try to use both arms once more.

Finally, stand up to the chest, face the shore, lean forward, and push off and try a stroke—the feet will easily recover themselves. Presently two strokes will become possible, after a while three; that is swimming. The sea is so buoyant, so beautiful, that let them once feel the sense of floating, and they will never rest till they have learned. Ladies can teach themselves so quickly, and swim better than we do. The best swimming I ever saw was done by three ladies together: the waves were large, but they swam with ease, the three graces of the sea.

CHAPTER IX

SAVAGES

Bevis and Mark went eagerly to bathe by themselves, but immediately left the direct path. Human beings must be kept taut, or, like a rope, they will slacken. The very first morning they took a leaping-pole with them, a slender ash sapling, rather more than twice their own height, which

they picked out from a number in the rickyard, intending to jump to and fro over the brook on their way. But before they had got half-way to the brook they altered their minds, becoming eager for the water, and raced to the bathing-place. The pole was now to be an oar, and they were to swim, supported by an oar, like shipwrecked people.

So soon as he had had a plunge or two, Bevis put one arm over the pole and struck out with the other, thinking that he should be able in that way to have a long swim. Directly his weight pressed on the pole it went under, and did not support him in the least. He put it next beneath his chest, with both arms over it, but immediately he pushed off down it went again. Mark took it and got astride, when the pole let his feet touch the bottom.

'It 's no use,' he said. 'What 's the good of people falling overboard with spars and oars? What stories they must tell.'

'I can't make it out,' said Bevis; and he tried again, but it was no good, the pole was an encumbrance instead of a support, for it insisted upon slipping through the water lengthways, and would not move just as he wished. In a rage he gave it a push, and sent it ashore, and turned to swimming to the rail. They did not know it, but the governor, still anxious about them, had gone round a long distance, so as to have a peep at them from the hedge on the other side of Fir-tree Gulf by the Nile. He could tell by the post and rails that they did not go out of their depth, and went away without letting them suspect his presence.

When they got out, they had a run in the sunshine, which dried them much better than towels. The field sloped gently to the right, and their usual run was on the slope beside a nut-tree hedge towards a group of elms. All the way there and back the sward was short and soft, almost like that of the Downs, which they could see, and dotted with bird's-foot lotus, over whose yellow flowers they raced.

But this morning, being no longer kept taut, after they had returned from the elms with an enormous mushroom they had found there, they ran to the old quarry and along the edge above. The perpendicular sand cliff fell to an enclosed pool beneath, in which, on going to the very edge, they could see themselves reflected. Some hurdles and flakes —a stronger kind of hurdle—had been placed here that the cattle might not wander over, but the cart-horses, who rub against everything, had rubbed against them and dislodged two or three. These had rolled down, and the rest hung half over.

While they stood still looking down over the broad waters of their New Sea, the sun burned their shoulders, making the skin red. Away they ran back to dress, and taking a short path across a place where the turf had partly grown over a shallow excavation pricked their feet with thistles, and had to limp the rest of the way to their clothes. Now, there were no thistles on their proper racecourse down to the elms and back.

As they returned home they remembered the brook, and went down to it to jump with the leaping-pole. But the soft ooze at the bottom let the pole sink in, and Bevis, who, of course, must take the first leap, was very near being hung up in the middle of the brook. Under his weight, as he sprang off, the pole sank deep into the ooze, and had it been a stiffer mud the pole would have stopped upright, when he must have stayed on it over the water or have been jerked off among the flags. As it was it did let him get over, but he did not land on the firm bank, only reaching the mud at the side, where he scrambled up by grasping the stout stalk of a willow-herb. In future he felt with the butt of the pole till he found a firm spot, where it was sandy, or where the matted roots of grasses and flags had bound the mud hard. Then he flew over well up on the grass.

Mark took his turn, and as he put the butt in the water a streak of mud came up where a small jack-fish had shot

away. So they went on down the bank leaping alternately, one carrying the towels while the other flew over and back.

Sometimes they could not leap because the tripping was bad, undermined where cowslips in the spring hung over the stream, bored with the holes of water-rats, which when disused become covered with grass, but give way beneath the foot or the hoof that presses on them, pitching leaper or rider into the current, or it was rotten from long-decaying roots, or about to slip. Sometimes the landing was bad, undermined in the same way, or higher than the tripping, when you have not only to get over, but to deliver yourself on a higher level; or swampy, where a wet furrow came to the brook; or too far, where there was nothing but mud to come on. They had to select their jumping-places, and feel the ground to the edge first.

'Here 's the raft!' shouted Mark, who was ahead, looking out for a good place.

'Is it?' said Bevis, running along on the other side. They had so completely forgotten it, that it came upon them like something new. Bevis took a leap and came over, and they set to work at once to launch it. The raft slipped gradually down the shelving shore of the drinking-place, and they thrust it into the stream. Bevis put his foot on board, but immediately withdrew it, for the water rushed through twenty leaks spurting up along the joins. Left on the sand in the sun's rays the wood of the raft shrank a little, opening the planking, while the clay they had daubed on to caulk the crevices had cracked, and the moss had dried up and was ready to crumble. The water came through everywhere, and the raft was half-full even when left to itself without any pressure.

'We ought to have thatched it,' said Mark. 'We ought to have made a roof over it. Let 's stop the leaks.'

'Oh, come on,' said Bevis, 'don't let 's bother. Rafts are no good, no more than poles or oars when you fall overboard. We shall have a ship soon.'

The raft was an old story, and he did not care about it. He went on with the leaping-pole, but Mark stayed a minute and hauled the raft on shore as far as his strength would permit. He got about a quarter of it on the ground, so that it could not float away, and then ran after Bevis.

They went into the Peninsula, and looked at all the fir trees, to see if any would do for a mast for the blue boat they were to have. As it had no name, they called it the blue boat to distinguish it from the punt. Mark thought an ash pole would do for the mast, as ash poles were so straight and could be easily shaved to the right size; but Bevis would not hear of it, for masts were never made of ash, but always of pine, and they must have their ship proper. He selected a tree presently, a young fir, straight as an arrow, and started Mark for the axe, but before he had gone ten yards Mark came back, saying that the tree would be of no use unless they liked to wait till next year, because it would be green, and the mast ought to be made of seasoned wood.

'So it ought,' said Bevis. 'What a lot of trouble it is to make a ship.'

But as they sat on the railing across the isthmus swinging their legs, Mark remembered that there were some fir poles which had been cut a long time since behind the great wood-pile, between it and the walnut trees, out of sight. Without a word away they ran, chose one of these and carried it into the shed where Bevis usually worked. They had got the dead bark off and were shaving away when it was dinner-time, which they thought a bore, but which wise old Pan, who was never chained now, considered the main object of life.

Next morning as they went through the meadow, where the dew still lingered in the shade, on the way to the bathing-place, taking Pan with them this time, they hung about the path picking clover-heads and sucking the petals, pulling them out and putting the lesser ends in their lips,

looking at the white and pink bramble flowers, noting where the young nuts began to show, pulling down the woodbine, and doing everything but hasten on to their work of swimming. They stopped at the gate by the New Sea, over whose smooth surface slight breaths of mist were curling, and stood kicking the ground and stones as flighty horses paw.

'We ought to be something,' said Mark discontentedly.

'Of course we ought,' said Bevis. 'Things are very stupid unless you are something.'

'Lions and tigers,' said Mark, growling, and showing his teeth.

'Pooh!'

'Shipwrecked people on an island.'

'Fiddle! They have plenty to do and are always happy, and we are not.'

'No; very unhappy. Let 's try escaping—prisoners running away.'

'Hum! Hateful!'

'Everything 's hateful.'

'So it is.'

'This is a very stupid sea.'

'There 's nothing in it.'

'Nothing anywhere.'

'Let 's be hermits.'

'There 's always only one hermit.'

'Well, you live that side' (pointing across), 'and I 'll live this.'

'Hermits eat pulse and drink water.'

'What 's pulse?'

'I suppose it 's barley-water.'

'Horrid.'

'Awful.'

'You say what we shall be then.'

'Pan, you old donk,' said Bevis, rolling Pan over with his foot. Lazy Pan lay on his back, and let Bevis bend his ribs with his foot.

'Caw, caw!' a crow went over down to the shore, where he hoped to find a mussel surprised by the dawn in shallow water.

Bang! 'Hoi! Hoo! Yah!' The discharge was half a mile away, but the crow altered his mind, and flew over the water as near the surface as he could without touching. Why do birds always cross the water in that way?

'That 's Tom,' said Mark. Tom was the bird-keeper. He shot first, and shouted after. He potted a hare in the corn with bits of flint, a button, three tin-tacks, and a horse-stub, which scraped the old barrel inside, but slew the game. That was for himself. Then he shouted his loudest to do his duty—for other people. The sparrows had flown out of the corn at the noise of the gun, and settled on the hedge; when Tom shouted they were frightened from the hedge, and went back into the wheat. From which learn this, shoot first and shout after.

'Shall we say that was a gun at sea?' continued Mark.

'They are always heard at night,' said Bevis. 'Pitch black, you know.'

'Everything is somehow else,' said Mark.

Pan closed his idle old eyes, and grunted with delight as Bevis rubbed his ribs with his foot. Bevis put his hands in his pockets and sighed deeply. The sun looked down on these sons of care, and all the morning beamed.

'Savages!' shouted Mark, kicking the gate to with a slam that startled Pan up. 'Savages, of course!'

'Why?'

'They swim, donk: don't they? They 're always in the water, and they have catamarans and ride the waves and dance on the shore, and blow shells——'

'Trumpets?'

'Yes.'

'Canoes?'

'Yes.'

'No clothes?'

'No.'
'All jolly?'
'Everything.'
'Hurrah!'

Away they ran towards the bathing-place to be savages, but Mark stopped suddenly, and asked what sort they were? They decided that they were the South Sea sort, and raced on again, Pan keeping pace with a kind of shamble; he was too idle to run properly. They dashed into the water, each with a woodpigeon's feather, which they had found under the sycamore trees above the quarry, stuck in his hair. At the first dive the feathers floated away. Upon the other side of the rails there was a large aspen tree whose lowest bough reached out over the water, which was shallow there.

Though they made such a splashing, when Bevis looked over the railings a moment, he saw some little roach moving to and fro under the bough. The wavelets from his splashing rolled on to the sandy shore, rippling under the aspen. As he looked, a fly fell on its back out of the tree and struggled in vain to get up. Bevis climbed over the rails, picked an aspen leaf, and put it under the fly, which thus on a raft, and tossed up and down as Mark dived, was floated slowly by the undulations to the strand. As he got over the rails a kingfisher shot out from the mouth of the Nile opposite, and crossed aslant the gulf, whistling as he flew.

'Look!' said Mark. 'Don't you know that 's a "sign"? Savages read "signs," and those birds mean that there are heaps of fish.'

'Yes, but we ought to have a proper language.'

'Kalabala-blong!' said Mark.

'Hududu-blow-fluz!' replied Bevis, taking a header from the top of the rail on which he had been sitting, and on which he just contrived to balance himself a moment without falling backwards.

'Umplumum!' he shouted, coming up again.

'Ikiklikah,' and Mark disappeared.

'Noklikah,' said Bevis, giving him a shove under as he came up to breathe.

'That 's not fair,' said Mark, scrambling up.

Bevis was swimming and Mark seized his feet. More splashing and shouting, and the rocks resound. The echo of their voices returned from the quarry and the high bank under the firs.

They raced presently down to the elms along the sweet soft turf, sprinkling the dry grass with the sparkling drops from their limbs, and the sunlight shone on their white shoulders. The wind blew and stroked their gleaming backs. They rolled and tumbled on the grass, and the earth was under them. From the water to the sun and the wind and the grass.

They played round the huge sycamore trunks above the quarry, and the massive boughs stretched over—from a distance they would have seemed mere specks beneath the immense trees. They raced across to a round hollow in the field and sat down at the bottom, so that they could see nothing but the sky overhead, and the clouds drifting. They lay at full length, and for a moment were still and silent; the sunbeam and the wind, the soft touch of the grass, the gliding cloud, the eye-loved blue gave them the delicious sense of growing strong in drowsy luxury.

Then with a shout, renewed, they ran, and Pan, who had been waiting by their clothes, was startled into a bark of excitement at their sudden onslaught. As they went homewards they walked round to the little sheltered bay where the boats were kept, to look at the blue boat and measure for the mast. It was beside the punt, half drawn up on the sand, and fastened to a willow root. She was an ill-built craft with a straight gunwale, so that when afloat she seemed lower at stem and stern than abeam, as if she would thrust her nose into a wave instead of riding it. The planks were thick and heavy and looked as if they had not been bent enough to form the true buoyant curve.

The blue paint had scaled and faded, the rowlocks were

mended with a piece cut from an old rake-handle, there was a small pool of bilge-water in the sternsheets from the last shower, full of dead insects and yellow willow leaves. A clumsy vessel put together years ago in some by-water of the far distant Thames above Oxford, and not good enough even for that unknown creek. She had drifted somehow into this landlocked pond and remained unused, hauled on the strand beneath the willows; she could carry five or six, and if they bumped her well on the stones it mattered little to so stout a frame.

Still she was a boat, with keel and curve, and like lovers they saw no defect. Bevis looked at the hole in the seat or thwart, where the mast would have to be stepped, and measured it (not having a rule with him) by cutting a twig just to the length of the diameter. Mark examined the rudder and found that the lines were rotten, having hung dangling over the stern in the water for so long. Next they stepped her length, stepping on the sand outside, to decide on the height of the mast, and where the ropes were to be fastened, for they meant to have some standing rigging.

At home afterwards in the shed, while Bevis shaped the fir pole for the mast, Mark was set to carve the leaping-pole, for the South Sea savages have everything carved. He could hardly cut the hard, dried bark of the ash, which had shrunk on and become like wood. He made a spiral notch round it, and then searched till he found his old spear, which had to be ornamented and altered into a bone harpoon. A bone from the kitchen was sawn off while in the vice, and then half through two inches from the largest end. Tapping a broad chisel gently, Mark split the bone down to the sawn part, and then gradually filed it sharp. He also filed three barbs to it, and then fitted the staff of the spear into the hollow end. While he was engraving lines and rings on the spear with his pocket-knife, the dinner interrupted his work.

Bevis, wearying of the mast, got some flints, and

hammered them to split off flakes for arrowheads, but though he bruised his fingers, he could not chip the splinters into shape. The fracture always ran too far, or not far enough. John Young, the labourer, came by as he was doing this sitting on the stool in the shed, and watched him.

'I see a man do that once,' said John.

'How did he do it? Tell me: what 's the trick?' said Bevis, impatient to know.

'Aw, I dunno; I see him at it. A' had a gate-hinge snopping um.'

The iron hinge of a gate, if removed from the post, forms a fairly good hammer, the handle of iron as well as the head.

'Where was it? What did he do it for?'

'Aw, up in the Downs. Course he did it to sell um.'

The prehistoric art of chipping flints lingered among the shepherds on the Downs, till the percussion-cap came in, and no longer having to get flakes for the flint-lock guns they slowly let it disappear. Young had seen it done, but could not describe how.

Bevis battered his flints till he was tired; then he took up the last and hurled it away in a rage with all his might. The flint whirled over and over and hummed along the ground till it struck a small sarsen or boulder by the wood-pile, put there as a spur-stone to force the careless carters to drive straight. Then it flew into splinters with the jerk of the stoppage.

'Here 's a sharp 'un,' said John Young, picking up a flake, 'and here 's another.'

Altogether there were three pointed flakes which Bevis thought would do. Mark had to bring some reeds next day from the place where they grew, half a mile below his house in a by-water of the brook. They were green, but Bevis could not wait to dry them. He cut them off a little above the knot or joint, split the part above, and put the flint flake in, and bound it round and round with horse-hair from the carter's store in the stable. But when they

were finished, they were not shot off, lest they should break; they were carried indoors into the room upstairs where there was a bench, and which they made their armoury.

They made four or five darts next, of deal shaved to the thickness of a thin walking-stick, and not quite so long. One end was split in four—once down and across that—and two pieces of cardboard doubled up thrust in, answering the purpose of feathering. There was a slight notch two-thirds up the shaft, and the way was to twist a piece of twine round it there crossed over a knot so as just to hold, the other end of the twine firmly coiled about the wrist, so that in throwing, the string was taut and the point of the dart between the fingers. Hurling it, the string imparted a second force, and the dart, twirling like an arrow, flew fifty or sixty yards.

Slings they made with a square of leather from the sides of old shoes, a small hole cut out in the centre that the stone might not slip, but these they could never do much with, except hurl pebbles from the rickyard, rattling up into the boughs of the oak on the other side of the field. The real arrows to shoot with—not the reed arrows to look at—were tipped with iron nails filed to a sharp point. They had much trouble in feathering them; they had plenty of goose-feathers (saved from the Christmas plucking), but to glue them on properly was not easy.

CHAPTER X

SAVAGES CONTINUED—THE CATAMARAN

WITH all their efforts, they could not make a blow-tube, such as is used by savages. Bevis thought and thought, and Mark helped him, and Pan grabbed his fleas, all together in the round blue summer-house; and they ate a thousand strawberries, and a basketful of red currants, ripe, from the

wall close by, and two young summer apples, far from ready, and yet they could not do it. The tube ought to be at least as long as the savage, using it, was tall. They could easily find sticks that were just the thickness, and straight, but the difficulty was to bore through them. No gimlet or auger was long enough; nor could they do it with a bar of iron, red-hot at the end; they could not keep it true; but always burned too much one side or the other.

Perhaps it might be managed by inserting a short piece of tin tubing, and making a little fire in it, and gradually pushing it down as the fire burnt. Only, as Bevis pointed out, the fire would not live in such a narrow place without any draught. A short tube was easily made out of elder, but not nearly long enough. The tinker, coming round to mend the pots, put it into their heads to set him to make a tin blow-pipe, five feet in length; which he promised to do, and sent it in a day or two. But as he had no sheet of tin broad enough to roll the tube in one piece, he had made four short pipes and soldered them together. Nothing would go straight through it because the joints were not quite perfect, inside there was a roughness which caught the dart and obstructed the puff, for a good blow-tube must be as smooth and well bored as a gun-barrel.

When they came to look over their weapons, they found they had not got any throw-sticks nor a boomerang. Throw-sticks were soon made, by cutting some with a good thick knob; and a boomerang was made out of a curved branch of ash, which they planed down smooth one side, and cut into a slight arch on the other.

'This is a capital boomerang,' said Bevis. 'Now we shall be able to knock a rabbit over without any noise, or frightening the rest, and it will come back and we can kill three or four running.'

'Yes, and one of the mallards,' said Mark. 'Don't you know?—they are always too far for an arrow, and besides, the arrow would be lost if it did not hit. Now we shall

have them. But which way ought we to throw it—the hollow first, or the bend first?'

'Let 's try,' said Bevis, and ran with the boomerang from the shed into the field.

Whiz! Away it went, bend first, and rose against the wind till the impetus ceased, when it hung a moment on the air, and slid to the right, falling near the summer-house. Next time it turned to the left, and fell in the hedge; another time it hit the hayrick: nothing could make it go straight. Mark tried his hardest, and used it both ways, but in vain—the boomerang rose against the wind, and, so far, acted properly, but directly the force with which it was thrown was exhausted, it did as it liked, and swept round to the left or the right, and never once returned to their feet.

'A boomerang is a stupid thing,' said Bevis, 'I shall chop it up. I hate it.'

'No; put it upstairs,' said Mark, taking it from him. So the boomerang was added to the collection in the bench-room. A crossbow was the next thing, and they made the stock from a stout elder branch, because when the pith was taken out, it left a groove for the bolt to slide up. The bow was a thick briar, and the bolt flew thirty or forty yards, but it did not answer, and they could hit nothing with it. A crossbow requires delicate adjustment, and, to act well, must be made almost as accurately as a rifle.

They shot a hundred times at the sparrows on the roof, who were no sooner driven off than they came back like flies, but never hit one; so the crossbow was hung up with the boomerang. Bevis, from much practice, could shoot far better than that with his bow and arrow. He stuck up an apple on a stick, and after six or seven trials hit it at twenty yards. He could always hit a tree. Mark was afraid to throw his bone-headed harpoon at a tree, lest the head should break off; but he had another, without a bone head, to cast; and he too could generally hit a tree.

'Now we are quite savages,' said Bevis, one evening, as they sat up in the bench-room, and the sun went down red and fiery, opposite the little window, filling the room with a red glow and gleaming on their faces. It put a touch of colour on the pears, which were growing large, just outside the window, as if they were ripe towards the sunset. The boomerang on the wall was lit up with the light; so was a parcel of canvas, on the floor, which they had bought at Latten town, for the sails of their ship.

There was an oyster barrel under the bench, which was to contain the fresh water for their voyage, and there had been much discussion as to how they were to put a new head to it.

'We ought to see ourselves on the shore with spears and things when we are sailing round,' said Mark.

'So as not to be able to land for fear.'

'Poisoned arrows,' said Mark. 'I say, how stupid! we have not got any poison.'

'No more we have. We must get a lot of poison.'

'Curious plants nobody knows anything about but us.'

'Nobody ever heard of them.'

'And dip our arrows and spears in the juice.'

'No one ever gets well after being shot with them.'

'If the wind blows hard ashore and there are no harbours it will be awful with the savages all along waiting for us.'

'We shall see them dancing and shouting, with bows and throw-sticks, and yelling.'

'That 's you and me.'

'Of course. And very likely if the wind is very hard we shall have to let down the sails, and fling out an anchor and stay till the gale goes down.'

'The anchor may drag.'

'Then we shall crash on the rocks.'

'And swim ashore.'

'You can't. There 's the breakers and the savages behind them. I shall stop on the wreck, and the sun will go down.'

'Red like that,' pointing to the window.

'And it will blow harder still.'

'Black as pitch.'

'Horrible.'

'No help.'

'Fire a gun.'

'Pooh!'

'Make a raft.'

'The clouds are sure to break, or something.'

'I say,' said Bevis, 'won't all these things'—pointing to the weapons—'do first-rate for our war?'

'Capital. There will be arrows sticking up everywhere all over the battle-field.'

'Broken lances and horses without riders.'

'Dints in the ground.'

'Knights with their backs against trees and heaps of soldiers chopping at them.'

'Flashing swords! the ground will shake when we charge.'

'Trumpets!'

'Groans!'

'Grass all red!'

'Blood-red sun like that!' The disk growing larger as it neared the horizon shone vast through some distant elms.

'Flocks of crows.'

'Heaps of white bones.'

'And we will take the shovels and make a tumulus by the shore.'

The red glow on the wall slowly dimmed, the colour left the pear, and the song of a thrush came from the orchard.

'I want to make some magic,' said Bevis, after a pause. 'The thing is to make a wand.'

'Genii are best,' said Mark. 'They do anything you tell them.'

'There ought to be a black book telling you how to do it somewhere,' said Bevis; 'but I 've looked through the bookcase and there 's nothing.'

'Are you sure you have quite looked through!'

'I 'll try again,' said Bevis. 'There 's a lot of books, but never anything that you want.'

'I know,' said Mark suddenly. 'There 's the bugle in the old cupboard—that will do for the war.'

'So it will; I forgot it.'

'And a flag.'

'No; we must have eagles on a stick.'

Knock! They jumped; Polly had hit the ceiling underneath with the handle of a broom.

'Supper.'

When they went to bathe next morning, Bevis took with him his bow and arrows, intending to shoot a pike. As they walked beside the shore they often saw jacks basking in the sun at the surface of the water, and only a few yards distant. He had fastened a long thin string one end to the arrow and the other to the bow, so that he might draw the arrow back to him with the fish on as the savages do. Mark brought his bone-headed harpoon to try and spear something, and between them they also carried a plank, which was to be used as a catamaran.

A paddle they had made was tied to it for convenience, that their hands might not be too full. Mark went first with one end of the plank on his shoulder, and Bevis followed with the other on his, and as they had to hold it on edge it rather cut them. Coming near some weeds where they had seen a jack the day before, they put the catamaran down, and Bevis crept quietly forward. The jack was not there, but motioning to Mark to stand still, Bevis went on to where the first railings stretched out into the water.

There he saw a jack about two pounds' weight basking within an inch of the surface, and aslant to him. He lifted his bow before he went near, shook out the string that it might slip easily like the coil of a harpoon, fitted the arrow, and, holding it almost up, stole closer. He knew if he

pulled the bow in the usual manner the sudden motion of his arms would send the jack away in an instant. With the bow already in position, he got within six yards of the fish, which, quite still, did not seem to see anything, but to sleep with eyes wide open in the sun. The shaft flew, and like another arrow the jack darted aslant into deep water.

Bevis drew back his arrow with the string, not altogether disappointed, for it had struck the water very near, if not exactly at, the place the fish had occupied. But he thought the string impeded the shaft, and took it off for another trial. Mark would not stay behind; he insisted upon seeing the shooting, so leaving the catamaran on the grass, they moved gently along the shore. After a while they found another jack, this time much larger, and not less than four pounds' weight, stationary in a tiny bay, or curve of the land. He was lying parallel to the shore, but deeper than the first, perhaps six inches beneath the surface. Mark stood where he could see the dark line of the fish, while Bevis, with the bow lifted and arrow half-drawn, took one, two, three, and almost another step forward.

Aiming steadily at the jack's broad side, just behind the front fins, where the fish was widest, Bevis grasped his bow firm to keep it from the least wavering (for it is the left hand that shoots), drew his arrow, and let go. So swift was the shaft, unimpeded, and drawn too this time almost to the head, in traversing the short distance between, that the jack, quick as he was, could not of himself have escaped. Bevis saw the arrow enter the water, and, as it seemed to him, strike the fish. It did indeed strike the image of the fish, but the real jack slipped beneath it.

Bevis looked and looked, he was so certain he had hit it, and so he had hit the mark he aimed at, which was the refraction, but the fish was unhurt. It was explained to him afterwards that the fish appears higher in the water than it actually is, and that to have hit it he should have aimed two inches underneath, and he proved the truth

of it by trying to touch things in the water with a long stick. The arrow glanced after going two feet or so deep, and performed a curve in the water exactly opposite to that it would have traced in the air. In the air it would have curved over, in the water it curved under, and came up to the surface not very far out; the water checked it so. Bevis fastened the string again to another arrow, and shot it out over the first, so that it caught and held it, and he drew them both back.

They fetched the catamaran, and went on till they came to the point where there was a wall of stones rudely put together to shield the land from the full shock of the waves, when the west wind rolled them heavily from the Indian Ocean and the Golden Sea. Putting the plank down again, Mark went forward with his harpoon, for he knew that shoals of fish played often in the water when it was still, just beneath this rocky wall. As he expected, they were there this morning, for the most part roach, but a few perch. He knelt and crept out on all fours to the edge of the wall, leaving his hat on the sward. Looking over, he could see to the stony bottom, and as there was not a ripple, he could see distinctly.

He put his harpoon gently, without a splash, into the sunlit water, and let it sink slowly in among the shoal. The roach swam aside a yard or so from it, but showed no more fear than that it should not touch them. Mark kept his harpoon still till a larger roach came slowly by within eighteen inches of the point, when he jerked it at the fish. It passed six inches behind his tail and though Mark tried again and again, thrusting quickly, he could not strike them with his single point. To throw it like a dart he knew was useless, they were too deep down, nor could he hit so small an object in motion. He could not do it, but some days afterwards he struck a small tench in the brook, and got him out. The tench was still, so that he could put the head of his harpoon almost on it.

CHAPTER XI

SAVAGES CONTINUED—MAKING THE SAILS

THE same evening, having got a great plateful of cherries, they went to work in the bench-room to cut out the sails from the parcel of canvas. There had been cherries in town weeks before, but these were the first considered ripe in the country, which is generally later. With a cherry in his mouth, Bevis spread the canvas out upon the floor, and marked it with his pencil. The rig was to be fore and aft, a mainsail and jib; the mast and gaff, or as they called it, the yard, were already finished. It took forty cherries to get it cut out properly, then they threw the other pieces aside, and placed the sails on the floor in the position they would be when fixed.

'You are sure they 're not too big,' said Mark, 'if a white squall comes?'

'There are no white squalls now,' said Bevis, on his knees thoughtfully sucking a cherry-stone. 'It 's cyclones now. The sails are just the right size, and of course we can take in a reef. You cut off—let me see—twenty bits of string, a foot—no, fifteen inches long: it 's for the reefs.'

Mark began to measure off the string from a quantity of the largest make, which they had bought for the purpose.

'There 's the block,' he said. 'How are you going to manage about the pulley to haul up the mainsail?'

'The block 's a bore,' mused Bevis, rolling his cherry-stone about. 'I don't think we could make one.'

'Buy one.'

'Pooh! There 's nothing in Latten; why you can't buy anything.' Mark was silent, he knew it was true. 'If we make a slit in the mast and put a little wheel in off a window-blind or something——'

'That would do first-rate.'

'No, it wouldn't; it would weaken the mast, stupe, and the first cyclone would snap it.'

'So it would. Then we should drift ashore and get eaten.'

'Most likely.'

'Well, bore a hole and put the cord through that; that would not weaken it much.'

'No; but I know! A curtain-ring! Don't you see, you fasten the curtain-ring—it 's brass—to the mast, and put the rope through, and it runs easy—brass is smooth.'

'Of course. Who 's that?'

Some small stones came rattling in at the open window, and two voices shouted:

'I say! Holloa!'

Bevis and Mark went to the window and saw below two of their friends, Bill and Wat, on the garden path below.

'When 's the war going to begin?' asked Wat.

'Tell us about the war,' said Bill.

'The war 's not ready,' said Bevis.

'Well, how long is it going to be?'

'Make haste.'

'Everybody 's ready.

'Lots of them. Do you think you shall want any more?'

'I know six,' said a third voice, and Tim came round the corner, having waited to steal a strawberry, 'and one 's a whopper.'

'Let 's begin.'

'Now then.'

'Oh! don't make such a noise,' said Bevis. The sails and the savages had rather put the war aside, but Mark had talked of it to others, and the idea was spread in a minute; everybody jumped at it, and all the cry was War!

'Make me lieutenant,' said Andrew, appearing from the orchard.

'I want to carry the flag.'

'Come down and tell us.'

'How are we to tell you if you keep talking?' said Mark;

Bevis put his head out of the window by the pears, and they were quiet.

'I tell you the war 's not ready,' he said; 'and you 're as bad as rebels—I mean you 're a mutiny to come here before you 're sent for, and you ought to be shot'—('Executed,' whispered Mark behind him)—'executed, of course.'

'How are we to know when it 's ready?'

'You 'll be summoned,' said Bevis. 'There will be a muster-roll and a trumpet blown, and you 'll have to march a thousand miles.'

'All right.'

'And the swords have to be made, and the eagles, besides the map of the roads and the grub'—('Provisions,' said Mark)—'provisions, of course, and all the rest, and how do you think a war is to be got ready in a minute, you stupes!' in a tone of great indignation.

They grumbled: they wanted a big battle on the spot.

'If you bother me much,' said Bevis, 'while I 'm getting the fleet ready, there shan't be a war at all.'

'Are you getting a fleet?'

'Here are the sails,' said Mark, holding up some canvas.

'Well, you won't be long?'

'You 'll let us know?'

'Shall we tell anybody else?'

'Lots,' said Bevis; 'tell lots. We 're going to have the biggest armies ever seen.'

'Thousands,' said Mark. 'Millions!'

'Millions!' said Bevis.

'Hurrah!' they shouted.

'Here,' said Bevis, throwing the remainder of the cherries out like a shower among them.

'Are you coming to quoits?'

'Oh! no,' said Mark, 'we have so much to do; now go away.' The soldiery moved off through the garden, snatching lawlessly at any fruit they saw.

'Mark,' said Bevis on his knees again, 'these sails will have to be hemmed, you know.'

'So they will.'

'We can't do it. You must take them home to Frances, and make her stitch them; roll them up and go directly.'

'I don't want to go home,' said Mark. 'And perhaps she won't stitch them.'

'I 'm sure she will; she will do anything for me.'

'So she will,' said Mark rather sullenly. 'Everybody does everything for you.'

Bevis had rolled up the sails, quite indifferent as to what people did for him, and put them into Mark's unwilling hands.

'Now you can have the donkey, and mind and come back before breakfast.'

'I can't catch him,' said Mark.

'No; no more can I—stop. John Young 's sure to be in the stable: he can.'

'Ah,' said Mark, brightening up a little, 'that moke is a beast.'

John Young, having stipulated for a 'pot,' went to catch the donkey; they sat down in the shed to wait for him, but as he did not come for some time they went after him. They met him in the next field leading the donkey with a halter, and red as fire from running. They took the halter and sent John away for the 'pot.' There was a wicked thought in their hearts, and they wanted witnesses away. So soon as John had gone, Mark looked at Bevis, and Bevis looked at Mark. Mark growled, Bevis stamped his feet.

'Beast!' said Mark.

'Wretch!' said Bevis.

'You—you—you, Thing,' said Mark; they ground their teeth, and glared at the animal. They led him all fearful to a tree, a little tree but stout enough; it was an ash, and it grew somewhat away from the hedge. They tied him firmly to the tree, and then they scourged this miserable citizen.

All the times they had run in vain to catch him; all the times they had had to walk when they might have ridden one behind the other on his back; all his refusals to be tempted; all the wrongs they had endured at his heels boiled in their breasts. They broke their sticks upon his back, they cut new ones, and smashed them too, they hurled the fragments at him, and then got some more. They thrashed, thwacked, banged, thumped, poked, prodded, kicked, belaboured, bumped, and hit him, working themselves into a frenzy of rage.

Mark fetched a pole to knock him the harder as it was heavy; Bevis crushed into the hedge, and brought out a dead log to hurl at him, a log he could but just lift and swung to throw with difficulty—the same Bevis who put an aspen leaf carefully under the fly to save it from drowning. The sky was blue, and the evening beautiful, but no one came to help the donkey.

When they were tired, they sat down and rested, and after they were cooler, and had recovered from the fatigue, they loosed him—quite cowed this time and docile, and Mark, with the parcel of sails, got on his back. After all this onslaught there did not seem any difference in him except that his coat had been well dusted. This immunity aggravated them; they could not hurt him.

'Put him in the stable all night,' said Bevis, 'and don't give him anything to eat.'

'And no water,' said Mark, as he rode off. 'So I will.'

And so he did. But the donkey had cropped all day, and was full, and just before John Young caught him had had a draught, rather unusual for him and equal to an omen, at the drinking-place by the raft. The donkey slept, and beat them.

After Mark had gone Bevis returned to the bench-room, and fastened a brass curtain-ring to the mast, which they had carried up there. When he had finished, remembering the poison for the arrows, he thought he would go and see if

he could find out any more fatal plants. There was an ancient encyclopaedia in the bookcase, in which he had read many curious things, such as would not be considered practical enough for modern publication, which must be dry or nothing. Among the rest was a page of chemical signs and those used by the alchemists, some of which he had copied off for magic. Pulling out the volumes, which were piled haphazard, like bricks shot out of a cart, there was one that had all the alphabets employed in the different languages, Coptic, Gothic, Syriac, and so on.

The Arabic took his fancy as the most mysterious—the sweeping curves, the quivering lines, the blots where the reed pen thickened, there was no knowing what such writing might not mean. How mystic the lettering which forms the running ornament of the Alhambra! It is the writing of the Orient, of the alchemist and enchanter, the astrologer, and the prophet.

Bevis copied the alphabet, and then he made a roll of a broad sheet of yellowish paper torn from the end of one of the large volumes, a fly-leaf, and wrote the letters upon it in such a manner as their shape and flowing contour arranged themselves. With these he mingled the alchemic signs for fire and air and water, and so by the time the dusk crept into the parlour and filled it with shadow he had completed a manuscript. This he rolled up and tied with string, intending to bury it in the sand of the quarry, so that when they sailed round in the ship they might land and discover it.

Mark returned to breakfast, and said that Frances had promised to hem the sails, and thought it would not take long. Bevis showed him the roll.

'It looks magic,' said Mark. 'What does it mean?'

'I don't know,' said Bevis. 'That is what we shall have to find out when we discover it. Besides, the magic is never in the writing; it is what you see when you read it—it 's like looking in a looking-glass, and seeing people moving about a thousand miles away.'

'I know,' said Mark. 'We can put it in a sand-martin's hole, then it won't get wet if it rains.'

They started for the bathing-place, and carefully deposited the roll in a sand-martin's hole some way up the face of the quarry, covering it with sand. To know the spot again, they counted and found it was the third burrow to the right, if you stood by the stone-heap and looked straight towards the first sycamore tree. Having taken the bearings, they dragged the catamaran down to the water, and had a swim. When they came out, and were running about on the high ground by the sycamores, they caught sight of a dog-cart slowly crossing the field a long way off, and immediately hid behind a tree to reconnoitre the new savage, themselves unseen.

'It 's Jack,' said Bevis; 'I' m sure it is.' It was Jack, and he was going at a walking-pace, because the track across the field was rough, and he did not care to get to the gateway before the man sent to open it had arrived there. His object was to look at some grass to rent for his sheep.

'Yes, it 's Jack,' said Mark, very slowly and doubtfully. Bevis looked at him.

'Well, suppose it is; he won't hurt us. We can easily shoot him if he comes here.'

'But the letter,' said Mark.

'What letter?'

Mark had started for his clothes, which were in a heap on the sward; he seized his coat, and drew a note much frayed from one of the pockets. He looked at it, heaved a deep sigh, and ran with all his might to intercept Jack. Bevis watched him tearing across the field and laughed; then he sat down on the grass to wait for him.

Mark, out of breath, and with thistles in his feet, would never have overtaken the dog-cart had not Jack seen him coming and stopped. He could not speak, but handed up the note in silence, more like Cupid than messengers

generally. He panted so that he could not run away directly, as he had intended.

'You rascal,' said Jack, flicking at him with his whip. 'How long have you had this in your pocket?'

Mark tried to run away, he could only trot; Jack turned his mare's head, as if half-inclined to drive after him.

'If you come,' said Mark, shaking his fist, 'we 'll shoot you and stick a spear into you. Aha! you 're afraid! aha!'

Jack was too eager to read his note to take vengeance. Mark walked away jeering at him. The reins hung down, and the mare cropped as the master read. Mark laughed to think he had got off so easily, for the letter had been in his pocket a week, though he had faithfully promised to deliver it the same day—for a shilling. Had he not been sent home with the sails it might have remained another week, till the envelope was fretted through.

Frances asked if he had given it to Jack. Mark started. 'Ah,' said she, 'you have forgotten it.'

'Of course I have,' said Mark. 'It 's so long ago.'

'Then you did really?'

'How stupid you are,' said Mark; and Frances could not press him further, lest she should seem too anxious about Jack, so the young dog escaped, but he did not dare delay longer, and had not Jack happened to cross the field meant to have ridden up to his house on the donkey. When Jack had read the note he looked at the retreating figure of Cupid and opened his lips, but caught his breath as it were and did not say it. He put his whip aside as he drove on, lest he should unjustly punish the mare.

Mark strolled leisurely back to the bathing-place, but when he got there Bevis was not to be seen. He looked round at the water, the quarry, the sycamore trees. He ran down to the water's edge with his heart beating and a wild terror causing a whirling sensation in his eyes, for the thought, in the instant, came to him that Bevis had gone out of his depth. He tried to shout 'Bevis!' but he was

choked; he raised his hands; as he looked across the water he suddenly saw something white moving among the fir trees at the head of the gulf.

He knew it was Bevis, but he was so overcome he sat down on the sward to watch, he could not stand up. The something white was stealthily passing from tree to tree like an Indian. Mark looked round, and saw his own harpoon on the grass, but at once missed the bow and arrows. His terror had suspended his observation, else he would have noticed this before.

Bevis, when Mark ran with the letter to Jack, had sat down on the sward to wait for him, and by and by, while still, and looking out over the water, his quiet eye became conscious of a slight movement opposite at the mouth of the Nile. There was a ripple, and from the high ground where he sat he could see the reflection of the trees in the water there undulate, though their own boughs shut off the light air from the surface. He got up, took his bow and arrows, and went to the firs. The dead, dry needles or leaves on the ground felt rough to his naked feet, and he had to take care not to step on the hard cones. A few small bramble bushes forced him to go aside, so that it took him some little time to get near the Nile.

Then he had to always keep a tree trunk in front of him, and to step slowly that his head might not be seen before he could see what it was himself. He stooped as the ripples on the other side of the brook became visible; then gradually lifting his head, sheltered by a large alder, he traced the ripples back to the shore, under the bank, and saw a moor-cock feeding by the roots of a willow. Bevis waited till the cock turned his back, then he stole another step forward to the alder.

It was about ten yards to the willow which hung over the water, but he could not get any nearer, for there was no more cover beyond the alder—the true savage is never content unless he is close to his game. Bevis grasped his

bow firm in his left hand, drew the arrow quick but steadily —not with a jerk—and as the sharp point covered the bird, loosed it. There was a splash and a fluttering, and he knew instantly that he had hit. 'Mark! Mark!' he shouted, and ran down the bank, heedless of the jagged stones. Mark heard, and came racing through the firs.

The arrow had struck the moorcock's wing, but even then the bird would have got away, for the point had no barb, and in diving and struggling it would have come out, had not he been so near the willow. The spike went through his wing and nailed it to a thick root; the arrow quivered as it was stopped by the wood. Bevis seized him by the neck and drew the arrow out.

'Kill him! Kill him!' shouted Mark. The other savage pulled the neck, and Mark, leaping down the jagged stones, took the dead bird in his eager hands.

'Here 's where the arrow went in.'

'There 's three feathers in the water.'

'Feel how warm he is.'

'Look at the thick red on his bill.'

'See his claws.'

'Hurrah!'

'Let 's eat him.'

'Raw?'

'No. Cook him.'

'All right. Make a fire.'

Thus the savages gloated over their prey. They went back up the bank and through the firs to the sward.

'Where shall we make the fire?' said Mark. 'In the quarry?'

'That old stupe may come for sand.'

'So he may. Let 's make it here.'

'Everybody would see.'

'By the hedge towards the elms then.'

'No. I know, in the hollow.'

'Of course, nobody would come there.'

'Pick up some sticks.'

'Come and help me.'

'I shall dress—there are brambles.'

So they dressed, and then found that Mark had broken a nail, and Bevis had cut his foot with the sharp edge of a fossil shell projecting from one of the stones. But that was a trifle, they could think of nothing but the bird. While they were gathering armfuls of dead sticks from among the trees, they remembered that John Young, who always paunched the rabbits and hares and got everything ready for the kitchen, said coots and moorhens must be skinned, they could not be plucked because of the 'dowl.'

Dowl is the fluff, the tiny featherets no fingers can remove. So after they had carried the wood they had collected to the round hollow in the field beyond the sycamore trees, they took out their knives, and haggled the skin off. They built their fire very skilfully; they had made so many in the Peninsula (for there is nothing so pleasant as making a fire out of doors), that they had learnt exactly how to do it. Two short sticks were stuck in the ground and a third across to them, like a triangle. Against this frame a number of the smallest and driest sticks were leaned, so that they made a tiny hut. Outside these there was a second layer of longer sticks; all standing, or rather leaning against the first.

If a stick is placed across, lying horizontally, supposing it catches fire, it just burns through the middle, and that is all, the ends go out. If it is stood nearly upright, the flame draws up it; it is certain to catch; it burns longer and leaves a good ember. They arranged the rest of their bundles ready to be thrown on when wanted, and then put some paper, a handful of dry grass, and a quantity of the least and driest twigs, like those used in birds' nests, inside the little hut. Then having completed the pile they remembered they had no matches.

'It 's very lucky,' said Bevis. 'If we had we should have to throw them away. Matches are not proper.'

'Two pieces of wood,' said Mark. 'I know; you rub them together till they catch fire, and one piece must be hard and the other soft.'

'Yes,' said Bevis, and taking out his knife he cut off the end of one of the larger dead branches they had collected, and made a smooth side to it. Mark had some difficulty in finding a soft piece to rub on it, for those which touched soft crumbled when rubbed on the hard surface Bevis had prepared. A bit of willow seemed best, and Bevis, seizing it first, rubbed it to and fro till his arm ached and his face glowed. Mark, lying on the grass, watched to see the slight tongue of flame shoot up, but it did not come.

Bevis stopped, tired, and putting his hand on the smooth surface found it quite warm, so that they had no doubt they could do it in time. Mark tried next, and then Bevis again, and Mark followed him; but though the wood became warm it would not burst into flame, as it ought to have done.

CHAPTER XII

SAVAGES CONTINUED—THE MAST FITTED

'THIS is very stupid,' said Bevis, throwing himself back at full length on the grass, and crossing his arms over his face to shield his eyes from the sun.

'They ought not to tell us such stupid things,' said Mark. 'We might rub all day.'

'I know,' said Bevis, sitting up again. 'It 's a drill; it 's done with a drill. Give me my bow—there, don't you know how Jonas made the hole in Tom's gun?'

Jonas the blacksmith, a clever fellow in his way, drilled out a broken nipple in the bird-keeper's muzzle-loading gun, working the drill with a bow. Bevis and Mark, always on the watch everywhere, saw him do it.

They cut a notch or hole in the hard surface of the thicker bough, and shaped another piece of wood to a dull point to fit in it. Bevis took this, placed it against the string of his bow, and twisted the string round it. Then he put the point of the stick in the hole; Mark held the bough firm on the ground, but immediately he began to work the bow backwards and forwards, rotating the drill alternate ways, he found that the other end against which he pressed with his chest would quickly fray a hole in his jacket. They had to stop and cut another piece of wood with a hole to take the top of the drill, and Bevis now pressed on this with his left hand (finding that it did not need the weight of his chest), and worked the bow with his right.

The drill revolved swiftly, it was really very near the savages' fire-drill; but the expected flame did not come. The wood was not dry enough, or the point of friction was not accurately adjusted; the wood became quite hot, but did not ignite. You may have the exact machinery and yet not be able to use it, the possession of the tools does not make the smith. There is an indefinite something in the touch of a master's hand which is wanting.

Bevis flung down the bow without a word, heaving a deep sigh of rage.

'Flint and steel,' said Mark presently.

'Hum!'

'There 's a flint in the gateway,' continued Mark. 'I saw it just now; and you can knock it against the end of your knife——'

'You stupe; there 's no tinder.'

'No more there is.'

'I hate it—it 's horrid,' said Bevis. 'What 's the use of trying to do things when everything can't be done?'

He sat on his heels as he knelt, and looked round scowling. There was the water—no fire to be obtained from thence; there was the broad field—no fire there; there was the sun overhead.

'Go home directly, and get a burning-glass—unscrew the telescope.'

'Is it proper?' said Mark, not much liking the journey.

'It 's not matches,' said Bevis sententiously.

Mark knew it was of no use, he had to go, and he went, taking off his jacket before he started, as he meant to run a good part of the way. It was not really far, but as his mind was at the hollow all the while the time seemed twice as long. After he had gone Bevis soon found that the sunshine was too warm to sit in, though while they had been so busy and working their hardest they had never noticed it. Directly the current of occupation was interrupted the sun became unbearable. Bevis went to the shadow of the sycamores, taking the skinned bird with him, lest a wandering beast of prey—some weasel or jackal—should pounce on it.

He thought Mark was a very long time gone; he got up and walked round the huge trunk of the sycamore, and looked up into it to see if any immense boa-constrictor was coiled among its great limbs. He thought they would some day build a hut up there on a platform of poles. Far out over the water he saw the Unknown Island, and remembered that when they sailed there in the ship there was no knowing what monsters or what enchantments they might encounter. So he walked out from the trees into the field to look for some moly to take with them, and resist Circe.

The bird's-foot lotus he knew was not it. There was one blue spot of veronica still, and another tiny blue flower which he did not know, besides the white honeysuckle clover at which the grey bees were busy, and would scarce stir from under his footsteps. He found three button mushrooms, and put them in his pocket. Wandering on among the buttercup stalks and bunches of grass, like a butterfly drawn hither and thither by every speck of colour, he came to a little white flower on a slender stem a few inches

high, which he gathered for moly. Putting the precious flower—good against sorcery—in his breast pocket for safety, he rose from his knees, and saw Mark coming by the sycamores.

Mark was hot and tired with running, yet he had snatched time enough to bring four cherries for Bevis. He had the burning-glass—a lens unscrewed from the telescope, and sitting on the grass they focused the sun's rays on a piece of paper. The lens was powerful and the summer sun bright, so that in a few seconds there was a tiny black speck, then the faintish whiff of bluish smoke, then a leap of flame, and soon another, till the paper burned, and their fire was lit. As the little hut blazed up they put some more boughs on, and the dead leaves attached to them sent up a thin column of smoke.

'The savages will see that,' said Mark, 'and come swarming down from the hills.'

'We ought to have made the fire in a hole,' said Bevis, 'and put turf on it.'

'Whatever shall we do?' said Mark. 'They 'll be here in a minute.'

'Fetish,' said Bevis. 'I know, cut that stick sharp at the end, tie a handful of grass on it—be quick—and run down towards the elms and stick it up. Then they 'll think we 're doing fetish, and won't come any nearer.'

'First-rate,' said Mark, and off he went with the stick, and thrust it into the sward with a wisp of grass tied to the top. Bevis piled on the branches, and when he came back there was a large fire. Then the difficulty was how to cook the bird. If they put it on the ashes, it would burn and be spoiled; if they hung it up, they could not make it twist round and round, and they had no iron pot to boil it; or earthenware pot to drop red-hot stones in, and so heat the water without destroying the vessel. The only thing they could do was to stick it on a stick, and hold it to the fire till it was roasted, one side at a time.

'The harpoon will do,' said Bevis. 'Spit him on it.'

'No,' said Mark; 'the bone will burn and get spoiled—spit him on your arrow.'

'The nail will burn out and spoil my arrow, and I 've lost one in the elms. Go and cut a long stick.'

'You ought to go and do it,' said Mark; 'I 've done everything this morning.'

'So you have; I 'll go,' said Bevis, and away he went to the nut-tree hedge. He soon brought back a straight hazel rod to which he cut a point, the bird was spitted, and they held it by turns at the fire, sitting on the sward.

It was very warm in the round, bowl-like hollow, the fire at the bottom and the sun overhead, but they were too busy to heed it. Mark crept on hands and knees up the side of the hollow while Bevis was cooking, and cautiously peered over the edge to see if any savages were near. There were none in sight; the fetish kept them at a distance.

'We must remember to take the burning-glass with us when we go on our voyage,' said Bevis.

'Perhaps the sun won't shine.'

'No. Mind you tell me, we will take some matches too; and if the sun shines use the glass, and if he doesn't, strike a match.'

'We shall want a camp-fire when we go to war,' said Mark.

'Of course we shall.'

'Everybody keeps on about the war,' said Mark. 'They 're always at me.'

'I found these buttons,' said Bevis; 'I had forgotten them.'

He put the little mushrooms, stems upwards, on some embers which had fallen from the main fire. The branches as they burned became white directly, coated over with a film of ash, so that except just in the centre they did not look red, though glowing with heat under the white layer. Even the flames were but just visible in the brilliant sunshine, and were paler in colour than those of the hearth. Now and then the thin column of grey smoke, rising straight

up out of the hollow, was puffed aside at its summit by the light air wandering over the field. As the butterflies came over the edge of the hollow into the heated atmosphere, they fluttered up high to escape it.

'I 'm sure it 's done,' said Mark, drawing the stick away from the fire. The bird was brown and burnt in one place, so they determined to eat it and not spoil it by over-roasting. When Bevis began to carve it with his pocket-knife, he found one leg quite raw, the wings were burnt, but there was a part of the breast and the other leg fairly well-cooked. These they ate, little pieces at a time, slowly, and in silence, for it was proper to like it. But they did not pick the bones clean.

'No salt,' said Mark, putting down the piece he had in his hand.

'No bread,' said Bevis, flinging the leg away.

'We don't do it right somehow,' said Mark. 'It takes such a long time to learn to be savages.'

'Years,' said Bevis, picking a mushroom from the embers. It burned his fingers and he had to wait till it was cooler. The mushrooms were better, their cups held some of the juice as they cooked, retaining the sweet flavour. They were so small, they were but a bite each.

'I am thirsty,' said Mark. Bevis was the same, so they went down towards the water. Mark began to run down the slope, when Bevis suddenly remembered.

'Stop,' he cried; 'you can't drink there.'

'Why not?'

'Why, of course, it 's the New Sea. We must go round to the Nile; it 's fresh water there.'

So they ran through the firs to the Nile, and lapped from the brook. On the way home a little boy stepped out from the trees on the bank where it was high, and he could look down at them.

'I say!'—he had been waiting for them—'say!'

'Well!' growled Mark.

'Bevis,' said the boy. Bevis looked up, he could not demean himself to answer such a mite. The boy looked round to see that he was sure of his retreat through the trees to the gap in the hedge he could crawl through, but they would find it difficult. Besides, they would have to run up the bank, which was thick with brambles. He got his courage together, and shouted in his shrill little voice:

'I say, Ted says he shan't play if you don't have war soon.'

Mark picked up a dead branch and hurled it at the mite; the mite dodged it, and it broke against a tree, then he ran for his life, but they did not follow. Bevis said nothing till they reached the blue summer-house at home and sat down. Then he yawned.

'War is a bother,' he said, putting his hands in his pockets, and leaning back in an attitude of weary despair at having to do something. If the rest would not have played, he would have egged them on with furious energy till they did. As they were eager he did not care.

'Oh, well!' said Mark, nodding his head up and down as he spoke, as much as to indicate that he did not care personally; but still, 'Oh, well! all I know is, if you don't go to war Ted will have one all to himself, and have a battle with somebody else. I believe he sent Charlie.' Charlie was the mite.

'Did he say he would have a war all to himself?' said Bevis, sitting upright.

'I don't know,' said Mark, nodding his head. 'They say lots of things.'

'What do they say?'

'Oh, heaps; perhaps you don't know how to make war, and perhaps——'

'I 'll have the biggest war,' said Bevis, getting up, 'that was ever known, and Ted 's quite stupid. Mind, he doesn't have any more cherries, that 's certain. I hate him—awfully! Let 's make the swords.'

'All right,' said Mark, jumping up, delighted that the war was going to begin. He was as eager as the others,

only he did not dare say so. Most of the afternoon they were cutting sticks for swords, and measuring them so as to have all the same length.

Next morning the governor went with them to bathe, as he wanted to see how they were getting on with their swimming. They had the punt, and the governor stopped it about twenty yards from the shore, to which they had to swim. Bevis dived first, and with some blowing and spluttering and splashing managed to get to where he could touch bottom with his feet. He could have gone farther than that, but it was a new feeling to know that he was out of his depth, and it made him swim too fast and splash. Mark, having seen that Bevis could do it, and knowing he could swim as far as Bevis could, did it much better.

The governor was satisfied and said they could now have the blue boat, but on two conditions, first, that they still kept their promise not to go out of their depth, and secondly, that they were to try and see every day how far they could swim along the shore. He guessed that they had rather neglected their swimming, having learnt the art itself they had not tried to improve themselves. He said he should come with them once or twice a week, and see them dive from the punt so as to get used to deep water.

If they would practise along the shore in their depth till they could swim from the rocky point to the rails, about seventy yards, he would give them each a present, and they could then go out of their depth. He was obliged to be careful about the depth till they could swim a good way, because he could not be always with them, and fresh water is not so buoyant as the sea, so that young swimmers soon tire.

The same day they carried the mast up, and fitted it in the hole in the thwart. The mast was a little too large, but that was soon remedied. The bowsprit was lashed to the ring to which the painter was fastened, and at its inner end to the seat and mast. Next the gaff was tried, and drew up and down fairly well through the curtain-ring.

But one thing they had overlooked—the sheets, or ropes for the jib, must work through something, and they had not provided any staples. Besides this, there was the rudder to be fitted with a tiller instead of the ropes. Somehow they did not like ropes; it did not look like a ship. This instinct was right, for ropes are not of much use when sailing; you have no power on the rudder as with a tiller.

After fitting the mast and bowsprit they unshipped them, and carried them home for safety till the sails were ready. Bevis wanted Mark to go and ask Frances to be quick, but Mark was afraid to return just yet, as Frances would now know from Jack that he had forgotten the letter. Every now and then bundles of sticks for swords, and longer ones for spears and darts, and rods for arrows, were brought in by the soldiery. All these were taken upstairs into the bench-room, or armoury, because they did not like their things looked at or touched, and there was a lock and key to that room. Bevis always kept the key in his pocket now.

They could not fit a head to the oyster barrel for the fresh water on the voyage, but found a large round tin canister with a tight lid, such as contain cornflour, and which would go inside the oyster barrel. The tin canister would hold water, and could be put in the barrel, so as to look proper. More sticks kept coming, and knobbed clubs, till the armoury was crowded with the shafts of weapons. Now that Bevis had consented to go to war, all the rest were eager to serve him, so that he easily got a messenger to take a note (as Mark was afraid to go) to Frances to be quick with the stitching.

In the evening Bevis tore another broad folio page or fly-leaf from one of the big books in the parlour, and took it out into the summer-house, where they kept an old chair—the back gone—which did very well for a table. Cutting his pencil, Bevis took his hat off and threw it on the seat which ran round inside; then kneeling down, as the table was so low, he proceeded to draw his map of the coming campaign.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COUNCIL OF WAR

'I SAY!'

'Battleaxes——'

'St. George is right——'

'Hold your tongue.'

'Pikes twenty feet long.'

'Marching two by two.'

'I shall be general.'

'That you won't.'

'Romans had shields.'

'Battleaxes are best.'

'Knobs and spikes.'

'I say—I say!'

'You 're a donkey!'

'They had flags——'

'And drums.'

'I 've got a flute.'

'I——'

'You!'

'Yes, *me*.'

'Hi!' 'Tom.' 'If you hit me, I 'll hit you.' 'Now.' 'Don't.' 'Be quiet.' 'Go on.' 'Let 's begin.' 'I will' —buzz—buzz—buzz!

Phil, Tom, Ted, Jim, Frank, Walter, Bill, 'Charl,' Val, Bob, Cecil, Sam, Fred, George, Garry, Michael, Jack, Andrew, Luke, and half a dozen more were talking all together, shouting across each other, occasionally fighting, wrestling, and rolling over on the sward under an oak. There were two up in the tree, bellowing their views from above, and little Charlie ('Charl') was astride of a bough which he had got hold of, swinging up and down, and yelling like the rest. Some stood by the edge of the water, for the

oak was within a few yards of the New Sea, and alternately made ducks and drakes, and turned to contradict their friends.

On higher ground beyond, a herd of cows grazed in perfect peace, while the swallows threaded a maze in and out between them, but just above the grass. The New Sea was calm and smooth as glass, the sun shone in a cloudless sky, so that the shadow of the oak was pleasant; but the swallows had come down from the upper air, and Bevis, as he stood a little apart listening in an abstracted manner to the uproar, watched them swiftly gliding in and out. He had convened a council of all those who wanted to join the war in the fields, because it seemed best to keep the matter secret, which could not be done if they came to the house, else perhaps the battle would be interfered with. This oak was chosen as it was known to every one.

It grew alone in the meadow, and far from any path, so that they could talk as they liked. They had hardly met ten minutes when the confusion led to frequent blows and pushes, and the shouting was so great that no one could catch more than disjointed sentences. Mark now came running with the map in his hand; it had been forgotten, and he had been sent to fetch it. As he came near, and they saw him, there was a partial lull.

'What an awful row you have been making,' he said, 'I heard it all across the field. Why don't you choose sides?'

'Who 's to choose?' said Ted, as if he did not know that he should be one of the leaders. He was the tallest and biggest of them all, a head and shoulders above Bevis.

'You, of course,' came in chorus.

'And you needn't look as if you didn't want to,' shouted somebody, at which there was a laugh.

'Now, Bevis, Bevis! Sides.' They crowded round, and pulled Bevis into the circle.

'Best two out of three,' said Mark. 'Here 's a penny.'

'Lend me one,' said Ted.

Phil handed him a coin.

'You 'll never get it back,' cried one of the crowd. Ted was rather known for borrowing on the score of his superior strength.

'Bevis, you 're dreaming,' as Bevis stood quiet and motionless, still in his far-away mood. 'Toss.'

Bevis tossed, the penny spun, and he caught it on the back of his hand; Mark nudged him.

'Cry.'

'Head,' said Ted. Mark nudged again; but it was a head. Mark stamped his foot.

'Tail,' and it was a tail; Ted won the toss.

'I told you how to do it,' whispered Mark to Bevis in a fierce whisper, 'and you didn't.'

'Choose,' shouted everybody. Ted beckoned to Val, who came and stood behind him. He was the next biggest, very easy tempered and a favourite, as he would give away anything.

'Choose,' shouted everybody again. It was Bevis's turn, and of course he took Mark. So far it was all understood, but it was now Ted's turn, and no one knew who he would select. He looked round and called Phil, a stout, short, slow-speaking boy, who had more pocket-money, and was more inclined to books than most of them.

'Who shall I have?' said Bevis aside to Mark.

'Have Bill,' said Mark. 'He 's strong.'

Bill was called, and came over. Ted took another—rank and file—and then Bevis, who was waking up, suddenly called 'Cecil.'

'You stupe,' said Mark. 'He can't fight.'

Cecil, a shy, slender lad, came and stood behind his leader.

'You 'll lose everybody,' said Mark. 'Ted will have all the big ones. There, he 's got Tim. Have Fred; I saw him knock George over once.'

Fred came, and the choosing continued, each trying to

get the best soldiers, till none were left but little Charlie, who was an odd one.

'He 's no good,' said Ted; 'you can put him in your pocket.'

'I hate you,' said Charlie; 'after all the times I 've run with messages for you. Bevis, let me come on your side.'

'Take him,' said Ted; 'but mind, you 'll have one more if you do, and I shall get someone else.'

'Then he 'll get a bigger one,' said Mark. 'Don't have him; he 'll only be in the way.'

Charlie began to walk off with his head hanging.

'Cry-baby,' shouted the soldiery. 'Pipe your eye.'

'Come here,' said Bevis; Charlie ran back delighted.

'Well, you have done it,' said Mark in a rage. 'Now Ted will have another twice as big. What 's the use of my trying when you are so stupid! I never did see. We shall be whopped anyhow.'

Quite heedless of these reproaches, Bevis asked Ted who were to be his lieutenants.

'I shall have Val and Phil,' said Ted.

'And I shall have Mark and Cecil,' said Bevis. 'Let us count. How many are there on each side? Mark, write down all ours. Haven't you a pocket-book? well, do it on the back of the map. Ted, you had better do the same.'

'Phil,' said Ted, who was not much of a student, 'you put down the names.'

Phil, a reader in a slow way, did as he was bidden. There were fifteen on Bevis's side, and fourteen on Ted's, who was to choose another to make it even.

'There 's the muster-roll,' said Mark, holding up the map.

'But how shall we know one another?' said George.

'Who 's friends, and who 's enemies,' said Fred.

'Else we shall all hit one another anyhow,' said another.

'Stick feathers in our hats.'

'Ribbons round our arms would be best,' said Cecil. 'Hats may be knocked off.'

'Ribbons will do first-rate,' said Bevis. 'I 'll have blue; Ted, you have red. You can buy heaps of ribbon for nothing.'

'Phil,' said Ted, 'have you got any money?'

'Half a crown.'

'Lend us, then.'

'No, I shan't,' said Phil: 'I 'll buy the ribbons myself.'

'Let 's have a skirmish now,' said Bill. 'Come on, Val,' and he began to whirl his hands about.

'Stop that,' said Bevis. 'Ted, there 's a truce, and if you let your fellows fight it 's breaking it. Catch hold of Bill—Mark, Cecil, hold him.'

Bill was seized, and hustled round behind the oak, and kept there till he promised to be quiet.

'But when are we going to begin?' asked Jack.

'Be quick,' said Luke.

'War! war!' shouted half a dozen, kicking up their heels.

'Hold your noise,' said Ted, cuffing one of his followers. 'Can't you see we 're getting on as fast as we can? Bevis, where are we going to fight?'

'In the Plain,' said Bevis. 'That 's the best place.'

'Plenty of room for a big battle,' said Ted. 'Oh, you 've got it on the map, I see.'

The Plain was the great pasture beside the New Sea, where Bevis and Mark bathed and ran about in the sunshine. It was some seventy or eighty acres in extent, a splendid battle-field.

'We 're not going to march,' said Mark, taking something on himself as lieutenant.

'We 're not going to march,' said Bevis. 'But I did not tell you to say so; I mean we are not going to march the thousand miles, Ted; we will suppose that.'

'All right,' said Ted.

'But we 're going to have camps,' continued Bevis. 'You 're going to have your camp just outside the hedge towards the hills, because you live that side, and you will

come that way. Here,'—he showed Ted a circle drawn on the map to represent a camp—'that 's yours; and this is ours, on this side, towards our house, as we shall come that way.'

'The armies will encamp in sight of each other,' said Phil. 'That 's quite proper. Go on, Bevis. Shall we send out scouts?'

'We shall light fires and have proper camps,' said Bevis.

'And bring our greatcoats and cloaks, and a hamper of grub,' interrupted Mark, anxious to show that he knew all about it.

Bevis frowned, but went on. 'And I shall send one of my soldiers to be with you, and you will send one of yours to be with me——'

'Whatever for?' said Ted. 'That 's a curious thing.'

'Well, it 's to know when to begin. When we are all there we 'll hoist up a flag—a handkerchief will do on a stick—and you will hoist up yours, and then when the war is to begin, you will send back my soldier, and I will send back yours, and they will cross each other as they are running, and when your soldier reaches you, and mine reaches me——'

'I see,' said Ted, 'I see. Then we are to march out so as to begin quite fair.'

'That 's it,' said Bevis. 'So as to begin at the same minute, and not one before the other. I have got it all ready, and you need not have sent people to worry me to make haste about the war.'

'Well, how was I to know if you never said anything?' said Ted.

'And who are we to be?' said Val. 'Saxons and Normans, or Crusaders, or King Arthur——'

'We 're all to be Romans,' said Bevis.

'Then it will be the Civil War,' said Phil, who had read most history.

'Of course it will,' said Bevis, 'and I am to be Julius Caesar, and Ted is to be Pompey.'

'I won't be Pompey,' said Ted; 'Pompey was beat.'

'You must,' said Bevis.

'I shan't.'

'But you *must*.'

'I won't be beaten.'

'I shall beat you easily.'

'That you won't,' very warmly.

'Indeed I shall,' said Bevis quite composedly, 'as I am Caesar I shall beat you very easily.'

'Of course we shall,' added Mark.

:You won't; I 've got the biggest soldiers, and I shall drive you anyhow.'

'No, you won't.'

'I 've got Val and Phil and Tim, and I mean to have Ike, so now——'

'There, I told you,' said Mark to Bevis. 'He 's got all the biggest, and Ike is a huge, big donk of a fellow.'

'It 's no use,' said Bevis, not in the least ruffled; 'I shall beat you.'

'Not you,' said Ted, hot and red in the face. 'Why, I 'll pitch you in the water first.'

'Take you all your time,' said Bevis, shutting his lips tighter and beginning to look a little dangerous.

'Shut up,' said Val.

'Stop,' said Phil and Bill and George, pressing in.

'Hush,' said Cecil. 'It 's a truce.'

'Well, I won't be Pompey,' said Ted sullenly.

'Then we must have somebody who will,' said Bevis sharply, 'and choose again.'

'I wouldn't mind,' said someone in the crowd.

'Nor I,' said another.

'If I was general I wouldn't mind being Pompey. Let me, Bevis.'

'Who 's that?' said Ted. 'If any one says that, I 'll smash him.' When he found he could so easily be superseded he surrendered. 'Well, I 'll be Pompey,' he said, 'but mind I shan't be beat.'

'Pompey ought to win if he can,' said Val; 'that 's only fair.'

'What 's the use of fighting if we are to be beat?' said Phil.

'Of course,' said Bevis, 'how very stupid you all are! Of course, Ted is to win if he can; he 's only to be called Pompey to make it proper. I know I shall beat him, but he 's to beat us if he can.'

'I 'm only to be called Pompey, mind,' said Ted; 'mind that. We are to win if we can.'

'Of course'; and so this delicate point was settled after very nearly leading to an immediate battle.

'Hurrah for Pompey!' shouted George, throwing up his hat.

'Hurrah for Caesar!' said Bill, hurling up his. This was the signal for a general shouting and uproar. They had been quiet ten minutes, and were obliged to let off their suppressed energy. There was a wild capering round the oak.

'Ted Pompey,' said Charlie, little and impudent, 'what fun it will be to see you run away!' For which he had his ears pulled till he squealed.

'Now,' shouted Mark, 'let 's get it all done. Come on.' The noise subsided somewhat, and they gathered round as Ted and Bevis began to talk again.

'Caesar,' said Phil to Bevis, 'if you 're Caesar and Ted 's Pompey, who are we? We ought to have names too.'

'I 'm Mark Antony,' said Mark, standing bolt upright.

'Very well,' said Bevis. 'Phil, you can be—let me see, Varro.'

'All right, I 'm Varro,' said Phil; 'and who 's Val? Oh, I know'—running the names over in his mind—'he 's Crassus. Val Crassus, do you hear?'

'Capital,' said Crassus. 'I 'm ready.'

'Then there 's Cecil,' said Mark; 'who 's he?'

'Cecil!' said Phil. 'Cecil—Cis—Cis—Scipio, of course.'

'First-rate,' said Mark. 'Scipio Cecil, that 's your name.'

'Write it down on the roll,' said Bevis. The names were duly registered; Pompey's lieutenants as Val Crassus and Phil Varro, and Caesar's as Mark Antony and Scipio Cecil. After which there was a great flinging of stones into the water and more shouting.

'Let 's see,' said Ted. 'If there 's fifteen each side, there will be five soldiers to each, five for captains, and five for lieutenants.'

'Cohorts,' said Phil. 'A cohort each, hurrah!'

'Do be quiet,' said Ted. 'How can we go on when you make such a row? Caesar Bevis, are all the swords ready?'

'No,' said Bevis. 'We must fix the length, and have them all the same.'

They got a stick, and after much discussion cut it to a certain length as a standard; Mark took charge of it, and all the swords were to be cut off by it, and none to be any thicker. There were to be cross-pieces nailed or fastened on, but the ends were to be blunt and not sharp.

'No sticking,' said Ted. 'Only knocking.'

'Only knocking and slashing,' said Bevis. 'Stabbing won't do, and arrows won't do, nor spears.'

'Why not?' said Mark, who had been looking forward to darting his javelin at Ted Pompey.

'Because eyes will get poked out,' said Bevis, 'and there would be a row. If anybody got stuck and killed, there would be an awful row.'

'So there would,' said Mark. 'How stupid! Just as if people could not kill one another without so much fuss!'

'And no hitting at faces,' said Bevis, 'else if somebody's marked there will be a bother.'

'No,' said Ted. 'Mind, no slashing faces. Knock swords together.'

'Knock swords together,' said Bevis, 'Make rattling and shout.'

'Shout,' said Mark, bellowing his loudest.

'How shall we know when we 're killed?' said Cecil.

'Well, you *are* a stupe,' said Val. 'Really you are.' They all laughed at Cecil.

'But I don't know,' said Ted Pompey. 'You just think, how shall we know who 's beat? Cecil 's not so silly.'

'No more he is,' said Mark. 'Bevis, how is it to be managed?'

'Those who run away are beaten,' said Charlie. 'You 'll see Ted run fast enough.' Away he scampered himself to escape punishment.

'Of course,' said Bevis. 'One way will be if people run away. Oh! I know, if the camp is taken.'

'Or if the captain is taken prisoner,' said Phil; 'and tied up with a cord.'

'Yes,' continued Bevis. 'If the captain is taken prisoner, and if the eagles are captured——'

'Eagles,' said Ted Pompey.

'Standards,' said Phil. 'That 's right; are we to have proper eagles, Caesar Bevis?'

'Yes,' said Bevis. 'Three brass rings round sticks will do. Two eagles each, don't you see, Ted, like flags, only eagles, that 's proper.'

'Who keeps the ground wins the victory,' said Cecil.

'Right,' said Ted. 'I shall soon tie up Bevis—we must bring cords.'

'You must catch him first,' said Mark.

'Captains must be guarded,' said Val. 'Strong guards round them and awful fighting there,' licking his lips at the thought of it.

'Captain Caesar Bevis,' said Tim, who had not spoken before, but had listened very carefully. 'Is there to be any punching?'

'Hum!' Bevis hesitated, and looked at Ted.

'I think so,' said Ted, who had long arms and hard fists.

'If there 's punching,' cried Charlie from the oak, into which he had climbed for safety; 'if there 's punching, only the big blokes can play.'

'No punching,' said Mark eagerly, not that he feared, being stout and sturdy, but seizing at anything to neutralize Ted's big soldiers.

'No punching,' shouted a dozen at once; 'only pushing.'

'Very well,' said Bevis, 'no punching and no tripping—pushing and wrestling quite fair.'

'Wrestling,' said Ted directly. 'That will do.'

'Stupid,' said Mark to Bevis; then louder, 'Only nice wrestling, no "scrumpshing."'

'No "scrumpshing,"' shouted everybody.

Ted stamped his foot, but it was of no use. Everybody was for fair and pleasant fighting.

'Never mind,' said Ted. 'We 'll shove you out of the field.'

'Yah! yah!' said Charlie, making faces at him.

'If any one does what 's agreed shan't be done,' said Mark, still anxious to stop Ted's design; 'that will lose the battle, even if it 's won.'

'It ought to be all fair,' said Val, who was very big, but straightforward.

'If anything 's done unfair, that counts against whoever does it,' said Cecil.

'No sneaking business,' shouted everybody. 'No sneaking and hitting behind.'

'Certainly not,' said Bevis. 'All quite fair.'

'Somebody must watch Ted, then,' said Charlie from the oak.

Ted picked up a piece of dead stick and threw it at him. He dodged it like a squirrel.

'If you say such things,' said Bevis, very angry, 'you shan't fight. Do you hear?'

'Yes,' said Charlie, penitent. 'I won't any more. But it 's true,' he whispered to Fred under him.

'Everything 's ready now, isn't it?' said Ted.

'Yes, I think so,' said Bevis.

'You haven't fixed the day,' said Val.

'No, more I have.'

'Let 's have it to-day,' said Fred.

They caught it up and clamoured to have the battle at once.

'The swords are not ready,' said Mark.

'Are the eagles ready?' asked Phil.

'Two are,' said Mark.

'The other two shall be made this afternoon,' said Bevis. 'Phil, will you go into Latten for the blue ribbon for us; here 's three shillings.'

'Yes,' said Phil, 'I 'll get both at once—blue and red, and bring you the blue.'

'To-morrow, then,' said Fred. 'Let 's fight to-morrow.'

But they found that three of them were going out to-morrow. So, after some more discussion, the battle was fixed for the day after, and it was to begin in the evening, as some of them could not come before. The camps were to be made as soon after six o'clock as possible, and this agreed to, the council broke up, though it was understood that if anything else occurred to any one, or the captains wished to make any alterations, they were to send dispatches by special messengers to each other. The swords and eagles for Ted's party were to be fetched the evening before, and smuggled out of the window when it was dark, that no one might see them.

'Hurrah!'

So they parted, and the oak was left in silence, with the grass all trampled under it. The cattle fed down towards the water, and the swallows wound in and out around them.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WAR BEGINS

As they were walking home Mark reproached Bevis with his folly in letting Ted, who was so tall himself, choose almost all the big soldiers.

'It 's no use to hit you, or pinch you, or frown at you,

or anything,' grumbled Mark; 'you don't take any more notice than a tree. Now Pompey will beat us hollow.'

'If you say any more,' said Bevis, 'I will hit you; and it is you who are the donk. I did not want the big ones. I like lightning-quick people, and I 've got Cecil, who is as quick as anything——'

'What 's the use of dreaming like a tree when you ought to have your eyes open; and if you 're like that in the battle——'

'I tell you the knights were not the biggest; they very often fought huge people and monsters. And don't you remember how Ulysses served the giant with one eye?'

'I should like to bore a hole through Ted like that,' said Mark. 'He 's a brute, and Phil 's as cunning as ever he can be, and you 've been and lost the battle.'

'I tell you I 've got Cecil, who is as quick as lightning, and all the sharp ones, and if you say any more I won't speak to you again, and I 'll have someone else for lieutenant.'

Mark nodded his head, and growled to himself, but he did not dare go farther. They worked all the afternoon in the bench-room, cutting off the swords to the same length, and fastening on the cross-pieces. They did not talk, Mark was sulky, and Bevis on his dignity. In the evening Phil came with the ribbons.

Next morning, while they were making two more eagles for Pompey, Val Crassus came to say he thought they ought to have telescopes, as officers had field-glasses; but Bevis said they were not invented in the time of their war. The day was very warm, still, and cloudless, and, after they had fixed the three brass rings on each long rod for standards, Bevis brought the old grey book of ballads out of the parlour into the orchard. Though he had used it so often he could not find his favourite place quickly, because the pages were not only frayed, but some were broader than others, and would not run through the fingers, but adhered together.

When he had found 'Kyng Estmere,' he and Mark lay down on the grass under the shadow of a damson tree, and chanted the verses, reading them first, and then singing them. Presently they came to where

> Kyng Estmere threwe his harpe asyde,
> And swith he drew his brand;
> And Estmere he, and Adler yonge,
> Right stiffe in stour can stand.
>
> And aye their swords soe sore can byte,
> Through help of gramaryè,
> That soone they have slayne the Kempery men,
> Or forst them forth to flee.

These they repeated twenty times, for their minds were full of battle; and Bevis said after they had done the war they would study gramarye or magic. Just afterwards Cecil came to ask if they ought not to have bugles, as the Romans had trumpets, and Bevis had a bugle somewhere. Bevis thought it was proper, but it was of no use, for nobody could blow the bugle but the old bailiff, and he could only get one long note from it, so dreadful that you had to put your hands to your ears if you stood near. Cecil also said that in his garden at home there was a bay tree, and ought they not to have wreaths for the victors? Bevis said that was capital, and Cecil went home with orders from Caesar to get his sisters to make some wreaths of bay for their triumph when they had won the battle.

Soon after sunset that evening the bailiff looked in, and said there was some sheet lightning in the north, and he was going to call back some of the men to put tarpaulins over two or three loaded wagons, as he thought, after so much dry, hot weather, there would be a great storm. The lightning increased very much, and after it grew dusk the flashes lit up the sky. Before sunset the sky had seemed quite cloudless, but now every flash showed innumerable narrow bands of clouds, very thin, behind which the electricity played to and fro.

While Bevis and Mark were watching it, Bevis's governor came out, and looking up said it would not rain and there was no danger; it was a sky-storm, and the lightning was at least a mile high. But the lightning became very fierce and almost incessant, sometimes crooked like a scimitar of flame, sometimes jagged, sometimes zigzag; and now and then vast acres of violet light, which flooded the ground and showed every tree and leaf and flower, all still and motionless; and after which, though lesser flashes were going on, it seemed for a moment quite dark, so much was the eye overpowered.

Bevis and Mark went up into the bench-room, where it was very close and sultry, and sat by the open window with the swords for Pompey bound up in two bundles, and the standards, but they were half afraid no one would come for them. Their shadows were perpetually cast upon the white wall opposite as the flashes came and went. The crossbow and lance, the boomerang and knobbed clubs were visible, and all the tools on the bench. Now and then, when the violet flashes came, the lightning seemed to linger in the room, to fill it with a blaze and stop there for a moment. In the darkness that followed one of these they heard a voice call 'Bevis' underneath the window, and saw Phil and Val Crassus, who had come for the swords. Mark lowered the bundles out of the window by a cord, but when they had got them they still stood there.

'Why don't you go?' said Mark.

'Lightning,' said Val. 'It 's awful.' It really was very powerful. The pears on the wall, and everything, however minute, stood out more distinctly defined than in daytime.

'It 's a mile high,' said Bevis. 'It won't hurt you.'

'Ted wouldn't come,' said Phil. 'He 's gone to bed, and covered his head. You don't know how it looks out in the fields, all by yourself; it 's all very well for you indoors.'

'I 'll come with you,' said Bevis directly; up he jumped and went down to them, followed by Mark.

'Why wouldn't Ted come?' said Mark.

'He 's afraid,' said Phil, 'and so was I till Val said he would come with me. Will lightning come to brass?' The flashes were reflected from the brass rings on the standards.

'I tell you it won't hurt,' said Bevis, quite sure, because his governor had said so. But when they had walked up the field and were quite away from the house and the trees which partly obstructed the view, he was amazed at the spectacle, for all the meadow was lit up; and in the sky streamers of flame rose in and out and over each other, till you could not tell which flash was which in the confusion of lightning. Bevis became silent and fell into one of his dream states, when, as Mark said, he was like a tree. He was lost—something seemed to take him out of himself. He walked on, and they went with him, till he came to the gate opening on the shore of the New Sea.

'Oh, look!' they all said at once.

All the broad, still water, smooth as glass, shone and gleamed, reflecting back the bright light above; and far away they saw the wood (where Bevis and Mark once wandered) as plain as at noontide.

'I can't go home to-night,' said Phil. Val Crassus said he could sleep at his house, which was much nearer; but he, too, hesitated to start.

'It *is* awful,' said Mark.

'It 's nothing,' said Bevis. 'I like it.' The continuous crackling of the thunder just then deepened, and a boom came rolling down the level water from the wooded hill. Bevis frowned, and held his lips tight together. He was startled, but he would not show it.

'I 'll go with you,' he said; and though Mark pointed out that they would have to come back by themselves, he insisted. They went with Pompey's lieutenants till Val's house, lit up by the lightning, was in sight; then they returned. As they came into the garden, Bevis said the battle ought to be that night, because it would read so well

in the history afterwards. The lightning continued far into the night, and still flashed when sleep overcame them.

Next morning Bevis sprang up and ran to the window, afraid it might be wet; but the sun was shining and the wind was blowing tremendously, so that all the willows by the brook looked grey as their leaves were turned, and the great elms by the orchard bowed to the gusts.

'It 's dry,' shouted Bevis, dancing.

'Hurrah!' said Mark, and they sang:

> 'Kyng Estmere threwe his harpe asyde,
> And swith he drew his brand.'

This was the day of the great battle, and they were impatient for the evening.

There was a letter on the breakfast-table from Bevis's grandpa, enclosing a P.O.O., a present of a sovereign for him. He asked the governor to advance him the money in two half-sovereigns. The governor did so, and Bevis immediately handed one of them to Mark.

About dinner-time there came a special messenger from Pompey with a letter, which was in Pompey's name, but Phil's handwriting. 'Ted Pompey to Caesar Bevis. Please tell me who you are going to send to be with me in my camp, and let him come to the stile in Barn Copse at half-past five, and I will send Tim to be with you till the white handkerchiefs are up. And tell me if the lieutenants are to carry the eagles, or someone else.'

Bevis wrote back: 'Caesar to Pompey greeting'—this style he copied from his books—'Caesar will send Charlie to be with you, as he can run quick, though he is little. The lieutenants are not to carry the eagles, but a soldier for them. And Caesar wishes you health.'

Then in the afternoon Mark had to go and tell Cecil and others, who were to send on the message to the rest of their party, to meet Bevis at the gate by the New Sea at half-past five, and to mind and not be one moment later. While

Mark was gone, Bevis roamed about the garden and orchard, and back again to the stable and sheds, and then into the rickyard, which was strewn with twigs and branches torn off from the elms that creaked as the gale struck them; then indoors, and from room to room. He could not rest anywhere, he was so impatient.

At last he picked up the little book of the *Odyssey*, with its broken binding and frayed margin, from the chair where he had last left it; and taking it up into the bench-room, opened it at the twenty-second book, where his favourite hero wreaked his vengeance on the suitors. With his own bow in his right hand, and the book in his left, Bevis read, marching up and down the room, stamping and shouting aloud as he came to the passages he liked best:

> Swift as the word the parting arrow sings,
> And bears thy fate, Antinous, on its wings!
> . . . . .
> For fate who fear'd amidst a feastful band?
> And fate to numbers, by a single hand?
> . . . . .
> 'Two hundred oxen every prince shall pay:
> The waste of years refunded in a day.
> Till then thy wrath is just.'—Ulysses burn'd
> With high disdain, and sternly thus return'd.
> . . . . .
> Soon as his store of flying fates was spent,
> Against the wall he set the bow unbent;
> And now his shoulders bear the massy shield,
> And now his hands two beamy javelins wield.

Bevis had dropped his bow and seized one of Mark's spears, not hearing, as he stamped and shouted, Mark coming up the stairs. Mark snatched up one of the swords, and as Bevis turned they rattled their weapons together, and shouted in their fierce joy. When satisfied they stopped, and Mark said he had come by the New Sea, and the waves were the biggest he had ever seen there, the wind was so furious.

They had their tea, or rather they sat at table, and rushed off as soon as possible; who cared for eating when war was about to begin! Seizing an opportunity, as the coast was clear, Mark ran up the field with the eagles, which, having long handles, were difficult to hide. Cecil and Bill took the greatcoat, and a railway-rug, which Bevis meant to represent his general's cloak. He followed with the basket of provisions on his shoulder, and was just thinking how lucky they were to get off without any inquiries, when he found they had forgotten the matches to light the camp-fire. He came back, took a box, and was going out again when he met Polly the dairymaid.

'What are you doing now?' said she. 'Don't spoil that basket with your tricks—we use it. What 's in it?' putting her hand on the lid.

'Only bread-and-butter and ham, and summer apples. It 's a picnic.'

'A picnic? What 's that ribbon for?' Bevis wore the blue ribbon round his arm.

'Oh! that 's nothing.'

'I 've half a mind to tell—I don't believe you 're up to anything good.'

'Pooh! don't be a donk,' said Bevis. 'I 'll give you a long piece of this ribbon when I come back.'

Off he went, having bribed Scylla, but he met Charybdis in the gateway, where he came plump on the bailiff.

'What 's up now?' he gruffly inquired.

'Picnic.'

'Mind you don't go bathing; the waves be as big as cows.'

Bathing,' said Bevis, with intense contempt. 'We don't bathe in the evening. Here, you——' donk, he was going to say, but forbore; he gave the bailiff a summer apple, and went on. The bailiff bit the apple, muttered to himself about 'mischief,' and walked towards the rickyard. In a minute Mark came to meet Bevis.

'You did him?' he said.

'Yes,' said Bevis, 'and Polly too.'

'Hurrah!' shouted Mark. 'They 're all there but one, and he 's coming in five minutes.'

Bevis found his army assembled by the gate leading to the New Sea. Each soldier wore a blue ribbon round the left arm for distinction; Tim, who had been sent by Pompey to be with them till all was ready, wore a red one.

'Two and two,' said Caesar Bevis, taking his sword and instantly assuming a general's authoritative tone. He marshalled them in double file, one eagle in front, one half-way down, where his second-lieutenant, Scipio Cecil, stood; the basket carried in the rear as baggage. Caesar and Mark Antony stood in front side by side.

'March,' said Bevis, starting, and they followed him.

The route was beside the shore, and so soon as they left the shelter of the trees the wind seemed to hit them a furious blow, which pushed them out of order for a moment. The farther they went the harder the wind blew, and flecks of brown foam, like yeast, came up and caught them against. Rolling in the same direction as they were marching, the waves at each undulation increased in size, and when they came to the bluff Bevis walked slowly a minute, to look at the dark hollows and the ridges from whose crests the foam was driven.

But here leaving the shore he led the army, with their brazen eagles gleaming in the sun, up the slope of the meadow where the solitary oak stood, and so beside the hedgerow till they reached the higher ground. The Plain, the chosen battle-field, was on the other side of the hedge, and it had been arranged that the camps should be pitched just without the actual campaigning-ground. On this elevated place the gale came along with even greater fury; and Mark Antony said that they would never be able to light a camp-fire that side, they must get through and into shelter.

'I shall do as I said,' shouted Bevis, scarcely audible, for the wind blew the words down his throat. But he kept on till he found a hawthorn bush, with brambles about the base, a detached thicket two or three yards from the hedge, and near which there was a gap. He stopped, and ordered the standard-bearer behind him to pitch the eagle there. The army halted, the eagles were pitched by thrusting the other ends of the rods into the sward, the cloaks, coats, and rug thrown together in a heap, and the soldiers set to work to gather sticks for the fire. Of these they found plenty in the hedge, and piled them up in the shelter of the detached thicket.

Bevis, Mark Antony, and Scipio Cecil went through the gap to reconnoitre the enemy. They immediately saw the smoke of his camp-fire rising on the other side of the Plain, close to a gateway. The smoke only rose a little above the hedge there—the fire was on the other side—and was then blown away by the wind. None of Pompey's forces were visible.

'Ted, I mean Pompey, was here first,' said Mark Antony. 'He 'll be ready before us.'

'Be quick with the fire,' shouted Caesar.

'Look,' said Scipio Cecil. 'There 's the punt.'

Behind the stony promontory at the quarry they could see the punt from the high ground where they stood; it was partly drawn ashore just inside Fir-Tree Gulf, so that the projecting point protected it like a breakwater. The old man (the watcher) had started for the quarry to get a load of sand as usual, never thinking, as how should he think? that the gale was so furious. But he found himself driven along anyhow, and unable to row back; all he could do was to steer and struggle into the gulf, and so behind the Point, where he beached his unwieldy vessel. Too much shaken to dig sand that day, and knowing that he could not row back, he hid his spade and the oars, and made for home on foot. But the journey by land was more

dangerous than that by sea, for he insensibly wandered into the high road, and came to an anchor in the first inn, where, relating his adventures on the deep with the assistance of ardent liquor, he remained.

Bevis, who had gone to light the fire with the matches in his pocket, now returned through the gap, and asked if anything had been seen of Pompey's men. As he spoke a Pompeian appeared, and mounting the spars of the distant gate displayed a standard, to which was attached a white handkerchief, which fluttered in the breeze.

'They 're ready,' said Mark Antony. 'Come on. Which way shall we march? Which way are you going?'

The smoke of Caesar's fire rose over the hedge, and swept down by the gale, trailed along the ground towards Pompey's. Bevis hastened back to the camp, and tied his handkerchief to the top of an eagle; Mark followed. 'Which way are you going?' he repeated. 'Where shall we meet them? What are you going to do?'

'I don't know,' said Caesar, angrily pushing him. 'Get away.'

'There,' growled Mark Antony to Scipio, 'he doesn't know what he 's going to do, and Phil is as cunning as——'

The standard-bearer sent by Caesar pushed by him, got through the gap, and held up the white flag, waving it to attract more attention. In half a minute, Pompey's flag was hauled down, and directly afterwards someone climbed over the gate and set out running towards them. It was Charlie.

'Run, Tim,' said Caesar Bevis; 'we 're ready.'

Tim dashed through the gap, and set off with all his might.

'Two and two,' shouted Caesar. 'Stand still, will you?' as they moved towards the opening. 'Take down that flag.'

The eagle-bearer resumed his place behind him. Caesar, signing to the legions to remain where they were, went

forward and stood on the mound. He watched the runners and saw them pass each other nearly about the middle of the great field, for though little, Charlie was swift of foot, and full of the energy which is more effective than size.

'Let 's go.'

'Now then.'

'Start.'

The legions were impatient and stamped their feet, but Caesar would not move. In a minute or two Charlie reached him, red and panting with running.

'Now,' shouted Bevis, 'march!' and he leaped into the field; Charlie came next, for he would not wait to take his place in the ranks. The legions rushed through anyhow, eager to begin the fray.

'Two and two,' shouted Caesar, who would have no disorder.

'Two and two,' repeated his first lieutenant, Mark Antony.

'Two and two,' said Scipio Cecil, punching his men into place.

On they went, with Caesar leading, straight across the wind-swept plain for Pompey's camp. The black swifts flew about them, but just clearing the grass, and passing so close as to seem almost under foot. There were hundreds of them, they come down from the upper air, and congregate in a great gale; they glided over the field in endless turns and windings. Steadily marching, the army had now advanced a third part of the way across the field.

'Where 's Pompey?' said Scipio Cecil.

'Where shall we meet and fight?' said Mark Antony.

'Silence,' shouted Bevis, 'or I 'll degrade you from your rank, and you shan't be officers.'

They were silent, but every one was looking for Pompey and thinking just the same. There was the gate in full view now, and the smoke of Pompey's camp, but none of the enemy were visible. Bevis was thinking and trying

to make out whether Pompey was waiting by his camp, or whether he had gone round behind the hedge, and if so, which way, to the right towards the quarry, or to the left towards the copse, but he could not decide, having nothing to guide him.

But though uncertain in his own mind, he was general enough not to let the army suppose him in doubt. He strode on in silence, but keeping the sharpest watch, till they came to the wagon-track, crossing the field from left to right. It had worn a gully or hollow way leading down to the right to the hazel hedge, where there was a gate. They came to the edge of the hollow way, where there were three thick hawthorn bushes and two small ash trees.

'Halt!' said Caesar Bevis, as the bushes partly concealed them from view. 'Stay here. Let no one move.'

Bevis himself went round the trees and looked again, but he could see nothing: Pompey and his army were nowhere in sight. He could not tell what to do, and returned slowly, thinking, when looking down the hollow way an idea struck him.

'Scipio, take your men'—('Cohort,' said Antony)—'take your cohort, jump into the road, and go down to the gate there. Keep out of sight—stoop: slip through the gate, and go up inside the hedge, dart round the corner and seize Ted's camp. Quick! And mind, if they 're all there, of course you 're not to fight, but come back. Now —quick.'

Scipio Cecil jumped into the hollow way followed by his five soldiers, and stooping so as to be hidden by the bank, ran towards the gate in the hazel hedge. They watched him till the cohort had got through the gate.

'Now what shall we do?' said Mark Antony.

'How can I tell what to do when Pompey isn't anywhere?' said Bevis, in a rage.

'Put me up a tree,' said Charlie, 'perhaps I could see.'

'You 've no business to speak,' said Bevis; but he used

the idea, and told two of them to 'bunt' (shove) Charlie up one of the ash trees till he could grasp a branch. Then Charlie, agile as a squirrel, was up in a minute.

'There 's no one in their camp,' he shouted down. 'Cecil 's rushing on it. Pompey, oh, I can see him!'

'Where?'

'There by the copse,' pointing to the left and partly behind them.

'Which way is he going?' asked Bevis.

'That way'—to the left.

'Our camp,' said Mark.

'That 's it,' said Bevis. 'Come down, quick. Turn to the left' (to the army). 'No, stop. Charlie, how many are there with Pompey?'

'Six, ten—oh, I can't count; I believe it 's all. I can't see any anywhere else.'

'Quick!' shouted Bevis, turning his legions to the left. 'Quick march! Run!'

CHAPTER XV

THE BATTLE OF PHARSALIA

THEY left Charlie to get down how he could, and started at a sharp pace to meet and intercept Pompey. Now, if Pompey had continued his course behind the hedge all the way, he must have got to Caesar's camp first, as Caesar could not crush through the hedge. But when Pompey came to the gate, from which the wagon-track issued into the field, he saw that he could make a short cut thence to the gap by Caesar's camp, instead of marching round the irregular curve of the hedge. Caesar, though running fast to meet him, was at that moment passing a depression in the ground, and was out of sight. Pompey seized so

favourable an opportunity, came through the gate, and ordering 'Quick march!' ran towards the gap. When Caesar came out of the depression he saw Pompey's whole army running with their backs almost turned away from him towards the gap by the camp. They seemed to flee, and Caesar's legions beholding their enemies' backs, raised a shout. Pompey heard, and looking round, saw Caesar charging towards his rear. He halted and faced about, and at the same time saw that his own camp was in Caesar's possession; for there was an eagle over the gate there, and his baggage was being pitched over. Nothing daunted, Pompey ordered his soldiers to advance, and pushed them with his own hands into line, placing Crassus and Varro, one at either end.

As he came running Caesar saw that the whole of Pompey's army was before them, while he had but two-thirds of his, and regretted now that he had so hastily detached Scopio's cohort. But waving his sword, he ran at the head of his men, keeping them in column. They were but a hundred yards apart, when Pompey faced about, and so short a distance was rapidly traversed.

Caesar's sword was the first to descend with a crash upon an enemy's weapon, but Antony was hardly a second later, and before they could lift to strike again, the legion behind, with a shout, pushed them by its impetus right through Pompey's line.

When Caesar Bevis stopped running, and looked round, there was a break in the enemy's army, which was divided into two parts. Bevis instantly made at the part on his left (where Phil Varro commanded), thinking, instinctively, to crush this half with all his soldiers. But as they did not know what his object was, for he had no time even to give an order, only four or five followed him. The rest paused and faced Val Crassus; and these Ted Pompey and six or seven of his men at once attacked.

Bevis met Phil Varro, and crossed swords with him.

Clatter! crash! snap! thump! bang! They slashed and warded: Bevis's shoulder was stung by a sharp blow. He struck back, and his sword sliding down Varro's, broke the cross-piece, and rapped his fingers smartly. Before Varro could hit again, two others, fighting, stumbled across and interrupted the combat.

'Keep together! Keep together!' shouted Phil Varro. 'Ted—Pompey, Pompey! Keep together!'

Slash! swish! crash! thump! 'Hit him! Now then! He's down! Hurrah!' Crash! Crack—a sword split and flew in splinters.

'Follow Bevis!' shouted Mark. 'Stick to Bevis! Fred! Bill! Quick!' He had privately arranged with these two, Fred and Bill, who were the biggest on their side, that all three should keep close to Bevis and form a guard. Mark was very shrewd, and he guessed that Ted Pompey, being so much stronger and well supported with stout soldiers, would make every effort to seize Caesar, who was slightly built, and bind him prisoner. He did not tell Bevis that he had arranged this, for Bevis was a stickler for his imperial authority, and if Mark had told him, would be quite likely to countermand it.

Whirling his sword with terrible fury, Caesar Bevis had cut his way through all between. Slight as he was, the intense energy within him carried him through the ranks. He struck a sword from one; overthrew another rushing against him, sent a third on his knees, and reaching Phil, hit him on the arm so heavy a blow that, for a moment, he could not use his weapon, but gave way and got behind his men.

'Hurrah!' shouted Mark. 'Follow Bevis! Stick to Bevis!'

'Here I am,' said Bill, the young giant, hitting at Varro.

'So am I,' said Fred, the other giant, and slashing Varro on the side. Varro turned aside to defend himself, when Mark Antony rushed at and overturned him thump on the sward.

'Hurrah! Down they go!' Such a tremendous shout arose in another direction, that Caesar Bevis, Mark, and the rest, turned fresh from their own victory to see their companions thrashed.

'Over with them!'

Ted Pompey, Val Crassus, and the other half of the divided line had attacked the remainder of the legion, which paused, and did not follow Caesar. Separated from Bevis, they fought well, and struggled hard to regain him; and, while they could keep their assailants at sword's-length, maintained the battle. But Varro's shout, 'Keep together! Keep together! Pompey! Keep together!' reminded Ted of what Phil Varro had taught him, and, signing to Crassus and his men to do the same, he crossed his arms, held his head low, and, with Crassus and the rest, charged, like bulls with eyes closed, disregarding the savage chops and blows he received. The manœuvre was perfectly successful; their weight sent them right over Caesar's men, who rolled on the ground in all directions.

'There!' said Mark, 'what did I tell you?'

'Come on!' shouted Caesar Bevis, and he ran to assist the fallen. He fell on Crassus, who chanced to be nearest, with such violence that Val gave way, when Bevis left him to attack Ted. Ted Pompey, nothing loath, lifted his sword and stepped to meet him.

'Bill! Fred!' shouted Mark; and these three, hustling before Caesar Bevis, charged under Pompey's sword, for he could not hit three ways at once; and thump, he measured his length on the grsss.

'Cords! Ropes!' shouted Mark. 'Bill—the rope. Hold him down, Fred! Oh! You awful stupe! Oh!'

He stood stock-still, mouth agape; for Bevis, pushing Fred aside as he was going to kneel on Ted as men kneel on a fallen horse's head, seized Ted by the arm and helped him up.

'Three to one 's not fair,' he said. 'Ted, get your sword and fight *Me*.'

Ted looked round for his sword, which had rolled a yard or two. At the same moment Varro, having got on his feet again, rushed up and struck Caesar a sharp blow on his left arm. He turned, Varro struck again, but Fred guarded it off on his sword. Three soldiers, with Varro, surrounded Fred and Bevis, and, for the moment, they could do nothing but fence off the blows. Ted Pompey having found his sword, ran to aid Varro, when Mark hit him: he turned to strike at Mark, but a body of soldiers, with George and Tim at their head, rushed by, fighting with others, and bore Mark and Ted before them bodily. In a second all was confusion. On both sides the leaders were separated from their troops, the battle spread out, covering forty yards or more, and twenty individual combats raged at once. All the green declivity was covered with scattered parties, and no one knew which had the better.

'Keep together! Keep together!' shouted Varro, as he struck and rushed to and fro. 'I tell you, keep together. Ted! Ted! Pompey! Keep together!'

Swish! slash! clatter! thump! 'Hurrah!' 'He's down!' 'Quick!' 'You've got it!' 'Take that!' Slash! But the slain arose again and renewed the fight.

Shrewd Mark Antony, having knocked his man over, paused on the higher part of the slope where he chanced to be, and looked down on the battle. He noted Phil Varro go up to Pompey and urge something. Pompey seemed to yield, and shouted: 'A tail! a tail! Crassus! George! Tim! A tail!'

Mark dashed down the slope to Bevis, who was fighting on the level ground. He hastened to save the battle, for a 'tail' is a terrible thing. The leader, who must be the biggest, gets in front, the next biggest behind him, a third behind him, and so on to the last, forming a tail, which is in fact a column, and so long as it keeps formation will bore a hole through a crowd. Before he could get to Caesar, for so many struck at him in passing that it took him some time

to pass fifty yards, the tail was made—Pompey in front, next Val Crassus, then Varro, then Ike (a big fellow, but who had as yet done nothing, and was no good except for the weight of his body), then George, then Tim, and two more. Eight of them in a mighty line, which began to descend the slope.

'Look!' said Mark Antony at last, touching Caesar Bevis, 'look there! It 's a tail!'

'It doesn't matter,' said Bevis, looking up.

'Doesn't matter! Why, they 'll *hunt* us!'

And Pompey did hunt them, downright hunt them along. Before Fred and Bill could come at Mark's call, before they could shake themselves free of their immediate opponents, Pompey came thundering down, and swept everything before him.

'Out of the way,' cried Mark. 'Bevis, out of the way! Oh! Now!' He wrung his hands and stamped.

Bevis stood and received the charge which Pompey led straight at him. Pompey, with his head down, and arms crossed to defend it, ran with all his might. Bevis, never stirring, lifted his sword. There was a part of Pompey's bare head which his arms did not cover. It was a temptation, but he remembered the agreement, and he struck with all his strength on Pompey's left arm. So hard was the blow that the tough sword snapped, and Pompey groaned with pain, but in the same instant Caesar felt as if an oak or a mountain had fallen on him. He was hurled to the ground with stunning force, and the column passed over him, one stepping on his foot.

There he lay for half a minute, dazed, and they might easily have taken him prisoner, but they could not stop their rush till they had gone twenty or thirty yards. By that time, Mark, Fred, and Bill had dragged Bevis up, and put a sword, which they snatched from a soldier, into his hand. He limped, and looked pale and wild for a minute, but his blood was up, and he wanted to renew the fight. They would not let him, they pulled him along.

'It 's no use,' said Mark; 'you can't. We must get to the trees. Here, lean on me. Run. Sycamores! Sycamores!' he shouted.

'Sycamores! Trees!' shouted Fred and Bill to their scattered followers. They urged Caesar to run, he limped, but kept pace with them somehow. Pompey had turned by now, and went through a small body of Caesar's men, who had rushed towards him when they saw he was down, just as if they had been straws. Still they checked the column a little, as floating beams check heavy waves, and so gave Caesar time to get more ahead.

'Sycamores!' Mark continued to shout as he ran, and the broken legions easily understood they were to rally there. At that moment the battle was indeed lost. Pompey ranged triumphant. Leading his irresistible and victorious column with shouting, he chased the flying Caesar.

Little Charlie, left in the ash tree, could not get down, but saw the whole of the encounter. The lowest bough was too high to drop from, the trunk too large to clasp and slide down. He was imprisoned and helpless, with the war in sight. He chafed and raged and shouted, till the tears of vexation rolled down his cheeks. Full of fiery spirit, it was torture to him to see the battle in which he could not take part. For a while, watching the first shock, he forgot everything else in the interest of the fight; but presently, when the combatants separated, and were strewn as it were over the slope, he saw how easily at that juncture any united body could have swept the field, and remembered Scipio Cecil. Why did not Cecil come?

He looked that way, and from his elevation could see Cecil standing on the gate by Pompey's camp. Having sacked the camp, put the fire out, and thrown all the coats over the gate into a heap in the field, Scipio did not know what next he ought to do, and wondered that no orders had reached him from Caesar. He got up on the highest bar except one of the gate, but could see no one, the un-

dulations of the ground completely concealing the site of the conflict. He did not know what to do; he waited a while and looked again. Once he fancied he heard shouting, but the gale was so strong he could not be certain.

Charlie in the ash tree now seeing Pompey form the tail, or column, worked himself into a state of frenzy. He yelled, he screamed to Scipio to come, till he was hoarse, and gasped with the straining of his throat; but the howling of the tremendous wind through the trees by the gate, prevented Scipio from hearing a word. Had he known Charlie was in the tree he might have guessed there was something wrong from his frantic gestures, but he did not, and as there were so many scattered trees in the field, there was nothing to make him look at that one in particular. Charlie waved his hat, and at last flung it up into the air, waved his handkerchief—all in vain.

He could see the crisis, but could not convey a knowledge of it to the idle cohort. He looked again at the battle. Caesar was down and trampled under foot. He threw up his arms, and almost lost his balance in his excitement. The next minute Caesar was up, and he and his lieutenant were flying from Pompey. The column chased them, and the whole scene—the flight and the pursuit—passed within a short distance, half a stone's throw, of the ash tree.

Quite wild, and lost to everything but his anger, Charlie, the next second, was out on a bough, clinging to it like a cat. He crawled out some way, till the bough bent a little with his weight. His design was to get out till it bowed towards the ground, and so lowered him—a perilous feat! He got half a yard farther, and then swung under it, out and out, till the branch gave a good way. He tried again, and looked down; the ground was still far below. He heard a shout, it stimulated him. He worked out farther till the branch cracked loudly; it would break, but would not bend much farther. His feet hung down now; he only held by his hands. Crack! Another shout! He looked down

wildly, and in that instant saw a little white knob—a button mushroom in the grass. He left hold, and dropped. The little mushroom saved him, for it guided him, steadied his drop; his feet struck it and smashed it, and his knees giving under him, down he came.

But he was not hurt, his feet, as he hung from the bowed branch, were much nearer the earth than it had looked to him from his original perch, and he alighted naturally. The shock dazed him at first, just as Bevis had been confused, a few minutes previously. In a minute he was all right, and running with all his speed towards Scipio.

As Caesar ran, with the shout of victorious Pompey close behind, he said: 'If we could charge the column sideways we could break it——'

'If,' snorted Mark, with the contempt of desperation; 'if—of course!'

Caesar was right, but he had not got the means just then. Next minute they reached the first sycamore, not ten yards in front of Pompey. As they turned to face the enemy, with their backs to the great tree, Pompey lowered his head, crossed his arms, and the column charged. Nothing could stop that onslaught, which must have crushed them, but Bevis, quick as thought, pushed Mark and Fred one way and Bill the other, stepping after the latter. Ted Pompey, with his eyes shut, and all the force of his men thrusting behind, crashed against the tree.

Down he went recoiling, and two or three more behind him.

Thwack! thwack! The four defenders hammered their enemies before they could recover the shock.

'Quick!' cried Mark; 'tie him—prisoner—quick,' pulling a cord from his pocket, and putting his foot on Ted, who was lying in a heap.

Before any one could help Mark the heap heaved itself up, and Val Crassus and Phil Varro hauled their half-stunned leader back out of reach.

Crash! clatter! bang! thwack!

'Backs to trees! Stand with backs to trees!' shouted Bevis, hitting out furiously. 'We shall win! Here, Bill!'

They planted themselves, these four, Bevis, Mark, Fred, and Bill, with their backs to the great trunk of the sycamore, standing a foot or two in front of it for room to swing their swords, and a little way apart for the same reason. The sycamore formed a bulwark so that none could attack them in the rear.

The column, as it recoiled, widened out, and came on again in a semicircle, surrounding them.

'Give in!' shouted Val. 'We 're ten to one!' (that was not numerically correct). 'Give in! You 'll all be prisoners in a minute!'

'That we shan't,' said Bill, fetching him a sideway slash.

'If we could only get Scipio up,' said Mark. 'Where is he? Can't we get him?'

'I forgot him,' said Bevis. 'There, take that,' as he warded a cut and returned it. 'I forgot him. Look out, Fred, that 's it. Hurrah! Mark,' as Mark made a successful cut. 'How stupid.' In the heat and constant changes of the combat they had totally forgotten Cecil and his cohort.

'Why, we 've been fighting two to three,' said Bill, 'and they haven't done us yet.'

'But we mean to,' said Tim, and Bill shrank involuntarily under an expected knock.

'Some more of you—there,' shouted Ted Pompey, as he came to himself, and saw a number of his soldiers in the rear watching the combat. 'You,'—in a rage—'you go round behind and worry them there; and some of you get up in the tree and hit down.'

'Oh, botheration!' said Mark, as he heard the last order.

'We *must* get Cecil somehow,' said Bevis.

'Now then,' yelled Ted Pompey, stamping in terrible fury, 'do as I tell you; go round the tree, and "bunt" somebody up into it!'

He passed his hand across his bruised forehead, wiping off a fragment of bark which adhered indented in the skin, and rushed into the fight. Ted fought that day like a hero; twice severely punished, he returned to the war with increased determination. He was nervous at lightning, but he feared no mortal being. He was as brave as brave could be. These heavy knocks seemed only to touch him on the quick and arouse a stronger will. When he came in the combat became tremendous.

Like knights with their backs to the tree, the four received them. The swords crossed and rattled, and for two or three minutes nothing else was heard; they were too busy to shout. The eight of the column would have succeeded better had not so many of the others pressed in to get a safe knock at Bevis, hitting from behind the bigger ones so as to be themselves in safety. These impeded Val and Phil and the first line.

One and all struck at Bevis. The dust flew from his coat, his shoulders smarted, his arms were sore, his left arm, which he used as a guard like a shield, almost numb with knocks.

His face grew pale with anger. He frowned and set his lips tight together, his eyes gleamed. The hail of blows descended on him, and though his wrist began to weary, he could not repay one-tenth of what they gave him.

'Give in! give in!' shouted Val, who was in front of him, and he put his left hand on Bevis's shoulder. With a twist of his wrist Bevis hit his right hand so sharp a knock that the sword flew out of it, and for a second Val was daunted.

'Give in! give in!' shouted Phil, pushing to Val's assistance. 'You 're done! It 's no good. You can't help it. Hurrah!'

Two soldiers appeared in the fork of the tree above. Though so huge the trunk was short, and they began to strike down on Mark, who was forced to stand out so far from the tree that he was in great danger of being seized, and would have been, had they not been so bent on Bevis.

Bevis breathed hard and panted. So thick came the hail that he could do nothing. If he lifted his sword it was beaten down, if he struck, ten knocks came for one. He received his punishment in silence. Tim had the cord to bind him ready: they made a noose to throw over his head.

'Stick to Bevis,' shouted Mark. 'Bevis—Bevis—stick to Bevis—Fred—ah!'—a smart knock made him grind his teeth, and four or five assailants rushing in separated him from Caesar.

Bevis was beaten on his knee. He crouched, his left side against the tree with his left hand against it, hitting wild and savage, and still keeping a short clear space with his sword.

'Stop!' cried Val, himself desisting. 'That 's enough. Stop! Stop! Don't hit him! He 's done. We 've got him! Now, Phil.'

Phil and Tim rushed in with the noose: Bevis sprang up, drove his head into Phil and sent him whirling with Tim under. Bevis made good use of the moment's breathing time he thus obtained, punishing three of his hardest thrashers.

'Keep together,' shouted Phil as he got up on his knees. 'If Ted would only do as I said. Hurrah!'

They had hammered Bevis by sheer dint of knocks down on his knees again. Fred and Bill in vain tried to get to him; they were attacked front and rear; Mark, quite beside himself with rage, pushed, wrestled, and struck, but they encompassed him like bees. Bevis could hit no more; he warded as well as he could, he could not return.

'Shame! shame!' cried Val, pulling two back, one with each hand. 'Don't hit him! He 's down!'

'Why doesn't he give in then?' said Phil, black as thunder.

Ted Pompey, who had watched this scene for a moment without moving, smiled grimly as he saw Bevis could not hit.

'Now,' said he, 'Phil, Tim, George—Val 's too soft. Come on—keep close—in we go and have him. Hurrah! Hang it! I say!'

'Whoop!'

CHAPTER XVI

THE BATTLE CONTINUED—SCIPIO'S CHARGE

SCIPIO'S cohort rushed them clean away from the sycamore. In a mass, Scipio Cecil and his men (fetched by Charlie), with half or more of Caesar's scattered soldiers, who rallied at once to Cecil's compact party, rushed them right away. Cecil forced his men to be quiet as they ran; they saw the point, and there was not a sound till in close order they fell on Pompey. Pompey, Val, Phil, and the whole attacking party were swept away like leaves before the wind. Had they seen Scipio coming, or heard him, or in the least expected him, it would not have been so. But thus suddenly burst on from the rear, they were helpless, and carried away by the torrent.

In a second Bevis, Mark, Fred, and Bill found themselves free. Bevis stood up and breathed again. They came to him. 'Are you hurt?' said Mark.

'Not a bit,' said Bevis, laughing as he shook himself together. 'Look there!'

Whirled round and round by the irresistible pressure of the crowd, Pompey and his lieutenants were hurried away, shouting and yelling, but unable even to strike, so closely were they hemmed in.

'They 've got my eagle,' said Mark in a fury. His standard-bearer had been overthrown while he defended himself at the tree, and the eagle taken from him.

'Phil 's down,' said Fred. 'So 's Tim! And Ike! Hurrah!'

'Look at little Charlie hitting!' said Bill.

'Shout for Charlie!' said Bevis. 'Capital!'

'My eagle,' said Mark.

'Quick,' said Bevis suddenly. 'Mark—quick; you and Fred, and Bill, and these'—three or four soldiers who came

up now things looked better—'run quick, Mark, and get in the hollow, you know where we cooked the bird, they 're going that way. See, Ted 's beginning to fight again, and you will be behind him. Make an ambush, don't you see? Seize him as he goes by. Quick! I 'm tired, I 'll follow in a minute.'

Off ran Mark, Fred, Bill, and the rest, and making a little circuit, got into the bowl-like hollow. The crowd with Scipio Cecil was still thrusting Pompey and his men before them, but Ted had worked himself free by main force, and he and Val Crassus, side by side, were fighting as they were forced backwards. Step by step they went backwards, but disputing every inch, straight back for the hollow where Mark and his party were crouching. In half a minute Ted would certainly be taken.

'Victory!' shouted Bevis, in an ecstasy of delight. He had been leaning against the sycamore: he stood up and stepped just in front of it to see better, shading his eyes (for his hat had gone long since) with his left hand, the point of his sword touching the ground. He was alone, he rejoiced in the triumph of his men. The gale blew his hair back, and brushed his cheek. His colour rose, a light shone in his eyes.

'We 've won!' he shouted. Just then the hurricane smote the tree, and as there was less noise near him, he heard a bough crack above. He looked up, thinking it might fall; it did not, but when he looked back Ted was gone.

'He 's down!' said Bevis. 'They 've got him.'

He could see Mark Antony, who had risen out of the hollow; thus caught between two forces, Scipio pushing in front, the Pompeians broke and scattered to the right in a straggling line.

'Hurrah! But where 's Ted? Hurrah!'

Bevis was so absorbed in the spectacle that, though the fight was only a short distance from him, the impulse to join it did not move him. He was lost in the sight.

'They 're running!'

'I 've got you!'

Ted Pompey pounced on him from behind the sycamore tree; Bevis involuntarily started forward, just escaping his clutch, struck, parried, and struck again.

Pompey, while driven backwards step by step by Scipio, had suddenly caught sight of Bevis standing alone by the sycamore. He slipped from Scipio, and ran round just as Bevis looked up at the cracking bough, and Mark sprang out of the hollow. Scipio's soldiers shouted, seeing Pompey as they thought running away. Mark for a moment could not understand what had become of him, the next he was occupied in driving the Pompeians as they yielded ground. Pompey running swiftly got round behind the tree and darted on Caesar, whose strategy had left him alone, intending to grasp him and seize him by main force.

Caesar Bevis slipped from him by the breadth of half an inch.

Pompey hit hard, twice, thrice; crash, clatter. His arm was strong, and the sword fell heavy; rattle, crash. He hit his hardest, fearing help would come to Bevis. Swish! slash!

Thwack! He felt a sharp blow on his shoulder. Bevis kept him off, saw an opportunity, and cut him. With swords he was more than Ted's match. He and Mark had so often practised, they had both become crafty at fencing. The harder Ted hit, overbalancing himself to put force into the blow, and the less able to recover himself quickly, the easier Bevis warded, and every three knocks gave Ted a rap. Ted danced round him, trying to get an advantage; he swung his sword to and fro in front of him horizontally. Bevis retired to avoid it past the sycamore. Finding this answer, Ted swung it all the more furiously, and Bevis retreated, watching his chance, and they passed several trees on to the narrow breadth of level short sward between the trees and the quarry.

Ted's chest heaved with the fury of his blows; Bevis could not ward them, at least not so as to be able to strike afterwards. But suddenly, as Ted swung it still fiercer, Bevis resolutely received the sword full on his left arm—thud, and stopped it. Before Ted could recover himself, Bevis hit his wrist, and his sword dropped from it on the ground.

Ted instantly rushed in and grappled with him. He seized him, and by sheer strength whirled him round and round, so that Bevis's feet but just touched the sward. He squeezed him, and tried to get him across his hip to throw him, but Bevis had his collar, and he could not do it. Bevis got his feet the next instant and worked Ted, who breathed hard, back.

The quarry was very near, they were hardly three yards from the edge of the cliff; the sward beneath their feet was short where the sheep had fed it close to the verge, and yellow with lotus flowers. Yonder far below were the waves, but they saw nothing but themselves.

The second's pause, as Bevis forced Ted back two steps, then another, then a fourth, as they glared at each other, was over. Ted burst on him again. He lifted Bevis, but could not for all his efforts throw him. He got his feet again.

'You punched me!' hissed Ted between his teeth.

'I didn't.'

'You did.' Ted hit him with doubled fist. Bevis instantly hit back. They struck without much parrying. At this, as at swords, Bevis's quick eye and hand served him in good stead. He kept Ted back; it was at wrestling Ted's strength was superior. Ted got a straight-out blow on the chin; his teeth rattled.

He hurled himself bodily on Bevis; Bevis stepped back and avoided the direct hug, but the cliff yawned under him. Into Ted's mind there flashed, vivid as a picture, something he had seen when two men were fighting in the road.

Without a thought, it was done in the millionth of a second, he tripped Bevis. Bevis staggered, swung round, half saved himself, clutched at Ted's arm, and put his foot back over the cliff into nothing. Ted did but see his face, and Bevis was gone. As he fell he disappeared; the hedge hid him. Crash!

Ted's face became of a leaden pallor, his heart stopped beating; an uncontrollable horror seized upon him. Some inarticulate sound came from between his teeth. He turned and fled down the slope into the firs, through the fields, like the wind, for his home under the hills. He fled from his own act. How many have done that who could have faced the world! Bevis he knew was dead. As he ran he muttered to himself, constantly repeating it: 'His bones are all smashed; I heard them. His bones are all smashed.' He never stopped till he reached his home. He rushed upstairs, locked his door, and got into bed with all his things on.

Bevis was not dead, nor even injured. He had scarcely fallen ten feet before he was brought up by a flake, which is a stronger kind of hurdle. It was one of those originally placed along the edge of the precipice to keep cattle from falling over. It had become loose, and a horse rubbing against it sent it over weeks before. The face of the cliff there had been cut into a groove four or five feet wide years ago by the sand-seekers. This groove went straight down to a deep pool of water, which had filled up the ancient digging for the stone of the lower stratum. As the flake tumbled it presently lodged aslant the cutting and it was in that position when Bevis fell on it.

His weight drove it down several feet farther, when the lower part caught in a ledge at that side of the groove, and it stopped with a jerk. The jerk cracked one bar of the flake, which was made much like a very slender gate, and it was this sound which Ted in his agony of mind mistook for the smashing of bones.

Bevis when he struck the flake instinctively clutched it, and it was well that he did so, or he would have rolled over into the pool. For the moment when he felt his foot go into space, he lost conscious consciousness. He really was conscious, but he had no control, or will, or knowledge at the time, or memory afterwards. That moment passed completely out of his life, till the jerk of the flake brought him to himself. He saw the pool underneath as through the bars of a grating, and clasped the flake still firmer.

In that position, lying on it, he remained for a minute, getting his breath, and recognizing where he was. Then he rose up a little, and shouted 'Mark!' The gale took his voice out over the New Sea, whose waves were rolling past not more than twenty yards from the base of the cliff.

'Mark!' No one answered. He sat upon the flake still holding it, and began to try and think what he should do if Mark did not come.

His first thought was to climb up somehow, but when he looked he saw that the sand was as straight as a wall. Steps might be cut in the soft sand, and he put his hand in his pocket for his knife, when he reflected that steps for the feet would be of no use unless he had something to hold on to as well. Then he looked down, inclined for the moment to drop into the water, which would check his fall, and bring him up without injury. Only the sides of the pool were as steep as the cliff itself, so that any one swimming in it could not climb up to get out.

He recollected the frog which he and Mark put in the stone trough, to see how it swam, and how it went round and round, and could not escape. So he should be if he fell into the pool. He could only swim round and round till his strength failed him. If the flake broke, or tipped, or slipped again, that was what would happen.

Bevis sat still and tried to think; and while he did so he looked out over the New Sea. The sun was now lower, and all the waves were touched with purple, as if the crests

had been sprinkled with wine. The wind blew even harder, as the sun got near the horizon, and fine particles of sand were every now and then carried over his head from the edge of the precipice.

What would Ulysses have done? He had a way of getting out of everything; but try how he would, Bevis could not think of any plan, especially as he feared to move much, lest the insecure platform under him should give way. He could see his reflection in the pool beneath, as if it were waiting for him to come in reality.

While he sat quite still, pondering, he thought he heard a rumbling sound, and supposed it to be the noise of tramping feet, as the legions battled above. He shouted again, 'Mark! Mark!' and immediately wished he had not done so, lest it should be a party fetched by Pompey to seize him; for if he was captured the battle would be lost. He did not know that Pompey had fled, and feared that his shout would guide his pursuers, forgetting in his excitement that if he could not get up to them, neither could they get down to him. He kept still looking up, thinking that in a minute he should see faces above.

But none appeared, and suddenly there was another rumbling noise, and directly afterwards a sound like scampering, and then a splash underneath him. He looked, and some sand was still rolling down, sprinkling the pool. 'A rabbit,' thought Bevis. 'It was a rabbit and a weasel. I see—of course! Yes; if it was a rabbit then there 's a ledge, and if there 's a ledge I can get along.'

Cautiously he craned his head over the edge of the flake, carefully keeping his weight as well back as he could. There was a ledge about two feet lower than the flake, very narrow, not more than three or four inches there; but having seen so many of these ledges in the quarry before, he had no doubt it widened. As that was the extreme end, it would be narrowest there. He thought he could get his foot on it, but the difficulty was what to hold to.

It was of no use putting his foot on a mere strip like that unless there was something for his hand to grasp. Bevis saw a sand-martin pass at that moment, and it occurred to him that if he could find a martin's hole to put his hand in, that would steady him. He felt round the edge of the groove, when, as he extended himself to do so, the flake tipped a little, and he drew back hastily. His chest thumped with sudden terror, and he sat still to recover himself. A humble-bee went by round the edge of the groove, and presently a second, buzzing close to him, and seeing these two he remembered that one had passed before, making three humble-bees.

'There must be thistles,' said Bevis to himself, knowing that humble-bees are fond of thistle-flowers, and that there were quantities of thistles in the quarry. 'If I can catch hold of some thistles, perhaps I can do it.' He wanted to feel round the perpendicular edge again, but feared that the flake would tip. In half a minute he got his pocket-knife, opened the largest blade, and worked it into the sand farthest from the edge—in the corner—so as to hold the flake there like a nail.

Then with the utmost caution, and feeling every inch of his way, he put his hand round the edge, and moving it about presently felt a thistle. Would it hold? that was the next thing; or should he pull it up if he held to it? How could he hold it tight? the prickles would hurt so. He knew that thistles generally have deep roots, and are hard to pull up, so he thought it would be firm, and besides, if there was one there were most likely several, and three or four would be stronger.

Taking out his handkerchief, he put his hand in it, and twisted it round his wrist to make a rough glove, then he knelt up close to the sand wall, and steadied himself before he started. The flake creaked under these movements, and he hesitated. Should he do it, or should he wait till Mark missed him and searched? But the battle—the

battle might be lost by then, and Mark, and all his soldiers driven from the field, and Pompey would triumph, and fetch long ladders, and take him prisoner.

Bevis frowned till a groove ran up the centre of his forehead, then he moved towards the verge of the flake, and slowly put his foot over till he felt the narrow ledge, at the same time searching about with his hand for the thistle. Now he had his foot on the ledge, and his hand on the stem of the thistle; it was very stout, which reassured him, but the prickles came through the handkerchief. A moment's pause, and he sprang round and stood upright on the ledge.

His spring broke the blade of the knife, and the flake upset and crashed down splash into the pool.

The prickles of the thistle dug deep into his hand, causing exquisite pain.

He clung to the thistle, biting his lips, till he had got his other foot on. One glance showed him his position.

The moment he had his balance he let go of the thistle, and ran along the ledge, which widened to about nine inches or a foot, tending downwards. Running kept him from falling, just as a bicycle remains upright while in motion.

In four yards he leapt down from the ledge to a much broader one, ran along that six or seven yards, still descending, sprang from it down on a wide platform, thence six or eight feet on to an immense heap of loose sand, into which he sank above his knees, struggled slipping as he went down its yielding side, and landed on his hands and knees on the sward below, while still the wavelets raised by the fall of the flake were breaking in successive circles against the sides of the pool.

He was up in a moment, and stamped his feet alternately to shake the sand off; then he pulled out some of the worst of the thistle points stuck in his hand, and kicked his heels up and danced with delight.

Without looking back he ran up on the narrow bank between the excavation and the New Sea, as the nearest

place to look round from. The punt was just there inside the headland. He saw that the waves, though much diminished in force by the point, had gradually worked it nearly off the shore. He could see nothing of the battle, but remembering a place where the ascent of the quarry was easy, and where he and Mark had often run up the slope, which was thinly grown with grass, he started there, ran up, and was just going to get out on the field when he recollected that he was alone, and had no sword, so that if Pompey had got a party of his soldiers, and was looking for him, they could easily take him prisoner. He determined to reconnoitre first, and seeing a little bramble bush and a thick growth of nettles, peered out from beside this cover. It was well that he did so.

Val Crassus, with a strong body of Pompeians, was coming from the sycamores direct towards him. They were not twenty yards distant when Bevis saw them, and instantly crouched on hands and knees under the brambles. He heard the tramp of their feet, and then their voices.

'Where can he be?'

'Are you sure you looked all through the firs?'

'Quite sure.'

'Well, if he isn't in the firs, nor behind the sycamores, nor anywhere else, he *must* be in the quarry,' said Crassus.

'So I think.'

'I 'm sure.'

'Ted 's got him down somewhere.'

'Perhaps he 's hiding from Ted.'

'Can you see him now in the quarry?'

They crowded on the edge, looking over Bevis into the excavated hollow beneath. Now Bevis had not noticed when he crouched that he had put his hand almost on the mouth of a wasp's nest, but suddenly feeling something tickle the back of his hand, he moved it, and instantly a wasp, which had been crawling over it, stung him. He pressed his teeth together, and shut his eyes in the

endeavour to repress the exclamation which rose; he succeeded, but could not help a low sound in his chest. But they were so busy crowding round and talking, they did not hear it.

'I can't see him.'

'He 's not there.'

'He may be hidden behind the stone-heaps. There 's a lot of nettles down there,' said Crassus.

'Yes,' said another, and struck at the nettles by Bevis, cutting down three or four with his sword.

'Anyhow,' said Crassus, 'we 're sure to have him, he can't get away; and Mark 's a mile off by this time.'

'Look sharp then; let 's go down and hunt round the stone-heaps.'

'There 's the old oak,' said someone; 'it 's hollow; perhaps he 's in that.'

'Let 's look in the oak as we go round to get down, and then behind the stones. Are there any caves?'

'I don't know,' said Crassus. 'Very likely. We 'll see. March.'

They moved along to the left; Bevis opened his eyes, and saw the sting and its sheath left sticking in his hand. He drew it out, waited a moment, and then peered out again from the brambles. Crassus and the cohort were going towards the old hollow oak, which stood not far from the quarry on low ground by the shore of the New Sea, so that their backs were towards him. Bevis stood out for a second to try and see Mark. There was not a sign of him, the field was quite deserted, and he remembered that Crassus had said Mark was a mile away. 'The battle 's lost,' said Bevis to himself. 'Mark has fled, and Pompey 's after him, and they 'll have me in a minute.'

He darted down the slope into the hollow, which concealed him for the time, and gave him a chance to think. 'If I go out on the Plain they 'll see me,' he said to himself; 'if I run to the firs I must cross the open first; if I hide

behind the stones, they 're coming to look. What shall I do? The New Sea 's that side, and I can't. Oh!'

He was over the bank and on the shore in a moment. The jutting point was rather higher than the rest of the ground there, and hid him for a minute. He put his left knee on the punt, and pushed hard with his right foot. The heavy punt, already loosened by the waves, yielded, moved, slid off the sand, and floated. He drew this other knee on, crept down on the bottom of the punt, and covered himself with two sacks, which were intended to hold sand. He was, too, partly under the seat, which was broad. The impetus of his push off and the wind and waves carried the punt out, and it was already fifteen or twenty yards from the land when Crassus and his men appeared.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BATTLE CONTINUED—MARK ANTONY

THEY had found the oak empty, and were returning along the shore to search the quarry. The wind brought their voices out over the water.

'Mind, he 'll fight if he 's there.'

'Pooh! we 're ten to one.'

'Well, he hits hard.'

'And he can run. We shall have to catch him when we find him; he can run like a hare.'

'Look!'

'The punt 's loose.'

'So it is.'

'Serves the old rascal right. Hope it will sink.'

'It 's sure to sink in those big waves,' said Crassus. 'Come on,' and down he went into the quarry, where they looked behind the stone-heaps and every place they could

think of, in vain. Next someone said that perhaps even now Bevis might be in the sycamores, up in the boughs, so they went there and looked, and actually pushed a soldier up into one tree to see the better. After which they went down to the lower ground and searched along the nut-tree hedge, some one side, some another, and two up in the mound itself.

'Wherever *can* he be?' said Crassus. 'It 's extraordinary. And Pompey, too.'

'Both of them nowhere.'

'I can't make it out. Thrust your sword into those ferns.' So they continued hunting the hedge.

Now the way Val Crassus and his cohort came to hunt for Caesar Bevis was like this: At the moment when Pompey pounced on Caesar, the rest of the Pompeians, a little way off, were scattering before Mark Antony and Scipio Cecil, who had attacked them front and rear. Mark Antony, though he had (to him unaccountably) missed Ted, saw the eagle which he had lost before him, and, calling to Cecil, pursued with fury. So terrific was their onslaught, especially as Scipio's cohort was quite fresh, that the Pompeians gave way and ran, not knowing where their general was, and some believing they had seen him fly the combat.

This pursuit continued for a good distance, almost down to the group of elms to which Bevis and Mark used to run when they came out from their bath.

As the Pompeians ran, Val Crassus, driven along by the throng, caught his foot against one who had tumbled, and fell. When he got up he found the rest had gone on and left him behind with several stragglers who had escaped at the side of the crowd. As he stood, dubious what to do, and looking round for Pompey, several more stragglers gathered about him, till by and by he had a detachment. Still he was uncertain what to do, whether to go after Mark and endeavour to check the rout, or whether to stay there and rally the Pompeians, if possible, to him.

By this time the fugitives, with Antony and Scipio hot on their rear, had gone through the gate to which the hollow way or wagon-track led, and were out of sight. Val Crassus moved towards the rising ground to view what happened in the meadows beyond, when two Pompeians came running to him, and said that Pompey had got Caesar Bevis prisoner.

These were the two who had been hoisted up into the sycamore tree, at Pompey's order, to slash down at the four defenders. So long as Bevis stood there afterwards watching Scipio drive his recent assailants away, they dared not descend. They had seen Bevis fight like a paladin; and though he was alone they dared not come down. But when Pompey pounced on him, and they went fencing at each other, past the tree, and some distance, they slipped out of the tree, which was very large, but equally short, so that they had not half the depth to fall that Charlie had.

They dreaded to go near the two leaders, for the moment, but watched the main fight, and hesitated to go near it, too, as their friends were in distress. When they turned, Pompey and Caesar were both gone: they looked the other way, and the Pompeians were in full flight. They hid for a few minutes in the bowl-like hollow, where the moorcock was cooked; and when they ventured to peep out, saw Val Crassus, with the soldiers who had rallied round him. They ran to him with the story of Caesar's capture, and that Ted was holding him, and could but just manage it.

Val Crassus immediately hastened to the sycamores, but when he arrived, found no one, for Pompey had fled, and Bevis was on the flake. Val turned angrily on the two who had brought him this intelligence, but they maintained their story, and being now in for it, added various other particulars; how Caesar had got up once, and how Ted pulled him down again, so that, most likely, Bevis had got away again, and Ted was chasing him.

Crassus shouted, but received no answer; then he went

through the firs, and came back to the sycamores, and next to the quarry, where he stood within a yard or two of Bevis without seeing him. Unable to discover either Pompey or Bevis, Crassus was now minutely searching the broad mound of the nut-tree hedge.

While he had been thus engaged, Antony and Scipio followed close in the rear of the fugitives, across two meadows, Mark forgetting Bevis in his eagerness to recover his standard. As they ran, presently Phil Varro stopped, sat down on the grass, and was instantly taken prisoner. He was short and stout and so overcome with his exertions that he could make no resistance, as they tied his hands behind him.

Antony still continued to pursue, shouting to the soldier with the eagle to surrender. He did not do so, but, looking back and seeing Varro taken, threw it down, the better to escape. So Antony recovered it, and at last, pausing, found himself alone, having outstripped all the rest. He now returned to where Varro was prisoner, and Scipio Cecil came up with another eagle, which he had taken, and which had been carried before Phil Varro.

'Hurrah!' shouted Mark, sitting down to recover breath; and they all rested a minute or two.

'Wreaths!' said Cecil, panting. 'Wreaths for the victors!'

'How many did you have made?'

'Two or three. Hurrah! we 'll put them on presently.'

'Where 's Bevis?' said Mark, as he got over his running.

'I haven't seen him,' said Cecil.

'Nor I!'

'It 's curious.'

'Have you seen him?'—to the others.

'Not for a long time.'

'No—nor Pompey.' Everybody remarked on the singular absence of the two leaders.

'Crassus,' said Mark. 'Bevis is hunting Crassus and Pompey: that 's it. Come on. Let 's help. March.'

He marched along the winding hedgerow towards the

Plain, and, turning round a corner, presently came to the gate in the nut-tree mound just as Crassus, who had been searching it, opened the gate.

'Charge!' shouted Mark, and they dashed on the Pompeians. Crassus drew back, but before he could get quite through, Mark jammed him with the gate, between the gate and the post.

'Fred! Bill!' For Crassus struggled, and was very strong. Bill rushed to Mark's assistance: together they squeezed Val tight.

'Oh! My side! You dogs!' Crassus hit at them with his sword: they pressed him harder.

'Give in,' said Bill. 'You 're caught—give in.'

'I shan't,' gasped Val. 'If I could only reach you'—he hit viciously, but they were just an inch or two beyond his arm.

'Charge, Cecil!—Scipio, charge!' shouted Mark. Scipio had charged already, and the Pompeians, being divided into three parties, one on each side of the mound, and the third up in it, were easily scattered. Scipio himself found their eagle in the brambles, where the bearer had left it, as he jumped out of the hedge to run.

'Yield,' said Bill. 'Give in—we 've got your eagle.'

'All the eagles,' said Scipio, returning. 'Every one—our two and Pompey's two.'

'And Varro 's a prisoner—there he is,' said Mark. 'Give in, Val.'

'I won't. Let me out. Come near and hit then. If I could get at you!'

'But you can't.'

'Oh!'—as they pressed him.

'Give in!'

'No! Not if I 'm squashed—no, that I won't,' said Val, frantically struggling.

'What 's the use?' said Scipio. 'You may just as well—the battle 's won, and it 's no use your fighting.'

'Where 's Pompey?' asked Val Crassus.

'Run away,' said Mark promptly.

'Then where 's Bevis?'

'After him of course,' said Mark.

'I don't believe it; did any one see Pompey run? Phil, did you?'—to the prisoner.

'Don't know,' said Varro sullenly. 'Don't care. If he had done as I said he would have won. Yes, I saw him leave the fight.'

'Now will you give in?' said Mark. 'Or must we chop you till you do?'

'Chop away,' said Val defiantly.

'Don't hit him,' said Scipio. 'Val, really it 's no good, you 've lost the battle.'

'I suppose we have,' said Val. 'Well, let someone take Varro on the hill, and let him tell me if he can see Pompey anywhere.'

They did so. Cecil and three others, as guards, took Varro on the rising ground; Varro was obliged to own that Pompey was not in sight.

'Take it, then,' said Crassus, hurling his sword at them. 'Well, I never thought Ted would have run. If he had not, I would not have given in for fifty of you.'

'But he did run,' said Mark, unable to suppress his joy.

'You won't tie me,' said Crassus, as they let him out. Mark did not tie him, and then as they were now ten to one they loosened Varro too. Mark led them up on the higher ground towards the sycamores, fully expecting to see Bevis every moment. When he got there, and could not see him anywhere, he could not understand it. Then Crassus told him of the search he had made. Mark went to the quarry and looked down—no one was there. He halted while two of his men ran through the firs shouting, but of course came back unsuccessful.

'I know,' said Scipio, 'he 's gone to the camp.'

'Of course,' said Mark. 'How stupid of us—of course he 's at the camp. Let him see us come properly. Two

and two, now—prisoners two and two half-way down, that 's it. Eagles in front. Right. March.'

He marched, with Scipio beside him, the four eagles behind, and the prisoners in the centre. Never was there a prouder general than Mark at that moment. He had captured both the enemy's eagles, recovered his own, and taken Pompey's lieutenants captive. Pompey himself and all his soldiers had fled: looking round the Plain there was not one in sight. Mark Antony was in sole possession of the battlefield. Proudly he marched, passing every now and then broken swords on the ground, and noticing the trampled grass where fierce combats had occurred. How delighted Bevis would be to see him! How he looked forward to Bevis's triumph! All his heart was full of Bevis, it was not his own success, it was Bevis's victory that he rejoiced in.

'Bevis! Bevis!' he shouted, as they came near the camp, but there was no answer. When they entered the camp, and found the fire still smouldering, but no Bevis, Mark's face became troubled. The triumph faded away, he grew anxious.

'Wherever can he be?' he said. 'I hope there 's nothing wrong. Bevis!' shouting at the top of his voice. The gale took the shout with it, but nothing came but the roaring of the wind. The sun was now sinking and cast a purple gleam over the grass.

CHAPTER XVIII

BEVIS IN THE STORM

In the punt Bevis remained quite still under the sacks while Crassus searched the quarry for him, then looked up in the sycamores, and afterwards went to the hazel hedge. Bevis, peeping out from under the broad seat, saw him go there, and knew that he could not see over the New Sea

from the lower ground, but as others might at any moment come on the hill, he considered it best to keep on the bottom of the boat. The punt at first floated slowly, and was sheltered by the jutting point, but still the flow of the water carried it out, and in a little time the wind pushed it more strongly as it got farther from shore. Presently it began to roll with the waves, and Bevis soon found some of the inconveniences of a flat-bottomed vessel.

The old punt always leaked, and the puntsman being too idle to bail till compelled, the space between the real and the false bottom was full of water. As she began to roll this water went with a sound like 'swish' from side to side, and Bevis saw it appear between the edge of the boards and the side. When she had drifted quite out of the gulf and met the full force of the waves every time they lifted her, this bilgewater rushed out over the floor. Bevis was obliged to change his position, else he would soon have been wet through. He doubled up the two sacks and sat on them, reclining his arms on the seat so as still to be as low down and as much concealed as possible.

This precaution was really needless, for both the armies were scattered, the one pursuing and the other pursued, in places where they could not see him, and even had they moved by the shore they would never have thought of looking for him where he was. He could not know this, and so sat on the sacks. The punt was now in the centre of the storm, and the waves seemed immense to Bevis. Between them the surface was dark, their tops were crested with foam, which the wind blew off against him, so that he had to look in the direction where he was going and not back, to escape the constant shower of scud in his face.

Now up, now down, the boat heaved and sank, turning slowly round as she went, but generally broadside on. With such a hurricane and such waves she floated fast, and the shore was already far behind. When Bevis felt

that he was really out on the New Sea a wild delight possessed him. He shouted and sang how:

Estmere threwe his harpe asyde,
And swith he drew his brand!

The dash of the waves, the 'wish' of the gust as it struck him, the flying foam, the fury of the storm, the red sun almost level with the horizon and towards which he drifted, the dark heaving waters in their wrath lifted his spirit to meet them. All he wished was that Mark was with him to share the pleasure. He was now in the broadest part of the New Sea, where the rollers having come so far rose yet higher. Bevis shouted to them, wild as the waves.

The punt being so cumbrous and heavy did not rise buoyantly as the waves went under, but hung on them, so that the crests of the larger waves frequently broke over the gunwale and poured a flood of water on board. There were crevices too in her sides, which in ordinary times were not noticed, as she was never loaded deep enough to bring them down to the water-line. But now the waves rising above these found out the chinks, and rushed through in narrow streams.

The increase of the water in the punt again forced Bevis to move, and he sat up on the seat with his feet on the sacks. The water was quite three inches above the false bottom, and rushed from side to side with a great splash, of course helping to heel her over. Bevis did not like this at all; he ceased singing, and looked about him.

It seemed a mile (it was not so far) back to the quarry, such a waste of raging waves and foam! On either side the shore was a long, long way, he could not swim a tenth as far. He recognized the sedges where he and Mark had wandered on his left, and found that he was rapidly coming near the two islands. He began to grow anxious, thinking that the boat would not keep afloat very much longer. The shore in front beyond the islands was a great way, and

from what he knew of it he believed it was encumbered far out with weeds through which, if the punt foundered, he could not swim, so that his hope was that she would strike either the Unknown Island or Serendib.

Both were now near, and he tried to discover whether the current and wind would throw him on them. A long white streak parallel to the course of the storm marked the surface of the water, rising and falling with the waves like a ribbon, and this seemed to pass close by Serendib. The punt being nearly on the streak he hoped he should get there. If he only had something to row with! The Old Man of the Sea had hidden the sculls, and had not troubled to bring the movable seat with him, as he did not want it. The movable seat would have made a good paddle. As for the stretcher it was fixed, nailed to the floor.

He could do nothing paddling with his hand; in calm weather he might, but not in such a storm of wind. If he only had something to paddle with he could have worked the punt into the line so as to strike on Serendib. As it was he could do nothing; if he had only had his hat he could have bailed out some of the water, which continued to rise higher.

Drifting as the waves chose he saw that Serendib was a low, flat island. The Unknown Island rose into a steep sandy bluff at that end which faced him. Against this bluff the waves broke with tremendous fury, sending the spray up to the bushes on the top. Bevis watched to see where the punt would ground, or whether it would miss both islands and drift through the narrow channel between them.

He still thought it might hit Serendib, when it once more rotated, and that brought it in such a position that the waves must take it crash against the low steep cliff of the Unknown Island. Bevis set his teeth, and prepared to dig his nails into the sand, when just as the punt was within three waves of the shore, it seemed to pause. This was the

reflux—the under-tow, the water recoiling from the bank —so that the boat for half a moment was suspended or held between the two forces.

Before he had time to think what was best to do the punt partly swung round, and the rush of the current, setting between the islands, carried it along close beside the shore. The bluff now sloped, and the waves rushed up among the bushes and trees. Bevis watched, saw a chance, and in an instant stepped on the seat, and leaped with all his might. It was a long way, but he was a good jumper, and his feet landed on the ground. He would even then have fallen back into the water had he not grasped a branch of alder.

For a moment he hung over the waves, the next he drew himself up, and was safe. He stepped back from the edge, and instinctively put his left arm round the alder trunk, as if clinging to a friend. Leaning against the tree he saw the punt, pushed out by the impetus from his spring, swing round and drift rapidly between the islands. It went some distance, and then began to settle, and slowly sank.

Bevis remained holding the tree till he had recovered himself, then he moved farther into the island, and went a little way up the bluff, whence he saw that the sun had set. He soon forgot his alarm, and as that subsided began to enjoy his position. 'What a pity Mark was not with me!' he said to himself. 'I am so sorry. Only think, I 'm really shipwrecked. It 's splendid!' He kicked up his heels, and a startled blackbird flew out of a bramble bush and across the water.

Bevis watched him fly aslant the gale till he lost sight of him in the trees on shore. Looking that way—north-west —his quick eyes found out a curious thing. On that side of the island there was a broad band of weeds stretching towards the shore, and widening the farther it extended.

These weeds were level with the surface, and as the waves rolled under they undulated like a loose green carpet lifted by a strong draught. As they proceeded the undulations

became less and less, till on emerging into an open channel on the other side of the weeds, they were nothing more than slow ripples. Still passing on the slow ripples gently crossed, and were lost in a second band of weeds. He could hear the boom of the waves as they struck the low cliff and dashed themselves to pieces, yet these furious waves were subdued by the leaves and stalks of the weeds, any of which he knew he could pull up with his hand.

Watching the green undulations he looked farther and saw that at some distance from the island there were banks covered with sedges, and the channel between the weeds (showing deeper water) wound in among these. Next he went up on the top of the cliff, and found a young oak tree growing on the summit, to which he held while thus exposed to the full strength of the wind, and every now and then the spray flew up and sprinkled him.

Shading his eyes with his hand, for the wind seemed to hurt them, he looked towards the quarry, which appeared yellow at this distance. He saw a group of people, as he supposed Pompey's victorious army, passing by the sycamores.

'It 's no use, Ted,' he said to himself, 'you can't find me, and you can't win. I 've done you.'

The group was really Mark and the rest searching for him. After a while they went over the hill, and Bevis could not see them.

Bevis came down from the cliff, and thought he would see how large the island was, so he went all round it, as near the edge as he could. It was covered with wood, and there were the thickest masses of bramble he had ever seen. He had to find a way round these, so that it took him some time to get along. Some firs, too, obstructed his path, and he found one very tall spruce. At last he reached the other extremity, where the ground was low, and only just above the water, which was nearly smooth there, being sheltered by the projecting irregularities of the shore.

Returning he had in one place to climb over quantities of stones, for the bank just there was steeper, and presently compelled him to go more inland. The island seemed very large, in shape narrow and long, but so thickly overgrown with bushes and trees that he could not see across it. The surface was uneven, for he went down into a hollow which seemed beneath the level of the water, and afterwards came to a steep bank, on rounding which he was close to the place from which he started.

Not having had anything to eat since dinner (for they shirked their tea), and having gone through all these labours, Bevis began to feel hungry, but there was nothing to eat on his island, for the berries were not yet ripe. First he whistled, then he wished Mark would come, then he walked up to the cliff and climbed into the oak on the summit.

'Mark is sure to come,' he said to himself. Just then he saw the full moon, which had risen above the distant hills, and shining over the battlefield touched the raging waves with tarnished silver.

He looked at the great round shield on which the heraldic markings were dimmed by its own gleam. He almost fancied he could see it move, so rapidly did it sweep upwards. It was clear and bright as if wind-swept, as if the hurricane had brushed it. Bevis watched it a little while, and then he thought of Mark. The possibility that Mark would not know where he was never entered his mind, nor did it occur to him that perhaps even Mark would hesitate to venture out in such a tempest of wind: so strong was his faith in his companion.

The wind blew so hard up in the tree, he presently got down, and descended the slope till the ridge sheltered him. He sat on the rough grass, put his hands in his pockets, and whistled again to assure himself that he liked it. But he was hungry, and the time seemed very slow, and he could not quite suppress an inward feeling that shipwreck when

one was quite alone was not altogether so splendid. It was so dull.

He got up, picked up some stones, and threw them into the shadowy bushes, just for something to do. They fell with a crash, and one or two birds fluttered away. He wished he had his knife to cut and whittle a stick. He thought he would make up his mind to go to sleep, and extended himself on the ground, when, looking up as he lay on his back, he saw there were stars. Not in the least sleepy, up he jumped again.

'Kaack! kaack!' like an immensely exaggerated and prolonged 'quack' without the 'qu'; a harsh shriek resounding over the water even above the gale.

'A heron,' thought Bevis. 'If I only had a gun, or my bow now.' He took a stone, and peered out over the water on the side the cry came from, which was where the weeds were. The surface was dim and shadowy in that direction, and he could not see the heron. He returned and sat down on the grass. He could not think of anything to do, till at last he resolved to build a hut of branches, as shipwrecked people did. But when he came to pull at the alder branches, those of any size were too tough; the aspen were too high up; the firs too small.

'Stupid,' he said to himself. 'This *is* stupid.' Once more he returned to the foot of the slope, and sat down on the grass.

Before him there were the shadowy trees and bushes, and behind he could hear the boom of the waves, yet it never occurred to him how weird the place was. All he wanted was to be at something.

'Why ever doesn't Mark come?' he repeated to himself. Just then he chanced to put his hand in his jacket-pocket, and instantly jumped up delighted. 'Matches!' He took out the box, which he had used to light the camp fire, and immediately set about gathering materials for a fire. 'The proper thing to do,' he thought. 'The very thing!'

He soon began to make a pile of dead wood, when he stopped, and, lifting the bundle in his arms, carried it up the slope, nearly to the top of the cliff, where he put it down behind a bramble bush. He thought that if he made the fire on the height it would be a guide to Mark, but down in the hollow no one could see it. To get together enough sticks took some time; for the moon, though full and bright, only gave light where the beams fell direct. In the shadow he could hardly see at all.

Having arranged the pile, and put all the larger sticks on one side, ready to throw on presently, he put some dry leaves and grass underneath, as he had no straw or paper, struck a match, and held it to them. Some of the leaves smouldered, one crackled, and the dry grass lit a little, but only just where it was in contact with the flame of the match. The same thing happened with ten matches, one after the other. The flame would not spread. Bevis on his knees thought a good while, and then he set to work and gathered some more leaves, dry grass, and some thin chips of dry bark. Then he took out the sliding drawer of the match-box, and placed it under these, as the deal of which it was made would burn like paper. The outer case he was careful to preserve, because they were safety matches, and lit only on the prepared surface.

In and around the little drawer he arranged half a dozen matches, and then lit them, putting the rest in his pocket. The flame caught the deal, which was as thin as a wafer, then the bark and tiny twigs, then the dry grass and larger sticks. It crept up through the pile, crackling and hissing. In three minutes it had hold of the boughs, curling its lambent point round them, as a cow licks up the grass with her tongue. The bramble bush sheltered it from the gale, but let enough wind through to cause a draught.

Up sprang the flames, and the bonfire began to cast out heat, and red light flickering on the trees. Bevis threw on more branches, the fire flared up and gleamed afar on the

wet green carpet of undulating weeds. He hauled up a fallen pole, the sparks rose as he hurled it on.

'Hurrah!' shouted Bevis, dancing and singing:

Kyng Estmere threwe his harpe asyde,
And swith he drew his brand;
And Estmere he, and Adler Yonge,
Right stiffe in stour can stand!

'Adler will be here in a minute.' He meant Mark.

CHAPTER XIX

MARK IS PUT IN PRISON

But Adler was himself in trouble. After they had waited some time in the camp, thinking that Bevis would be certain to return there sooner or later, finding that he did not come, the whole party, with Mark at their head, searched and re-searched the battlefield and most of the adjacent meadows, not overlooking the copse. Mark next ran home, hoping that Bevis for some reason or other might have gone there, and asked himself whether he had offended him in any way, and was that why he had left the fight? But he could not recollect that he had done anything.

Bevis, of course, was not at home, and Mark returned to the battlefield, every minute now adding to his anxiety. It was so unlike Bevis that he felt sure something must be wrong.

'Perhaps he 's drowned,' said Val.

'Drowned,' repeated Mark, with intense contempt; 'why he can swim fifty yards.'

Fifty yards is not far, but it would be far enough to save life on many occasions. Val was silenced, still Mark, to be certain, went along the shore, and even some way up the Nile. By now the others had left, one at a time, and only Val, Cecil, and Charlie remained.

The four hunted again, then they walked slowly across the field, trying to think. Mark picked up Bevis's hat, which had fallen off in the battle; but to find Bevis's hat was nothing, for he had a knack of leaving it behind him.

'Perhaps he 's gone to your place,' said Charlie, meaning Mark's home.

Mark shook his head. 'But I wish you would go and see,' he said; he dared not face Frances.

'So I will,' said Charlie, always ready to do his best, and off he went.

Charlie's idea gave rise to another, that Bevis might be gone to Jack's home in the Downs, and Val offered to go and inquire, though it was a long, long walk.

He set out, Cecil went with him, and Mark, left to himself, walked slowly home, hoping once more Bevis might have returned. As he came in with Bevis's hat in his hand, the servants pounced upon him. Bevis was missed, there had been a great outcry, and all the people were inquiring for him. Several had come to the kitchen to gossip about it. The uproar would not have been so great so soon but it had got out that there had been a battle.

'You said it was a picnic,' said Polly, shaking Mark.

'You told I so,' said the bailiff, seizing his collar.

'Let me go,' shouted Mark, punching.

'Well, what have you done with him? Where is he?'

Mark could not tell, and between them, four or five to one, they hustled him into the cellar.

'You must go to gaol,' said the bailiff grimly. 'Bide there a bit.'

'How can you find Bevis without me?' shouted Mark, who had just admitted he did not know where Bevis was. But the bailiff pushed him stumbling down the three stone steps, and he heard the bolt grate in the staple. Thus the general who had just won a great battle was thrust ignominiously into a cellar.

Mark kicked and banged the door, but it was of solid oak,

without so much as a panel to weaken it, and though it resounded it did not even shake. He yelled till he was hoarse, and hit the door till his fists became numbed. Then suddenly he sat down quite quiet on the stone steps, and the tears came into his eyes. He did not care for the cellar, it was about Bevis—Bevis was lost somewhere and wanted him, and he *must* go to Bevis.

Dashing the tears away, up he jumped, and looked round to see if he could find anything to burst the door open. There was but one window, deep set in the thick wall, with an iron upright bar inside. The glass was yellowish-green, in small panes, and covered with cobwebs, so that the light was very dim. He could see the barrels, large and small, and as his eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness some meat—a joint—and vegetables on a shelf, placed there for coolness. Out came his pocket-knife, and he attacked the joint savagely, slashing off slices anyhow, for he (like Bevis) was hungry, and so angry he did not care what he did.

As he ate he still looked round and round the cellar and peered into the corners, but saw nothing, though something moved in the shadow on the floor, no doubt a resident toad. Mark knew the cellar perfectly, and he had often seen tools in it, as a hammer used in tapping the barrels, but though he tried hard he could not find it. It must have been taken away for some purpose. He stamped on the stone floor, and heard a rustle as a startled mouse rushed into its hole.

The light just then seemed to increase, and turning towards the window he saw the full, round moon. As it crossed the narrow window, the shadow of the iron bar fell on the opposite wall, then moved aside, and in a very few minutes the moon began to disappear as she swept up into the sky. He watched the bright shield for a while, then as he looked down he thought of the iron bar, and out came his knife again.

The bar was not let into the stonework, the window recess

inside was encased with wood, and the bar, flattened at each end, was fastened with three screws. Mark endeavoured to unscrew these, he quickly broke the point of his knife, and soon had nothing but a stump left. The stump answered better than the complete blade, and he presently got the screws out. He then worked the bar to and fro with such violence that he wrenched the top screws clean away from the wood there. But just as he lifted the bar to smash all the panes and get out, he saw that the frame was far too narrow for him to pass through.

Inside, the recess was wide enough, but it was not half so broad where the glass was. The bar was really unnecessary; no one could have got in or out, and perhaps that was why it had been so insecurely fastened, as the workmen could hardly have helped seeing it was needless.

Mark hurled the bar to the other end of the cellar, where it knocked some plaster off the wall, then fell on an earthenware vessel used to keep vegetables in, and cracked it. He stamped up and down the cellar, and in his bitter and desperate anger, had half a mind to set all the taps running for spite.

'Let me out,' he yelled, thumping the door with all his might. 'Let me out; you 've no business to put me in here. If the governor was at home, I know he wouldn't, and you 're beasts—you 're *beasts*.'

He was right in so far that the governor would not have locked him in the cellar; but the governor was out that evening, and Bevis's mamma, so soon as she found he was missing, had had the horse put in the dog-cart, and went to fetch him. So Mark fell into the hands of the merciless. No one even heard him howling and bawling and kicking the heart of oak, and when he had exhausted himself he sat down again on a wooden frame made to support a cask. Presently he went to the door once more, and shouted through the keyhole: 'Tell me if you have found Bevis!'

There was no answer. He waited, and then sat down on the frame, and asked himself if he could get up through the roof. By standing on the top of the largest cask he thought he could touch the rafters, but no more, and he had no tool to cut his way through with. 'I know,' he said suddenly, 'I 'll smash the lock.' He searched for the iron bar, and found it in the earthenware vessel.

He hit the lock a tremendous bang, then stopped, and began to examine it more carefully. His eyes were now used to the dim light, and he could see almost as well as by day, and he found that the great bolt of the lock, quite three inches thick, shot into an open staple driven into the doorpost, a staple much like those used to fasten chains to.

In a minute he had the end of the iron bar inside the staple. The staple was strong, and driven deep into the oaken post, but he had a great leverage on it. The bar bent, but the staple came slowly, then easier, and presently fell on the stones. The door immediately swung open towards him.

Mark dashed out with the bar in his hand, fully determined to knock any one down who got in his way, but they were all in the road, and he reached the meadow. He dropped the bar, and ran for the battlefield. Going through the gate that opened on the New Sea, something pushed through beside him against his ankles. It would have startled him, but he saw directly it was Pan. The spaniel had followed him: it may be with some intelligence that he was looking for his master.

'Pan! Pan!' said Mark, stooping to stroke him, delighted to get some sympathy at last. 'Come on.'

Together they raced to the battlefield.

Then from the high ground Mark saw the beacon on the island, and instantly knew it was Bevis. He never doubted it for a moment. He looked at the beacon, and saw the flames shoot up, sink, and rise again; then he ran back as fast as he could to the head of the water, where the boats

were moored in the sandy corner. Fetching the sculls from the tumbling shed where they were kept, he pushed off in the blue boat which they were fitting up for sailing, never dreaming that the first voyage in it would be like this. Pan jumped in with him.

In his haste, not looking where he was going, he rowed into the weeds, and was some time getting out, for the stalks clung to the blade of the scull as if an invisible creature in the water were holding it. Soon after he got free he reached the waves, and in five minutes, coming out into the open channel, the boat began to dance up and down. With wind and wave and oar he drove along at a rapid pace, past the oak where the council had been held, past the jutting point, and into the broad waters, where he could see the beacon, if he glanced over his shoulder.

The boat now pitched furiously, as it seemed to him rising almost straight up, and dipping as if she would dive into the deep. But she always rose again, and after her came the wave she had surmounted, rolling with a hiss and bubble eager to overtake him. The crest blew off like a shower in his face, and just as the following roller seemed about to break in the stern-sheets it sank. Still the wave always came after him, row as hard as he would; like vengeance, black, dire, and sleepless.

Lit up by the full moon, the raging waters rushed and foamed and gleamed around him. Though he afterwards saw tempests on the ocean, the waves never seemed so high and so threatening as they did that night, alone in the little boat. The storms, indeed, on inland waters are full of dangers, perhaps more so than the long heaving billows of the sea, for the waves seem to have scarcely any interval between, racing quick, short, and steep, one after the other.

This great black wave—for it looked always the same—chased him eagerly, overhanging the stern. Pan sat there on the bottom, as it looked, under the wave. Mark rowed

his hardest, trying to get away from it. Hissing, foaming, with the rush and roar of the wind, the wave ran after. When he ventured to look round he was close to the islands, so quickly had he travelled.

Bevis was standing on the summit of the cliff with a long stick burning at the end in his hand. He held it out straight like the arm of a signal, then waved it a little, but kept it pointing in the same direction. He was shouting his loudest, to direct Mark, who could not hear a sound, but easily guessed that he meant him to bear the way he pointed. Mark pulled a few strokes and looked again, and saw the white spray rushing up the cliff, though he could not hear the noise of the surge.

Bevis was frantically waving the burning brand; Mark understood now, and pulled his left scull hardest. The next minute the current setting between the islands seized the boat, and he was carried by as if on a mountain torrent. Everything seemed to whirl past, and he saw the black wave that had followed him dashed to sparkling fragments against the cliff.

He was taken beyond the island before he could stay the boat, then he edged away out of the rush behind the land, where the water was much smoother, and was able presently to row back to it in the shelter. Bevis came out from the trees to meet him, and taking hold of the stem of the boat drew it ashore. Mark stepped out, and Pan, jumping on Bevis, barked round him.

Bevis told him how it had all happened, and danced with delight when he heard how Mark had won the battle, for he insisted that Mark had done it. They went to the beacon fire, and then Mark, now his first joy was over, began to grumble because Bevis had been really shipwrecked and he had not. He wished he had smashed his boat against the cliff now. Bevis said they could have another great shipwreck soon. Mark wanted to stop all night on the island, but Bevis was hungry.

'And besides,' said he, 'there 's the governor; he will be awfully frightened about us, and he ought to know.'

'So he did,' said Mark. 'Very well; but mind, there is to be a jolly shipwreck.'

Scamps as they were, they both disliked to give pain to those who loved them. It was the knowledge that the governor would never have put him in the cellar that stopped Mark from the spiteful trick of turning on the taps. Bevis was exceedingly angry about Mark having been locked up. He stamped his foot, and said the bailiff should know.

They got into the boat, and each took a scull, but when they were afloat they paused, for it occurred to both at once that they could not row back in the teeth of the storm.

'We shall have to stop on the island now,' said Mark, not at all sorry. Bevis, however, remembered the floating breakwater of weeds, and the winding channel on that side, and told Mark about it. So they rowed between the weeds, and so much were the waves weakened that the boat barely rocked. Now the boat was steady, Pan sat in front, and peered over the stem like a figure-head. Presently they came to the sand or mudbanks where the water was quite smooth, and here the heron rose up.

'We ought to have a gun,' said Bevis; 'it 's a shame we haven't got a gun.'

'Just as if we didn't know how to shoot,' said Mark indignantly.

'Just as if,' echoed Bevis; 'but we will have one somehow.'

The boat as he spoke grounded on a shallow; they got her off, but she soon grounded again, and it took them quite three-quarters of an hour to find the channel, so much did it turn and wind. At last they were stopped by thick masses of weeds, and a great bunch of the reed-mace, often called bulrushes, and decided to land on the sandbank. They hauled the boat so far up on the shore that she could not possibly get loose, and then walked to the mainland.

There the bushes and bramble thickets again gave them much trouble, but they contrived to get through into the wildest-looking field they had ever seen. It was covered with hawthorn trees, bunches of thistles, bramble bushes, rushes, and numbers of green ant-hills, almost as high as their knees. Skirting this, as they wound in and out the ant-hills, they startled some peewits which rose with their curious whistle, and two or three white tails, which they knew to be rabbits, disappeared round the thistles.

It took them some time to cross this field; the next was barley, very short; the next wheat, and then clover; and at last they reached the head of the water, and got into the meadows. Thence it was only a short way home, and they could see the house illuminated by the moonlight.

The authorities were wroth, though secretly glad to see them. Nothing was said; the wrath was too deep for reproaches. They were ordered to bed that instant. They did not dare disobey, but Mark darted a savage look, and Bevis shouted back from the top of the staircase that he was hungry. 'Be off, sir,' was the only reply. Sullenly they went into their room and sat down. Five minutes afterwards someone opened the door a little way, put in a plate and a jug, and went away. On the plate were three huge slices of bread, and in the jug cold water.

'I won't touch it,' said Bevis; 'it 's hateful.'

'It 's hateful,' said Mark.

'After we came home to tell them, too,' said Bevis. 'Horrid!'

But by and by his hunger overcame him; he ate two of the huge slices, and Mark the other. Then after a draught of the cold water they undressed, and fell asleep, quick and calm, just as Aurora was beginning to show her white foot in the East.

CHAPTER XX

IN DISGRACE—VISIT TO JACK'S

'As if we were dogs,' said Bevis indignantly.

'Just as if,' said Mark. 'It 's hateful. And after coming home from the island to tell them.'

'All that trouble.'

'I could have brought you some stuff to eat,' said Mark, 'and we could have stopped there all night, quite jolly.'

'Hateful!'

They were in the blue-painted summer-house the next day talking over the conduct of the authorities, whose manner was distant in the extreme. The governor was very angry. They thought it unjust after winning such a mighty victory, and actually coming home on purpose to save alarm.

'I do not like it at all,' said Bevis.

'Let 's go back to the island,' said Mark eagerly.

'They would come and look there for us the first thing,' said Bevis. 'I 've a great mind to walk to Southampton, and see the ships. It 's only sixty miles.'

'Well, come on,' said Mark, quite ready. 'The road goes over the hills by Jack's. Oh, I know!'

'What is it?' for Mark had jumped up.

'Jack 's got a rifle,' said Mark. 'He 'll let us shoot. Let 's go and stop with Jack.'

'First-rate,' said Bevis. 'But how do you know he has a rifle? There wasn't one when I was there last—you mean the long gun.'

'No, I don't; he 's got a rifle. I know, because he told Frances. He tells Frances everything. Stupids always tell girls everything. Somebody wanted to sell it, and he bought it.'

'Are you quite sure?' said Bevis, getting up.

'Quite.'

'What sort is it?'

'A deer rifle.'

'Come on.'

Off they started without another word, and walked a mile in a great hurry, when they recollected that if they did not appear in the evening there would be a hunt for them.

'Just as if we were babies,' said Mark.

'Such rubbish,' said Bevis. 'But we won't have any more such stuff and nonsense. Let 's find Charlie, and send him back with a message.'

They found him, and sent him home with a piece of paper, on which Bevis wrote: 'We are gone to Jack's, and we shall not be home to-night.' It was quite an hour's walk to Jack's whose house was in a narrow valley between two hills. Jack was away in the fields, but when he returned he showed them the rifle, a small, old-fashioned muzzle-loader, and they spent a long time handling it, and examining the smallest detail.

'Let 's have a shot,' said Bevis.

'Yes,' said Mark. 'Now do, Jack.' They begged and teased and worried him, till he almost yielded. He thought perhaps Bevis's governor would not like shooting, but on the other hand he knew Frances was fond of Bevis, and Mark was her brother, with whom, for various reasons, he wished to keep especially friendly. At last he said they would go and try and shoot a young rabbit, and took down his double-barrel.

They did not take any dogs, meaning to stalk the rabbits and shoot them sitting, as neither Mark nor Bevis could kill anything moving. Jack went down to some little enclosed meadows at the foot of the Downs where the rabbits came out as the sun began to sink. Every now and then he made them wait while he crept forward and peered through gaps or over gates.

Presently he came quietly back from a gap by a hollow

willow, and giving Bevis the gun (which he had hitherto carried himself, being very anxious lest an accident should happen), whispered to him that there were three young rabbits out in the grass.

'Aim at the shoulder,' said Jack, thinking Bevis might miss the head. 'And be sure you don't pull both triggers at once, and—I say——' But Bevis had started. Bevis stepped as noiselessly as a squirrel, and glancing carefully round the willow saw the rabbits' ears pricked up in the grass. They had heard or seen him, but being so young were not much frightened, and soon resumed feeding.

He lifted the gun, which was somewhat heavy, having been converted from a muzzle-loader, and old guns were made heavier than is the custom now. One of the rabbits moving turned his back to him, so that he could not see the shoulder; another was behind a bunch of grass; but in a minute the third moved, and Bevis aimed at him. The barrels would not at first keep quite steady, the sight, just as he had got it on the rabbit, jumped aside or drooped, so that he had to try twice before he was satisfied.

'What a time he is,' whispered Mark, when Bevis pulled the trigger, and they all ran forward. Jack jumped through the gap and picked up the rabbit, which was kicking in the grass. Bevis rubbed his shoulder and felt his collar-bone.

'Hurt?' said Jack, laughing. 'Kicked? I was going to tell you only you were in such a hurry. You should have held the stock tight to your shoulder, then it would not kick. There, like this; now try.'

Bevis took the gun and pressed it firmly to his bruised shoulder.

'Got it tight?' said Jack. 'Aim at that thistle, and try again.'

'But he 'll frighten the rabbits, and it 's my turn,' said Mark.

'All gone in,' said Jack, 'every one; you 'll have to wait till they come out again. Shoot.'

Bevis shot, and the thistle was shattered. It scarcely hurt him at all, it would not have done so in the least, only his shoulder was tender now.

'It 's a very little rabbit,' said Mark.

'That it 's not,' said Bevis. 'How dare you say so?'

'It looks little.'

'The size of a kitten,' said Jack. 'As sweet as a chicken,' he added, 'when cooked, and as white. You shall have it to-morrow for dinner—just the right size to be nice'; he saw that Bevis was rather inclined to be doubtful, and wished to reassure him. Jack was a huge, kind-hearted giant.

'Are you sure it will be nice?'

'The very thing,' said Jack, 'if Mark can only shoot another just like it; it wants two for a pudding.'

About half an hour afterwards Mark did shoot another, and then there was a long discussion as to which was the bigger, which could not be decided, for, in fact, being both about the same age, one could hardly be distinguished from the other except that Mark's had a shot-hole in the ear, and Bevis's had not. On the way home, a cloud of sparrows rose out of some wheat and settled on the hedge, and Bevis had a shot at these, bringing down three. Afterwards he missed a yellow-hammer that sat singing happily on a gate.

He wanted the yellow-hammer because it had so fine a colour. The yellow-hammer sang away while he aimed, repeating the same note, as he perched all of a heap, a little lump of feathers on the top bar. The instant the flash came the bird flew, and as is its habit in starting, drooped, and so was shielded by the top bar. The bar was scarred with shot, and a dozen pellets were buried in it; but the yellow-hammer was not hurt.

Mark was delighted that Bevis had missed. There was an elm near the garden, and up in it Mark, on the look-out for anything, spied a young thrush. He took steady aim,

and down came the thrush. They were disposed to debate as to who had shot best, but Jack stopped it, and brought out the quoits. After they had played some time, and it was growing dusky, Ted entered the field.

'Halloa! Pompey,' said Mark. 'Pompey!'

'Pompey,' said Jack, not understanding.

Ted walked straight up to Bevis.

'But aren't you angry?' said Ted.

'Angry—why?'

'Because I sent you over.'

'But you didn't do it purposely.'

'No, *that* I didn't,' said Ted, with all his might.

From that moment they were better friends than they had ever been before, though it was some time before Ted could really believe that Bevis was not angry about it. In fact, the idea had never entered Bevis's mind. Ted stopped with them to supper, and everything was explained to Jack, who was delighted with the battle, and could not hear enough about it. But they did not press Ted as to what had become of him, seeing how confused he was whenever the subject was approached.

Quite beside himself with terror and misery, poor Ted had pretended illness, and remained in his room, refusing to see any one, and dreading every knock at the door, lest it should be the constable come to arrest him. Towards the afternoon Val, who had already been down to Bevis's house and found he was all right, strolled up to see Pompey. Ted would not open the door even to him, and Val taunted him for being such a coward all that time after the battle. Still, Ted would not unlock it till Val happened to say that there was a row about the war, and Bevis had gone up to Jack's. Open came the door directly.

'Where 's Bevis?' said Ted, grasping at Val's arm.

'At Jack's.'

'Not killed?'

'Killed—no. How could he be killed?'

As soon as he understood that Bevis was really alive, not even hurt, Ted started off, to Val's amazement, and never stopped till he entered the field where they were picking up the quoits as it grew too dark to play well. So Caesar and Pompey sat down to supper very lovingly, and talked over Pharsalia. Big Jack made them tell him the story over and over again, and wished he could have taken part in the combat. Like Mark, too, he envied Bevis's real shipwreck. Now seeing Jack so interested they made use of his good humour, and coaxed him till at last he promised to let them shoot with the rifle on the morrow in the evening, after he had finished in the fields.

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CHAPTER XXI

SAILING—'THERE SHE LAY, ALL THE DAY!'

BEVIS had eased off, and the boat was sailing right before the wind, which blew direct into the gulf. Mark crawled up more into the bow to see better, and shout directions to the pilot.

'Left—left.'

'Port.'

'Well, port.'

'Starboard now—that side. There, we scraped some weeds.' The weeds made a rustling sound as the boat passed over them.

'Right—right—starboard, that side,' holding out his hand, 'you 'll hit the rocks; you 're too close.'

'Pooh!' said Bevis. 'It 's deeper under the rocks, don't you remember.' He prided himself on steering within an inch; the boat glided between the sandy island and the rocky wall, so close to the wall that the sail leaning over the side nearly swept it. Then he steered so as to pass along about three yards from the shore. The quarry opened out, and they went by it on towards the place where they bathed.

'Rails,' said Mark, 'mind the rails.' By the bathing-place the posts and rails which were continued into the water were partly under the surface, so that a boat might get fixed on the top. Bevis pushed the tiller over and the boat came round broadside to the wind, and began to cross the head of Fir-Tree Gulf.

The ripples here increased in size, and became wavelets as the breeze, crossing a wider surface of water, blew straight on shore, and seemed to rush in a stronger draught through the trees. These wavelets were not large enough to make the boat dance, but they caused more splashing at the bow, and she heeled a little to the wind. They slipped across the head of the gulf, some two hundred yards, at a good pace, steering for the mouth of the Nile.

'Tack,' said Bevis, as they came near. 'It 's almost time. Get ready.'

Mark unfastened the cord or sheet on the left side, against which the foresail was pulling, and held it in his hand. 'I 'm ready,' he said, and in a minute—'Quick, we shall be on shore.'

Bevis pushed the tiller down hard to the left, at the same time telling Mark to let go. Mark loosened the foresheet, and the boat, turning to the right, was carried by her own impetus and the pressure of the mainsail up towards the wind. Bevis expected her to do as he had seen the yachts and ships at the seaside, and as he had read was the proper way, to come round slowly facing the wind, till just as she passed the straight line as it were of the breeze, Mark would have to tighten the foresheet, and the wind would press on the foresail like a lever, and complete the turn.

He watched the foresail eagerly, for the moment to shout to Mark; the boat moved up towards the wind, then paused, hung, and began to fall back again. The wind blew her back. Bevis jammed the tiller down still harder, rose from his seat, bawled, 'Mark! Mark!' but he was jerked back in a moment as she took the ground.

Mark seized a scull to push her off, when letting go the sheet the foresail flapped furiously, drawing the cord or rope through the staple as if it would snap it. Bevis, fearing the boat would turn over, let go the mainsheet, and then the mainsail flew over the left side, flapping and shaking the mast, while the sheet or rope struck the water and splashed it as if it were hit with a whip.

'Pull down the mainsail,' shouted Bevis, stumbling forward.

'Hold tight,' shouted Mark, giving a great shove with the scull. The boat came off, and Bevis was thrown down on the ballast. The wind took her before they could scramble into their places, and she drifted across the mouth of the Nile and grounded again.

'Down with the sail, I tell you,' shouted Bevis in a rage. 'Not that one—the big one.'

Mark undid the cord or halyard, and down fell the mainsail into the boat, covering Bevis, who had to get out from under it before he could do anything.

'Did you ever see such a bother?' said Mark.

'Is anything broken?' said Bevis.

'No. You ought to have tacked sooner.'

'How could I tell? She wouldn't come round.'

'You ought to have had room to try twice.'

'So we will next time.'

'Let 's go up the Nile and turn round, and get the sails up there,' said Mark. 'It will be such a flapping here.'

Bevis agreed, and they pushed the boat along with the sculls a few yards up the Nile, which was quite smooth there, while at the mouth the quick wavelets dashed against the shore. The bank of the river and the trees on it sheltered them while they turned the boat's head round, and carefully set the sails for another trial.

'We 'll have two tries this time,' said Bevis, 'and we 're sure to do it. If we can't tack, it 's no use sailing.'

When everything was ready, Mark rowed a few strokes

with one oar till the wind began to fill the sails; then he shipped it, and sat down on the ballast on the windward side. The moment she was outside the Nile the splashing began, and Mark, to his great delight, felt a little spray in his face. 'This is real sailing,' he said.

'Now we 're going,' said Bevis, as the boat increased her speed. 'Let 's see how much we can gain on this tack.' He kept her as close to the wind as he could, but so as still to have the sails well filled and drawing. He let the mainsail hollow out somewhat, thinking that it would hold the wind more and draw them faster.

'Hurrah!' said Mark; 'we 're getting a good way up; there 's the big sarsen—we shall get up to it.'

There was a large sarsen or boulder, a great brown stone, lying on the shore on the quarry side of the gulf, about thirty yards above the bathing-place. If they could get as high up as the boulder, that would mean that in crossing the gulf on that tack they had gained thirty yards in direct course, thirty yards against the wind. To Mark it looked as if they were sailing straight for the boulder, but the boat was not really going in the exact direction her bow pointed.

She inclined to the right, and to have found her actual course he ought to have looked not over the stem but over the lee bow. The lee is the side away from the wind. That is to say, she drifted or made leeway, so that when they got closer they were surprised to see she was not so high up as the boulder by ten yards. She was off a bunch of rushes when Bevis told Mark to be ready. He had allowed space enough this time for two trials.

'Now,' said Bevis, pushing the tiller over to the right; 'let go.'

Mark loosened the foresail, that it might not offer any resistance to the wind, and so check the boat from turning.

Bevis pushed the tiller over still harder, and as she had been going at a good pace the impetus made her answer the rudder better.

'She 's coming,' shouted Mark. 'Jam the rudder.'

The rudder was jammed, but when the bow seemed just about to face the wind, and another foot would have enabled Mark to tighten the foresail, and let it draw her round like a lever, she lost all forward motion.

'Oh, dear!' said Bevis, stamping with vexation. The boat stopped a moment, and then slowly fell back. 'Pull tight,' said Bevis, meaning refasten the foresheet. Mark did so, and the boat began to move ahead again.

'We 're very close,' said Mark almost directly.

'Tack,' said Bevis. 'Let go.'

He tried to run her up into the wind again, but this time, having less way or impetus, she did not come nearly so far round, but began to pay off, or fall back directly, and, before Mark could get a scull out, bumped heavily against the shore, which was stony there.

'Let 's row her head round,' said Mark.

'Sculls ought not to be used,' said Bevis. 'It 's lubberly.'

'Awful lubberly,' said Mark. 'But what are we to do?'

'Pull away, anyhow,' said Bevis.

Mark put out the scull, pushed her off, and after some trouble pulled till her head came round. Then he shipped the scull, and they began to sail again.

'We haven't got an inch,' said Bevis. 'Just look; there are the rails.'

They had made about twenty yards, but in missing stays twice, drifting, and rowing round, had lost it all before the boat could get right again, before the sails began to draw well.

'What ever is it?' said Mark. 'What is it we don't do?'

'I can't think,' said Bevis. 'It 's very stupid. That 's better.'

There was a hissing and bubbling, and the boat, impelled by a stronger puff, rushed along, and seemed to edge a way up into the wind.

'Splendid,' said Mark. 'We shall get above the Nile this time, we shall get to the willow.'

A willow tree stood on the shore that side some way up. The boat appeared to move direct for it.

'I shall tack soon,' said Bevis, 'while we've got a good wind.'

'Tack now,' said Mark. 'It doesn't matter about going right across.'

'All right—now; let go.'

They tried again, just the same; the boat paused and came back; then again, and still it was of no use.

'Row,' said Bevis. 'Bother!'

Mark rowed with a scull out on the lee side, and got her round.

'Now, just look,' said Bevis. 'Just look.'

He pointed at the Nile. They had drifted so that when they at last turned they were nearly level with the mouth of the river from which they had started.

'Let me row quicker next time,' said Mark. 'Let me row directly. It 's hateful, though.'

'It 's hateful,' said Bevis. 'Sailing without tacking is stupid. Nobody would ever think we were sailors to see us rowing round.'

'What 's to be done?' said Mark. 'Now try.'

Bevis put the tiller down, and Mark pulled her head round as quick as he could. By the time the sails had begun to draw they had lost more than half they had gained, and in crossing, as the breeze slackened a little, lost the rest, and found themselves as before, just off the mouth of the Nile.

'I don't think you keep her up tight enough,' said Mark, as they began to cross again. 'Try her closer. Close-hauled, you know.'

'So I will,' said Bevis; and the breeze rising again he pulled the mainsheet tighter (while Mark tightened the foresheet), and pushed the tiller over somewhat.

The boat came closer to the wind, and seemed now to be sailing straight for the quarry.

'There,' said Mark, 'we shall get out of the gulf in two tacks.'

'But we 're going very slow,' said Bevis.

'It doesn't matter if we get to the quarry.'

The boat continued to point at the quarry, and Bevis watched the mainsail intently, with his hand on the tiller, keeping her so that the sail should not shiver, and yet should be as near to it as possible.

'Splendid,' said Mark, on his knees on the ballast, looking over the stem. 'Splendid. It 's almost time to tack.'

He lifted the foresail, and peered under it at the shore.

'I say—well, Bevis.'

'What is it?' asked Bevis. 'I 'm watching the mainsail; is it time?'

'We haven't got an inch—we 're going—let 's see—not so far up as the rushes.'

All the while the boat's head pointed at the quarry she had been making great leeway, drifting with the wind and waves. The sails scarcely drew, and she had no motion to cut her way into the wind. Instead of edging up into it, she really crossed the gulf in nearly a straight line, almost level with the spot whence she started. When Bevis tried to get her round, she would not come at all. She was moving so slowly she had no impetus, and the wind blew her back. Mark had to row round again.

'That 's no use,' he said. 'But it looked as if it was.'

'She won't sail very near the wind,' said Bevis, as they crossed again towards the Nile. 'We must let her run free, and keep the sails hollow.'

They crossed and crossed five times more, and still came only just above the mouth of the Nile, and back to the bunch of rushes.

'I believe it 's the jib,' said Bevis, as they sailed for the quarry side once more. 'Let 's try without the jib. Perhaps it 's the jib won't let her come round. Take it down.'

Mark took the foresail down, and the boat did show some

disposition to run up into the wind; but when Bevis tried to tack she went half-way, and then paid off and came back, and they nearly ran on the railings, so much did they drift. Still they tried without the foresail again; the boat they found did not sail so fast, and it was not the least use, she would not come round. So they re-set the foresail. Again and again they sailed to and fro, from the shore just above the Nile to the bunch of rushes, and never gained a foot, or if they did one way they lost it the other. They were silent for some time.

'It 's like the Bay of Biscay,' said Mark.

"There she lay, all the day,
In the Bay of Biscay, O!"

And the sails look so jolly too.'

'I can't make it out,' said Bevis. 'The sails are all proper, I 'm sure they are. What can it be? We shall never get out of the gulf.'

'And after all the rowing round, too,' said Mark. 'Lubberly.'

'Horrid,' said Bevis. 'I hope there 's no other ship about looking at us. The sailors would laugh so. I know—Mark!'

'Yes.'

'Don't row next time; we 'll wear ship.'

'What 's that?'

'Turn the other way—with the wind. Very often the boom knocks you over or tears the mast out.'

'Capital, only we 've no boom. What must I do?'

'Nothing; you 'll see. Sit still—in the middle. Now.'

Bevis put the tiller over to windward. The boat paid off rapidly to leeward, and described a circle, the mainsail passing over to the opposite side, and as it took the wind giving a jerk to the mast.

Mark tightened the foresheet, and they began to sail back again.

'But just look!' said he.

'Horrid,' said Bevis.

In describing the circle they had lost not only what they had gained, but were level with the mouth of the Nile, and not five yards from the shore at the head of the gulf. It was as much this tack as they could do to get above the railings; they were fifteen yards at least below the rushes, when Bevis put the tiller up to windward, and tried the same thing again. The boat turned a circle to leeward, and before she could get right round and begin to sail again, they had gone so near the shore, drifting, that Mark had to pull out the scull in case they should bump. In crossing this time the wind blew so light that they could not get above the mouth of the Nile.

'It 's no use wearing ship,' said Mark.

'Not a bit; we lose more than ever. You 'd better row again,' said Bevis reluctantly.

Mark pulled her round again, and they sailed to and fro three times more, but did but keep their position, for the wind was perceptibly less as the day went on, and it became near noon.

'I hate those rushes,' said Mark, as he pulled her head round once more.

Bevis did not reply, but this time he steered straight across to the Nile and up it till the bank sheltered them from the wind. There they took down the sails, quite beaten, for that day at least, and rowed back to harbour.

Next morning when they arrived at the New Sea they found that the wind came more down the water, having turned a little to the south, but it was the same in force. They started again, and sailed very well till they were opposite the hollow oak in which on the day of battle it was supposed Bevis had hidden. Here the wind was a head-wind, against which they could only work by tacking, and when they came to tack they found just the same difficulty as yesterday.

All the space they gained during the tack was lost in coming round before the boat could get way on her. They sailed to and fro from the hollow oak to some willow bushes on the other side, and could not advance farther. Sometimes they got above the oak, but then they fell back behind the willow bushes; sometimes they worked up twenty yards higher than the willow bushes, but dropped below the oak.

Bevis soon discovered why they made better tacks now and then; it was because the wind shifted a little, and did not so directly oppose them. The instant it returned to its usual course they could not progress up the sea. By the willow bushes they could partly see into Fir-Tree Gulf; yesterday they could not sail out of the gulf, and to-day, with all their efforts, they could not sail into it.

After about twenty trials they were compelled to own that they were beaten, and returned to harbour. Bevis was very much troubled with this failure, and as soon as they had got home he asked Mark to go up into the bench-room, or do anything he liked, and leave him by himself, while he looked at the old encyclopaedia.

Mark did as he was asked, knowing that Bevis always learnt anything best by himself. Bevis went up into the bedroom, where the great book remained open on the chair, knelt down, and set to work to read everything there was in it on ships and navigation. There was the whole history of boats and ships, from the papyrus canoes of the Nile, made by plaiting the stalks, the earthenware boats, hide boats, rafts of skins, hollowed trees, bark canoes, catamarans, and proas. There was an account of the triremes of Rome, and on down to the caravels, bilanders, galliots, zebecs, and great three-deckers. The book did not quite reach to the days of glorious Nelson.

It laid down the course supposed to have been followed by Ulysses, and described the voyages of the Phoenicians to Britain. The parts of a three-decker were pictured, and the instruments of navigation were explained with illustrations.

Everything was there except what Bevis wanted, for in all this exhaustive and really interesting treatise, there were no plain directions how to tack.

There were the terms and the very orders in nautical language, but no explanations as to how it was done. Bevis shut the book up, and rose with a sigh, for he had become so occupied with his search that he had unconsciously checked his breathing. He went down to the bookcase and stood before it thoughtfully. Presently he recollected that there was something about yachting in a modern book of sports. He found it and read it carefully, but though it began about Daedalus, and finished with the exact measurements of a successful prize-winning yacht, he could not make out what he wanted.

The account was complete even to the wages of the seamen and the method of signalling with flags. There was a glossary of terms, but nothing to tell him how to tack, that is, nothing that he could understand. He put the book away, and went out into the blue-painted summer-house to think it over again.

What you really want to know is never in a book, and no one can tell you. By and by, if you keep it steadily in memory and ever have your eyes open, you hit on it by accident. Some mere casual incident throws the solution right into your hands at an unexpected moment.

Bevis had fitted up his boat according to his recollections of those he had seen in the pictures.

There was no sailing-boat that he could go and see nearer than forty miles. As he sat thinking it over Mark rushed up. He, too, had been thinking, and he had found something.

'I know,' he said.

'What?'

'We have not got enough ballast,' said Mark. 'That 's it—I 'm sure that 's it. Don't you remember how the boat kept drifting?'

'Very likely,' said Bevis. 'Yes, that 's it; how stupid we were. Let 's get some more directly. I know; I 'll ask the governor for a bag of shot.'

The governor allowed them to take the bag, which weighed twenty-eight pounds, on condition that they put it inside a small sack, so as to look like sand, else someone might steal it. They also found two pieces of iron, scraps, which made up the fresh ballast to about forty pounds. The wind had now gone down as it did soon after midday, and they could do nothing.

But next morning it blew again from the south, and they were afloat directly after breakfast. The effect of the ballast was as Mark had anticipated; the boat did not drift so much, she made less leeway, and she was stiffer, that is, she stood up to the wind better. They did not lose so much quite, but still they did not gain, nor would she come round without using a scull; indeed, she was even worse in this respect, and more obstinate, she would not come up into the wind, the weight seemed to hold her back.

After two hours they were obliged to give it up for the third time. The following day there was no wind. 'Let 's make the anchor,' said Mark, 'and while we 're making the anchor perhaps we shall think of something about tacking.'

So they began to make the anchor, after the picture of one in the old folio. They found a square piece of deal, it was six inches by four, and sawed off about two feet. In the middle they cut a long hole right through, and after much trouble found a flat stone to fit it. This was wedged in tight, and further fastened with tar cord. Near one end a small square hole was cut, and through this they put a square rod of iron, which the blacksmith sold them for a shilling—about three times its value.

The rod was eighteen inches long, and when it was through it was bent up, or curved, and the ends filed to a blunt point. It fitted tight, but they wedged it still

firmer with nails, and it was put the opposite way to the stone, so that when the stone tried to sink flat to the bottom, one or other of the points of the bar would stick in the ground. Mark thought there ought to be a cross-piece of wood or iron as there is in proper anchors, but so far as they could make out, this was not attached to the ancient stone-weighted ones, and so they did not put it.

Lastly, a hole was bored at the other end of the shaft, and the rope or cable (a stout cord) inserted and fastened. Looking eagerly out of the window in the morning to see if there was a wind they were delighted to see the clouds drifting from the north-north-west. This was a capital wind for them as they could not tack. It was about the same that had been blowing the first day when they sailed into Fir-Tree Gulf and could not get out, but it would have taken them to the very end of the New Sea, had they not considered it proper to coast round. This time they meant to sail straight up the centre and straight back.

CHAPTER XXII

SAILING CONTINUED—VOYAGE TO THE UNKNOWN ISLAND

AFTER breakfast they got afloat, and when away from the trees the boat began to sail fast, and every now and then the bubbles rushed from under the bow. Mark sat on the ballast, or rather reclined, and Bevis steered. The anchor was upon the forecastle as they called it, with twenty-five feet of cable. Sailing by the bluff covered with furze, by the oak where the council was held, past the muddy shore lined with weeds where the cattle came down to drink, past the hollow oak and the battlefield, they saw the quarry and Fir-Tree Gulf, but did not enter it. As they reached the broader water the wind came fresher over the side surface, and the boat careening a little hastened on.

They were now a long way from either shore in the centre of the widest part.

'This is the best sail we 've had,' said Mark, putting his legs out as far as he could, leaning his back against the seat and his head against the mast. 'It 's jolly.'

Bevis got off the stern-sheets and sat down on the bottom so that he too could recline, he had nothing to do but just keep the tiller steady and watch the mainsail, the wind set the course for them. They could feel the breeze pulling at the sails, and the boat drawn along.

'Is it rough?' said Mark.

'Shall we take in a reef?' said Bevis.

'No,' said Mark. 'Let 's capsize.'

'Right,' said Bevis. 'It doesn't matter.'

'Not a bit. Isn't she slipping along?'

'Gurgling and guggling.'

'Bubbling and smacking. That was spray.'

'There 's a puff. How many knots are we going?'

'Ten.'

'Pooh! twenty. No chance of a pirate catching us.'

'In these unknown seas,' said Mark, 'you can't tell what proas are waiting behind the islands, nor how many Malays with creeses.'

'They 're crooked the wrong way,' said Bevis. 'The most curious knives I ever saw.'

'Or junks,' said Mark. 'Are these the Chinese Seas?'

'Jingalls,' said Bevis, 'they shoot big bullets, almost cannon-balls, as big as walnuts. I wish we had one on the forecastle.'

'We ought to have a cannon.'

'Of course we did.'

'As if we couldn't manage a cannon!'

'As if!'

'Or a double-barrel gun.'

'Or anything.'

'Anything.'

'People *are* stupid.'

'Idiotic.'

'We must have a gun.'

'We must.'

They listened again to the gurgling and 'guggling' of the bubbles, and kiss, kiss of the wavelets.

'We 're a long way now,' said Mark presently. 'Can we see land?'

'See land! We lost sight of land months ago. I should think not. Look up there.'

Bevis was watching the top of the mast, tracing its line along the sky, where white filmy clouds were floating slowly. Mark opened his drowsy eyes and looked up too.

'No land in sight,' said he.

'Nothing but sky and clouds,' said Bevis.

'How far are we from shore?'

'Six thousand miles.'

'It 's the first time anybody has ever sailed out of sight of land in our time,' said Mark. 'It 's very wonderful, and we shall be made a great deal of when we get home.'

'Yes, and put in prison afterwards. That's the proper way.'

'We shall bring home sandal-wood, and diamonds as big as—as apples——'

'And see unknown creatures in the sea, and butterflies as huge as umbrellas——'

'Catch fevers and get well again——'

'We must make notes of the language, and coax the people to give us some of their ancient books.'

'Oh! I say,' said Mark, 'when you were on the Unknown Island did you see the magician with long white robes, and the serpent a hundred feet long he keeps in a cave under the bushes?'

'No,' said Bevis, 'I forgot him.' So he had. His imagination ran so rapidly, one thing took the place of the other as the particles of water take each other's place in a running brook. 'We shall find him, I dare say.'

'Let 's land and see.'

'So we will.'

'Are you sure you 're steering right?'

'Oh, yes; it 's nothing to do, you only have to keep the wind in the sails.'

'I wonder what bird that is?' said Mark, as a dove flew over. He knew a dove well enough on land.

'It 's a sort of parrot, no doubt.'

'I wonder how deep it is here.'

'About a million fathoms.'

'No use trying to anchor.' 'Not the least.'

'It 's very warm.'

'In these places ships get burnt by the sun sometimes.'

Another short silence.

'Is it time to take a look-out, captain?'

'Yes, I think so,' said the captain.

Mark crept up in the bow.

'You 're steering too much to the right—that way,' he cried, holding out his right arm.

'Is that better?'

'More over.'

'There.'

'Right.'

As the boat fell off a little from the wind, obeying the tiller, Bevis, now the foresail was out of his line of sight, could see the Unknown Island. They were closer than they had thought.

'Shall we land on Serendib?'

'Oh! no—on your island,' said Mark. 'Steer as close to the cliff as you can.'

Bevis did so, and the boat approached the low, sandy cliff against which the waves had once beat with such fury. The wavelets now washed sideways past it with a gentle splashing, they were not large enough to make the boat dance, and if they had liked they could have gone up and touched it.

'It looks very deep under it,' said Mark, as Bevis steered into the channel, keeping two or three yards from shore.

'Ready,' he said; 'get ready to furl the mainsail.'

Mark partly unfastened the halyard, and held it in his hand. Almost directly they had passed the cliff they were in the lee of the island, which kept off the wind. The boat moved, carried on by its impetus through the still water, but the sails did not draw. In a minute Bevis told Mark to let the mainsail down, and as it dropped Mark hauled the sail in or the folds would have fallen in the water. At the same moment Bevis altered the course, and ran her ashore some way below where he had leaped off the punt, and where it was low and shelving. Mark was out the instant she touched with the painter, and tugged her up on the strand. Bevis came forward and let down the foresail, then he got out.

'Captain,' said Mark, 'may I go round the island?'

'Yes,' said the captain, and Mark stepped in among the bushes to explore. Bevis went a little way and sat down under a beech. The hull of the boat was hidden by the undergrowth, but he could see the slender mast and some of the rigging over the boughs. The sunshine touched the top of the smooth mast, which seemed to shine above the green leaves. There was the vessel; his comrade was exploring the unknown depths of the wood; they were far from the old world and the known countries. He sat and gloated over the voyage, till by and by he remembered the tacking.

They could not do it, even yet they were only half mariners, and were obliged to wait for a fair wind. If it changed while they were on the island they would have to row back. He was no longer satisfied; he went down to the boat, stepped on board, and hoisted the sails. The trees and the island itself so kept off the wind that it was perfectly calm, and the sails did not even flutter. He stepped on shore, and went a few yards where he could look back

and get a good view of the vessel, trying to think what it could be they did not do, or what it could be that was wrong.

He looked at her all over, from the top of the mast to the tiller, and he could not discover anything. Bevis walked up and down, he worked himself quite into a fidget. He went into the wood a little way, half inclined to go after Mark as he felt so restless. All at once he took out his pocket-book and pencil and sat down on the ground just where he was, and drew a sailing-boat such as he had seen. Then he went back to the shore, and sketched their boat on the other leaf. His idea was to compare the sailing-boats he had seen with theirs.

When he had finished his outline-drawing he saw directly that there were several differences. The mast in the boat sketched from memory was much higher than the mast in the other. Both sails, too, were larger than those he had made. The bowsprit projected farther, but the foresail was not so much less in proportion as the mainsail. The foresail looked almost large enough, but the mainsail in the boat was not only smaller, it was not of the same shape.

In his sketch from memory the gaff or rod at the top of the sail rose up at a sharper angle, and the sail came right back to the tiller. In the actual boat before him the gaff was but little more than horizontal to the mast, and the sail only came back three-fourths of the distance it ought to have done.

'It must be made bigger,' Bevis thought. 'The mainsail must be made ever so much larger, and it must reach to where I sit. That 's the mistake—you can see it in a minute. Mark! Mark!' He shouted and whistled.

Mark came presently running. 'I 've been all round,' he said panting, 'and I 've——'

'This is it,' said Bevis, holding up his pocket-book.

'I 've seen a huge jack—a regular shark. I believe it was a shark—and three young wild ducks, and some more of those parrots up in the tree.'

'The mainsail——'

'And something under the water that made a wave, and went along——'

'Look, you see it ought to come——'

'What could it have been that made the wave and went along?'

'Oh! nothing—only a porpoise, or a seal, or a walrus—nothing! Look here——'

'But,' said Mark, 'the wave moved along, and I could not tell what made it.'

'Magic,' said Bevis. 'Very likely the magician. Did you see him?'

'No; but I believe there 's something curious about this island——'

'It 's enchanted of course,' said Bevis.

'There 's lots of things you know are there, and you can't find,' said Mark; 'there 's a tiger, I believe, in the bushes and reeds at the other end. If I had my spear I should have gone and looked, and there 's boa-constrictors, and a hippopotamus was here last night, and heaps of jolly things, and I 've found a place to make a cave. Come and see,' (pulling Bevis).

'I 'll come,' said Bevis, 'in a minute. But just look, I 've found out what was wrong——'

'And how to tack?'

'Yes.'

'Then let 's do it, and tack and get shipwrecked, and live here. If we only had Jack's rifle.'

'But we must sail properly first,' said Bevis. 'I shan't do anything till we can sail properly: now this is it. Look.'

He showed Mark the two sketches, and how their mainsail did not reach back far enough towards the stern.

'Frances must make it larger,' said Mark. 'Of course that 's it—it 's as different as possible. And the mast ought to be higher—it would crack better, and go overboard—whop!'

'I don't know,' said Bevis, 'about the mast; yes, I think I will. We will make one a foot or eighteen inches higher——'

'Bigger sails will go faster, and smash the ship splendidly against the rock,' said Mark. 'There 'll be a crash and a grinding, and the decks will blow up, and there 'll be an awful yell as everybody is gulped up but you and me.'

'While we 're doing it, we 'll make another bowsprit, too—longer,' said Bevis.

'Why didn't we think of it before?' said Mark. 'How stupid! Now you look at it, you can see it in a minute. And we had to sail half round the world to find it.'

'That 's just it,' said Bevis. 'You sail forty thousand miles to find a thing, and when you get there you can see you left it at home.'

'We have been stupes,' said Mark. 'Let 's do it directly. I 'll shave the new mast, and you take the sails to Frances. And now come and see the place for the cave.'

Bevis went with him, and Mark took him to the bank or bluff inside the island, which Bevis had passed when he explored it the evening of the battle. The sandy bank rose steeply for some ten or fifteen feet, and then it was covered with brambles and fern. There was a space at the foot clear of bushes and trees, and only overgrown with rough grasses. Beyond this there were great bramble thickets, and the trees began again about fifty yards away, encircling the open space. The spot was almost in the centre of the island, but rather nearer the side where there was a channel through the weeds than the other.

'The sand's soft and hard,' said Mark, 'I tried it with my knife; you can cut it, but it won't crumble.'

'We should not have to prop the roof,' said Bevis.

'No, and it 's as dry as chips; it 's the most splendid place for a cave that ever was.'

'So it is,' said Bevis. 'Nobody could see us.'

He looked round. The high bank shut them in behind,

the trees in front and each side. 'Besides, there 's nobody to look. It 's capital.'

'Will you do it?' said Mark.

'Of course I will—directly we can sail properly.'

'Hurrah!' shouted Mark, hitting up his heels, having caught that trick from Bevis. 'Let 's go home and begin the sails. Come on.'

'But I know one thing,' said Bevis, as they returned to the boat; 'if we 're going to have a cave, we must have a gun.'

'That 's just what I say. Can't we borrow one? I know, you put up Frances to make Jack lend us his rifle. She 's fond of you—she hates me.'

'I 'll try,' said Bevis. 'How ought you to get a girl to do anything?'

'Stare at her,' said Mark. 'That 's what Jack does, like a donk at a thistle when he can't eat any more.'

'Does Frances like the staring?'

'She pretends she doesn't, but she does. You stare at her, and act stupid.'

'Is Jack stupid?'

'When he 's at our house,' said Mark. 'He 's as stupid as an owl. Now she kisses you, and you just whisper and squeeze her hand, and say it 's very tiny. You don't know how conceited she is about her hand—can't you see—she 's always got it somewhere where you can see it; and she sticks her foot out so' (Mark put one foot out); 'and don't you move an inch, but stick close to her, and get her into a corner or in the arbour. Mind, though, if you don't keep telling her how pretty she is, she 'll box your ears. That 's why she hates me——'

'Because you don't tell her she 's pretty. But she is pretty.'

'But I 'm not going to be always telling her so—I don't see that she 's anything very beautiful either—you and I should look nice if we were all the afternoon doing our hair,

and if we walked like that and stuck our noses up in the air; and kept grinning, and smacked ourselves with powder, and scent, and all such beastly stuff. Now Jack's rifle——'

'We could make it shoot,' said Bevis, 'if we had it all to ourselves, and put bullets through apples stuck up on a stick, or smash an egg——'

'And knock over the parrots in these trees.'

'I *will* have a gun,' said Bevis, kicking a stone with all his might. 'Are you sure Frances could get Jack——'

'Frances get Jack to do it! Why, I 've seen him kiss her foot.'

They got on board laughing and set the sails, but as the island kept the wind off, Mark had to row till they were beyond the cliff. Then the sails filled and away they went.

'Thessaly,' said Mark presently. 'See! we 're getting to places where people live again. I say, shall we try the anchor?'

'Yes. Let down the mainsail first.'

Mark let it down, and then put the anchor over. It sank rapidly, drawing the cable after it. The flat stone in the shaft endeavoured as it sank to lie flat on the bottom, and this brought one of the flukes or points against the ground, and the motion of the boat dragging at it caused it to stick in a few inches. The cable tightened, and the boat brought up and swung with her stem to the wind. Mark found that they did not want all the cable; he hauled it in till there was only about ten feet out; so that, allowing for the angle, the water was not much more than five or six feet deep. They were off the muddy shore, lined with weeds. Rude as the anchor was, it answered perfectly. In a minute or two they hauled it up, set the mainsail, and sailed almost to the harbour, having to row the last few yards because the trees kept much of the breeze off. They unshipped the mast, and carried it and the sails home.

In the evening Mark set to work to shave another and

somewhat longer pole for the new mast, and Bevis took the sails and some more canvas to Frances. He was not long gone, and when he returned said that Frances had promised to do the work immediately.

'Did you do the cat and mouse?' said Mark. 'Did you stare?'

'I stared,' said Bevis, 'but there were some visitors there——'

'Stupes?'

'Stupes, so I couldn't get on very well. She asked me what I was looking at, and if she wasn't all right——'

'She meant her flounces; she thinks of nothing but her flounces. Some of the things are called gores.'

'But I began about the rifle, and she said perhaps, but she really had no influence with Jack.'

'Oh!' said Mark with a snort. 'Another buster.'

'And she couldn't think why you didn't come home. She had forgiven you a long time, and you were always unkind to her, and she was always forgiving you.'

'Busters,' said Mark. 'She 's on telling stories from morning to night.'

'I don't see why you should be afraid of her; she can't hurt you.'

'Not hurt me! Why, if you 've done anything, it 's niggle, niggle-naggle, and she 'll play you every nasty trick, and set the Old Moke on to look cross; and then when Jack comes, it 's "Mark, dear Mark," and wouldn't you think she was a sweet darling who loved her brother?'

Mark tore off a shaving.

'One thing though,' he added. 'Won't she serve Jack out when he 's got her and obliged to have her? As if I didn't know why she wants me to come home. All she wants is to send some letters to him.'

'Postman. I see,' said Bevis.

'But I 'll go,' said Mark. 'I 'll go and fetch the sails to-morrow. I should like to see the Jolly Old Moke; and

don't you see? if I take the letters she 'll be pleased and get the rifle for us.'

It was exceedingly disrespectful of Mark to speak of his governor as the Old Moke; his actual behaviour was very different to his speech, for in truth he was most attached to his father. The following afternoon Mark walked over and got the sails, and as he had guessed, Frances gave him a note for Jack, which he had to deliver that evening. They surprised the donkey; Mark mounted and rode off.

Bevis went on with the mast and the new gaff and bowsprit, and when Mark got back about sunset he had the new mast and rigging fitted up in the shed to see how it looked. The first time they made a mast it took them a long while, but now, having learned exactly how to do it, the second had soon been prepared. The top rose above the beam of the shed, and the mainsail stretched out under the eave.

'Hoist the peak up higher,' said the governor. Being so busy they had not heard him come. 'Hoist it up well, Mark.'

Mark gave another pull at the halyard, and drew the peak, or point of the gaff, up till it stood at a sharp angle.

'The more peak you can get,' said the governor, 'the more leverage the wind has, and the better she will answer the rudder.'

He was almost as interested in their sailing as they were themselves, and had watched them from the bank of the New Sea concealed behind the trees. But he considered it best that they should teach themselves, and find out little by little where they were wrong. Besides which he knew that the greatest pleasure is always obtained from inferior and incomplete instruments. Present a perfect yacht, a beautiful horse, a fine gun, or anything complete to a beginner, and the edge of his enjoyment is dulled with too speedy possession. The best way to learn to ride is on a rough pony, to sail in an open ill-built boat, because by encountering difficulties, the learner comes to understand

and appreciate the perfect instrument, and to wield or direct it with fifty times more power than if he had been born to the purple.

From the shore the governor had watched them vainly striving to tack, and could but just refrain from pointing out the reason. When he saw them fitting up the enlarged sails and the new mast, he exulted almost as much as they did themselves. 'They will do it,' he said to himself, 'they will do it this time.'

Then to Bevis, 'Pull the mainsail back as far as you can, and don't let it hollow out, not hollow and loose. Keep it taut. It ought to be as flat as a board. There——' He turned away abruptly, fearing he had told them too much.

'As flat as a board,' repeated Bevis. 'So I will. But we thought it was best hollow, didn't we?' There was still enough light left to see to step the mast, so they carried the sails and rigging up to the boat, and fitted them the same evening.

CHAPTER XXIII

SAILING CONTINUED—THE 'PINTA'—NEW FORMOSA

In the morning the wind blew south, coming down the length of the New Sea. Though it was light and steady it brought larger waves than they had yet sailed in, because they had so far to roll. Still they were not half so high as the day of the battle, and came rolling slowly, with only a curl of foam now and then. The sails were set, and as they drifted rather than sailed out of the sheltered harbour, the boat began to rise and fall, to their intense delight.

'Now it 's a proper sea,' said Mark.

'Keep ready,' said Bevis. 'She 's going. We shall be across in two minutes.'

He hauled the mainsheet taut, and kept it as the governor

had told him, as flat as a board. Smack! The bow hit a wave, and threw handfuls of water over Mark, who knelt on the ballast forward, ready to work the foresheets. He shouted with joy, 'It 's sea, it 's real sea!'

Smack! smack! His jacket was streaked and splotched with spray; he pushed his wet hair off his eyes. Sish! sish! with a bubbling hiss the boat bent over, and cut into the waves like a knife. So much more canvas drove her into the breeze, and as she went athwart the waves, every third one rose over the windward bow like a fountain, up the spray flew, straight up, and then horizontally on Mark's cheek. There were wide, dark patches on the sails where they were already wet.

Bevis felt the tiller press his hand like the reins with a strong fresh horse. It vibrated as the water parted from the rudder behind. The least movement of the tiller changed her course. Instead of having to hold the tiller in such a manner as to keep the boat's head up to the wind, he had now rather to keep her off, she wanted to fly in the face of the breeze, and he had to moderate such ardour. The broad mainsail, taut and flat as a board, strove to drive the bow up to windward.

'Look behind,' said Mark. 'Just see.'

There was a wake of opening bubbles and foam, and the waves for a moment were smoothed by their swift progress. Opposite the harbour the New Sea was wide, and it had always seemed a long way across, but they had hardly looked at the sails and the wake, and listened to the hissing and splashing, than it was time to tack.

'Ready,' said Bevis. 'Let go.'

Mark let go, and the foresail bulged out and fluttered, offering no resistance to the wind. Bevis pushed the tiller over, and the mainsail having its own way at last drove the head of the boat into the wind, half round, three-quarters; now they faced it, and the boat pitched. The mainsail shivered; its edge faced the wind.

'Pull,' said Bevis the next moment.

Mark pulled the foresheet tight to the other side. It drew directly, and like a lever brought her head round, completing the turn. The mainsail flew across. Bevis hauled the sheet tight. She rolled, heaved, and sprang forward.

'Hurrah! We 've done it! Hurrah!'

They shouted and kicked the boat. Wish! the spray flew, soaking Mark's jacket the other side, filling his pocket with water, and even coming back as far as Bevis's feet. Sish! sish! The wind puffed, and the rigging sang; the mast leaned; she showed her blue side; involuntarily they moved as near to windward as they could.

Wish! The lee gunwale slipped along, but just above the surface of the water, skimming like a swallow. Smack! Such a soaker. The foresail was wet; the bowsprit dipped twice. Swish! The mainsail was dotted with spray. Smack! Mark bent his head, and received it on his hat.

'Ready!' shouted the captain.

The foresheet slipped out of Mark's hand, and flapped, and hit him like a whip till he caught the rope. The mainsail forced her up to the wind; the foresail tightening again levered her round. She rolled, heaved, and sprang forward.

Next time they did it better, and without a word being spoken. Mark had learned the exact moment to tighten the sheet, and she came round quicker than ever. In four tacks they were opposite the bluff, the seventh brought them to the council oak. As the wind blew directly down the New Sea each tack was just the same.

Bevis began to see that much depended upon the moment he chose for coming about, and then it did not always answer to go right across. If he waited till they were within a few yards of the shore the wind sometimes fell, the boat immediately lost way, or impetus, and though she came round it was slowly, and before she began to sail again they had made a little leeway.

He found it best to tack when they were sailing full speed, because when he threw her head up to windward she actually ran some yards direct against the wind, and gained so much. Besides what they had gained coming aslant across the water, at the end of the tack she shot up into the eye of the wind, and made additional headway like that. So that by watching the breeze, and seizing the favourable opportunity, he made much more than he would have done by merely travelling as far as possible.

The boat was badly built, with straight, stiff lines, a crank, awkward craft. She ought to have been a foot or so broader, and more swelling, when she would have swung round like a top.

Bevis might then have crossed to the very shore, though the wind lessened, without fear of leeway. But she came round badly even at the best. They thought she came round first-rate, but they were mistaken. Had she done so, she would have resumed the return course without a moment's delay, instead of staggering, rolling, heaving, and gradually coming to her work again. Bevis had to watch the breeze and coax her.

His eye was constantly on the sail, he felt the tiller, handling it with a delicate touch like a painter's brush. He had to calculate and decide quickly whether there was space and time enough for the puff to come again before they reached the shore, or whether he had better sacrifice that end of the tack and come round at once. Sometimes he was wrong, sometimes right. In so narrow a space, and with such a boat, everything depended upon coming round well.

His workmanship grew better as they advanced. He seemed to feel all through the boat from rudder to mast, from the sheet in his hand to the bowsprit. The touch, the feeling of his hand, seemed to penetrate beyond the contact of the tiller, to feel through wood and rope as if they were a part of himself like his arm. He responded to

the wind as quickly as the sail. If it fell, he let her off easier, to keep the pace up; if it blew, he kept her closer, to gain every inch with the increased impetus. He watched the foresail, lest he should keep too close, and it should cease to draw. He stroked, and soothed, and caressed, and coaxed her to put her best foot foremost.

Our captains have to coax the huge ironclads. With all the machinery, and the science, and the elaboration, and the gauges, and the mathematically correct everything, the iron monsters would never come safe to an anchorage without the most exquisite coaxing. You must coax everything if you want to succeed; ironclads, fortune, Frances.

Bevis coaxed his boat, and suited her in all her little ways; now he yielded to her; now he waited for her; now he gave her her head and let her feel freedom; now, he hinted, was the best moment; suddenly his hand grew firm, and round she came.

Do you suppose he could have learnt wind and wave and to sail like that if he had had a perfect yacht as trim as the saucy *Arethusa* herself? Never. The crooked ways of the awkward craft brought out his ingenuity.

As they advanced the New Sea became narrower, till just before they came opposite the battlefield the channel was but a hundred yards or so wide. In these straits the waves came with greater force and quicker; they were no higher, but followed more quickly, and the wind blew harder, as if also confined. It was tack, tack, tack. No sooner were the sheets hauled, and they had begun to forge ahead, than they had to come about. Flap, flutter, pitch, heave, on again. Smack! smack! The spray flew over. Mark buttoned his jacket to his throat, and jammed his hat down hard on his head.

The rope, or sheet, twisted once round Bevis's hand, cut into his skin, and made a red wale. He could not give it a turn round the cleat because there was no time. The mainsail pulled with almost all its force against his hand.

Just as they had got the speed up, and a shower of spray was flying over Mark, round she had to come. Pitch, pitch, roll, heave forward, smack! splash! bubble! smack!

On the battlefield side Bevis could not go close to the shore because it was lined with a band of weeds; and on the other there were willow bushes in the water, so that the actual channel was less than the distance from bank to bank. Each tack only gained a few yards, so that they crossed and re-crossed nearly twenty times before they began to get through the strait. The sails were wet now, and drew the better; they worked in silence, but without a word, each had the same thought.

'It will do now,' said Mark.

'Once more,' said Bevis.

'Now,' said Mark as they had come round.

'Yes!'

From the westward shore Bevis kept her close to the wind, and as the water opened out, he steered for Fir-Tree Gulf. He calculated that he should just clear the stony promontory. Against the rocky wall the waves dashed and rose up high above it; the spray was carried over the bank and into the quarry. The sandbank or islet in front was concealed, the water running over it, but its site was marked by boiling surge.

The waves broke over it, and then met other waves thrown back from the wall; charging each other, they sprang up in pointed tips, which parted and fell. Over the grassy bank above rolled brown froth, which was then lifted and blown away. This was one of those places where the wind always seems to blow with greater force. In a gale from the south-west it was difficult to walk along the bank, and even now with only a light breeze the waves ran at the stony point as if they were mad. Bevis steered between Scylla and Charybdis, keeping a little nearer the sunken islet this time, the waves roared and broke on each side of them, froth caught against the sails, the boat shook

as the reflux swept back and met the oncoming current; the rocky wall seemed to fly by, and in an instant they were past and in the gulf.

Hauling into the wind, the boat shot out from the receding shore, and as they approached the firs they were already half across to the Nile. Returning, they had now a broad and splendid sea to sail in, and this tack took them up so far that next time they were outside the gulf. It was really sailing now, long tacks, or 'legs,' edging aslant up into the wind, and leaving the quarry far behind.

'It 's splendid,' said Mark. 'Let me steer now.'

Bevis agreed, and Mark crept aft on hands and knees, anxious not to disturb the trim of the boat; Bevis went forward and took his place in the same manner, buttoning his jacket and turning up his collar.

Mark steered quite as well. Bevis had learned how to work the boat, to coax her, from the boat and the sails themselves. Mark had learned from Bevis, and much quicker. It requires time, continued observation, and keenest perception to learn from nature. When one has thus acquired the art, others can learn from him in a short while and easily. Mark steered and handled the sheet, and brought her round as handily as if he had been at it all the time.

These lengthened zigzags soon carried them far up the broad water, and the farther they went the smaller the waves became, having so much the less distance to come, till presently they were but big ripples, and the boat ceased to dance. As the waves did not now oppose her progress so much, there was but little spray and she slipped through faster. The motive power, the wind, was the same; the opposing force, the waves, less. The speed increased, and they soon approached Bevis's island, having worked the whole distance up against the wind. They agreed to land, and Mark brought her to the very spot where they had got out before. Bevis doused the mainsail, leaped out, and

tugged her well aground. After Mark had stepped ashore they careened the boat and bailed out the water.

There was no tree or root sufficiently near to fasten the painter to, so they took out the anchor, carried it some way inland, and forced one of the flukes into the ground. The boat was quite safe and far enough aground not to drift off, but it was not proper to leave a ship without mooring her. Mark wanted to go and look at the place he thought so well adapted for a cave, so they walked through between the bushes, when he suddenly remembered that the vessel in which they had just accomplished so successful a voyage had not got a name.

'The ship ought to have a name,' he said. 'Blue boat sounds stupid.'

'So she ought,' said Bevis. 'Why didn't we think of it before! There's *Arethusa, Agamemnon, Sandusky, Orient*——'

'*Swallow, Viking, St. George*—but that won't do,' said Mark. 'Those are ships that sail now and have some steam; what were old ships——'

'*Argo*,' said Bevis. 'I wonder what was the name of Ulysses' ship——'

'I know,' said Mark, '*Pinta*—that 's it. One of Columbus's ships, you know. He was the first to go over there, and we 're the first on the New Sea.'

'So we are; it shall be *Pinta*, I 'll paint it, and the island ought to have a name too.'

'Of course. Let 's see: Tahiti?' said Mark

'Loo-choo?'

'Celebes?'

'Carribbees?'

'Cyclades? But those are a lot of islands, aren't they?'

'Formosa is a good name,' said Bevis. 'It sounds right. But I don't know where it is—it 's somewhere.'

'Don't matter—call it New Formosa.'

'Capital,' said Bevis. 'The very thing; there 's New Zealand and New Guinea. Right. It 's New Formosa.'

'Or the Land of Magic.'

'New Formosa or the Magic Land,' said Bevis. 'I 'll write it down on the map we made when we get home.'

'Here 's the place,' said Mark. 'This is where the cave ought to be,' pointing at a spot where the sandy cliff rose nearly perpendicular; 'and then we ought to have a hut over it.'

'Poles stuck in and leaning down and thatched.'

'Yes, and a palisade of thick stakes stuck in in front of the door.'

'So that no one could take us by surprise at night.'

'And far enough off for us to have our fire inside.'

'Twist bushes in between the stakes.'

'Quite impassable to naked savages.'

'How high?'

'Seven feet.'

'Or very nearly.'

'We could make a bed, and sleep all night.'

'Wouldn't it be splendid to stop here altogether?'

'First-rate; no stupid sillinesses.'

'No bother.'

'Have your dinner when you like.'

'Nobody to bother where you 've been to.'

'Let 's live here.'

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XXIV

BEVIS'S ZODIAC

THEY returned to the hut and prepared the kangaroo and the fish for boiling on the morrow; the fish was to be coiled up in the saucepan, and the kangaroo in the pot. Pan had the paunch, and with his great brown eyes glaring out of his head with gluttony, made off with it to his own private larder, where, after eating his full, he buried the rest. Pan

had his own private den behind a thicket of bramble, where he kept some bones of a duck, a bacon bone, and now added this to his store. Here he retired occasionally from civilization, like the king of the Polynesian island, to enjoy nature, away from the etiquette of his attendance at court on Bevis and Mark.

Next, Mark with one of the old axes they had used to excavate the store-room, cut a notch in the edge of the cave, where it opened on the hut, large enough to stand the lantern in, as the chest would be required for the raft. They raked the potatoes out of the ashes, and had them for supper, with a damper, the last fragment of a duck, and cold tea, like gold-diggers.

Bevis now recollected the journal he had proposed to keep, and got out the book, in which there was as yet only one entry and that a single word, 'Wednesday.' He set it on the table under the awning, with the lantern open before him. Outside the edge of the awning the moon filled the courtyard with her light.

'Why, it 's only Thursday now,' said Mark. 'We 've only been here one full day, and it seems weeks.'

'Months,' said Bevis. 'Perhaps this means Wednesday of last year.'

'Of course: this is next year to that. How we must have altered! Our friends would not know us.'

'Not even our mothers,' said Bevis.

'Nor our jolly old mokes and governors.'

'Shot a kangaroo,' said Bevis, writing; 'shot a duck and a jack. No. Are they jacks? That 's such a common name.'

'No; not jacks: jack-sharks.'

'No; sun-fish: they 're always in the sun.'

'Yes; sun-fish.'

'Shot a sun-fish: saw two squirrels, and a heron, and four parrots——'

'And a kingfisher——'

'Halcyon,' said Bevis, writing it down—'a beautiful halcyon; made a table and a sundial. I must go up presently and mark the meridian by the north star.'

'Saw one savage.'

'Who was that?'

'Why, Charlie.'

'Oh yes, one savage; believe there are five thousand in the jungle on the mainland.'

'Seven thousand miles from anywhere. Put it down,' said Mark.

'Twenty degrees north latitude; right. There, look; half a page already!'

'We ought to wash some sand to see if there 's any gold,' said Mark—'in a cradle, you know.'

'So we did. We ought to have looked in the duck's gizzard; tiny nuggets get in gizzards sometimes.'

'Everything goes to the river beyond the weeds,' said Mark; 'that ought to be written.'

'Does everything go to the river?'

'Everything. While I was fishing I saw them all come back to Serendib from it.'

'We must make haste with the raft.'

'Like lightning,' said Mark.

'Let me see,' said Bevis, leaning his arm on the table and stroking his hair with the end of the pen-holder. 'There are blue-gum trees, and palms, and banyans.'

'Reeds—they 're canes.'

'Sedges are papyrus.'

'The big bulrushes are bamboos.' He meant the reed-mace.

'Yes, bamboos. I 've put that down. There ought to be a list of everything that grows here—cedars of course; that 's something else. Huge butterflies——'

'Very huge.'

'Heaps of flies.'

'And a tiger somewhere.'

'Then there ought to be the names of all the fossils, and metals, and if there 's any coal,' said Bevis; 'and when we have the raft we must dredge up the anemones and pearl oysters, and——'

'And write down all the fish.'

'And everything. The language of the natives will be a bother. I must make a new alphabet for it. Look! that will do for A'—he made a tiny circle; 'that's B, two dots.'

'They gurgle in their throats,' said Mark.

'That 's a gurgle,' said Bevis, making a long stroke with a dot over and under it; 'and they click with their tongues against the roofs of their mouths. No: it 's awkward to write clicks. I know: there, CK, that 's for click, and this curve under it means a tongue—the way you 're to put it to make a click.'

'Click! Click!'

'Guggle!'

'Then there 's the names of the idols,' said Mark. 'We 'd better find some.'

'You can cut some,' said Bevis; 'cut them with your knife out of a stick, and say they 're models, as they wouldn't let you take the real ones. The names; let 's see —Jog.'

'Hick-kag.'

'Hick-kag; I 've put it down. Jog and Hick-kag are always quarrelling, and when they hit one another, that 's thunder. That 's what they say.'

'Noodles.'

'Natives are always noodles.'

'But they can do one thing capital though.'

'What 's that?'

'Stick up together.'

'How? Why?'

'If you take a hatchet and chop a big notch in them, they stick up together again directly.'

'Join up.'

'Like glue.'

'Then the thing is, how did the savages get here? Nobody has ever been here before us; now where did they come from? There are sure to be grand ruins in the jungle somewhere,' said Bevis, 'all carved, and covered with inscriptions.'

'Huge trees growing on the top.'

'Magic signs chipped out on stones, and books made of string with knots instead of writing.'

Kaak! kaak! A heron was descending. The unearthly noise made them look up.

'Are there any tidal waves?' said Mark.

'Sometimes — a hundred feet high. But the thing is how did they get here? How did anybody ever get anywhere?'

'It 's very crooked,' said Mark, 'very crooked: you can't quite see it, can you? Suppose you go and do the sundial: I 'm sleepy.'

'Well, go to bed; I can do it.'

'Good night!' said Mark. 'Lots of chopping to do to-morrow. We ought to have brought a grindstone for the axes. You have got the plan ready for the raft?'

'Quite ready.'

Mark went into the hut, placed the lantern in the niche, and threw himself on the bed. In half a minute he was firm asleep. Bevis went out of the courtyard, round outside the fence, and up on the cliff to the sundial. The stars shone brighter than it is usually thought they do when there is a moon; but in fact it is not so much the moon as the state of the atmosphere. There was no haze in the dry air, and he could see the Pole Star distinctly.

He sat down—as the post on which the dial was supported was low—on the southern side, with it between him and the north. He still had to stoop till he had got the tip of the gnomon to cover the North Star. Closing one eye, as if aiming, he then put his pencil on the dial in the circle or

groove scratched by the compass. The long pencil was held upright in the groove, and moved round till it intercepted his view of the star. The tip of the gnomon, the pencil, and the Pole Star were in a direct line, in a row one behind the other.

To make sure, he raised his head and looked over the gnomon and pencil to the star, when he found that he had not been holding the pencil upright; it leaned to the east, and made an error to the west in his meridian. 'It ought to be a plumb-line,' he thought. 'But I think it 's straight now.'

He stooped again and found the gnomon and pencil correct, and pressing on the pencil hard, drew it towards him out of the groove a little way. By the moonlight when he got up he could see the mark he had left, and which showed the exact north. To-morrow he would have to draw a line from that mark straight to the gnomon, and when the shadow fell on that line it would be noon. With the fixed point of noon and the fixed point of four o'clock, he thought he could make the divisions for the rest of the hours.

The moonlight cast a shadow to the east of the noon-line, as she had crossed the meridian. Looking up, he saw the irregular circle of the moon high in the sky, so brilliant that the scored relievo work enchased upon her surface was obscured by the bright light reflected from it.

Behind him numerous lights glittered in the still water; near at hand they were sharp clean points, far away they were short bands of light drawn towards him. Bevis went to the young oak and sat down under it. Cassiopeia fronted him, and Capella; the Northern Crown was faint and low; but westward great Arcturus shone, though the moon had taken the redness from him. The cross of Cygnus was lying on its side as it was carried through the eastern sky; beneath it the Eagle's central star hung over the Nile. Low in the south, over the unknown river, Antares, too, had lost his redness.

Up through the branches of the oak he saw Lyra, the purest star in the heavens, white as whitest and clearest light may be, gleaming at the zenith of the pale blue dome. But just above the horizon northwards there was a faint white light, the faintest aurora, as if another moon was rising there. By these he knew his position, and that he was looking the same way as if he had been gazing from the large northern window of the parlour at home, or if he had been lying on the green path by the strawberries, as he sometimes did in the summer evenings.

Then the North Star, minute but clear—so small, and yet chosen for the axle and focus of the sky, instead of sun-like Sirius—the North Star always shone just over the group of elms by the orchard. Summer and winter, spring and autumn, it was always there, always over the elms—whether they were reddening with the buds and flowers of February, whether they were dull green now in the heats of August, whether they were yellow in October.

Dick and his Team, whose wagon goes backwards, swung round it like a stone in a sling whirled about the shoulders. Sometimes the tail of the Bear, where Dick bestrides his second horse, hung down behind the elms into the vapour of the horizon. Sometimes the Pointers were nearly overhead. If they were hidden by a cloud, the Lesser Bear gave a point; or you could draw a line through Cassiopeia, and tell the north by her chair of stars.

The comets seemed to come within the circle of Bootes—Arcturus you always know is some way beyond the tail of the Bear. The comets come inside the circle of the stars that never set. The governor had seen three or four appear there in his time, just over the elms under the Pole. Donati's, which perhaps you can remember, came there—a tiny thing twelve inches long from nucleus to tail to look at, afterwards the weird sign the world stood amazed at. Then there was another not long after, which seemed to appear at once as a broad streak across the sky.

Like the sketches in old star-maps, it did indeed cross the whole sky for a night or two, but went too quickly for the world to awake at midnight and wonder at. Lately two more have come in the enchanted circle of the stars that never set.

All the stars from Arcturus to Capella came about the elms by the orchard; as Arcturus went down over the place of sunset in autumn, Capella began to shine over another group of elms—in the meadow to the north-east. Capella is sure to be seen, because it begins to become conspicuous just as people say the sky is star-lit as winter sends the first frost or two. But Capella is the brightest star in the northern sky in summer, and it always came up by the second or north-east group of elms.

Between these two groups of tall trees—so tall and thick that they are generally visible even on dark nights—the streamers of the Aurora Borealis shot up in winter, and between them in summer the faint reflection of the midnight sun, like the lunar dawn which precedes the rising of the moon, always appeared. The real day-dawn—the white foot of Aurora—came through the sky-curtain a little to the right of the second group, and about over a young oak in the hedge across the road, opposite the garden wall.

When the few leaves left on this young oak were brown, and rustled in the frosty night, the massy shoulder of Orion came heaving up through it—first one bright star, then another; then the gleaming girdle, and the less definite scabbard; then the great constellation stretched across the east. At the first sight of Orion's shoulder Bevis always felt suddenly stronger, as if a breath of the mighty hunter had come down and entered into him.

He stood upright; his frame enlarged; his instep lifted him as he walked, as if he too could swing the vast club and chase the lion from his lair. The sparkle of Orion's stars brought to him a remnant of the immense vigour of

the young world, the frosty air braced his sinews, and power came into his arms.

As the constellation rose, so presently new vigour too entered into the trees, the sap moved, the buds thrust forth, the new leaf came, and the nightingale travelling up from the south sang in the musical April nights. But this was when Orion was south, and Sirius flared like a night-sun over the great oak at the top of the Home Field.

Sirius rose through the young oak opposite the garden wall, passed through a third group of elms, by the rick-yard, gleaming through the branches—hung in the spring above the great oak at the top of the Home Field, and lowered by degrees westwards behind the ashes growing at that end of the New Sea by the harbour. After it Arcturus came, and lorded the midsummer zenith, where now lucent Lyra looked down upon him.

Up, too, through the little oak came Aldebaran, the red Bull's Eye, the bent rod of Aries, and the cluster of the Pleiades. The Pleiades he loved most, for they were the first constellation he learned to know. The flickering Pleiades, the star-dusted spot in Cancer, and Leo, came in succession.

Antares, the harvest-star, scarcely cleared the great oak southwards in summer. He got them all from a movable planisphere, the very best star-maps ever made, proceeding step by step, drawing imaginary lines from one to the other, as through the Pointers to the Pole, and so knew the designs on our northern dome.

He transferred them from the map to the trees. The north group of elms, the north-east group, the east oak, the south-east elms, the southern great oak, the westward ashes, the orchard itself north-west—through these like a zodiac the stars moved, all east to west, except the enchanted circle about the Pole. For the Bear and the Lesser Bear sometimes seemed to move from west to east

when they were returning, swinging under to what would have been their place of rising.

Fixing them thus by night, he knew where many were by day; the Pole Star was always over the north elms—when the starlings stayed and whistled there before they flew to the housetop, when the rooks called there, before the sun set, on their way home to the jungle, when the fieldfares in the gloomy winter noon perched up there. The Pole Star was always over the elms.

In the summer mornings the sun rose north of east, between the second group of elms and the little oak—so far to the north that he came up over the vale instead of the Downs. The morning beams then lit up the northern or outer side of the garden wall and fell aslant through the narrow kitchen window, under the beam of the ceiling. In the evening the sun set again northwards of the orchard, between it and the north elms, having come round towards the place of rising, and shining again on the outside of the garden wall, so that there seemed but a few miles between. He did not sink, but only dipped, and the dawn that travelled above him indicated his place, moving between the north and north-east elms, and overcoming the night by the little oak. The sun did not rise and sink; he travelled round an immense circle.

In the winter mornings the sun rose between the young oak and the third group of elms, red and vapour-hung, and his beams presently shot through the window to the logs on the kitchen hearth. He sank then between the south-westerly ashes and the orchard, rising from the wall of the Downs, and sinking again behind it. At noon he was just over, only a little higher than, the great southern oak. All day long the outer side of the garden wall was in shadow, and at night the northern sky was black to the horizon. The travelling dawn was not visible: the sun rose and sank, and was only visible through half of the great circle. The cocks crowed at four in the afternoon, and the rooks hastened to the jungle.

But by and by, when the giant Orion shone with his full width grasping all the sky, then in the mornings the sun's rising began to shift backwards—first to the edge of the third group of elms, then straight up the road, then to the little oak. In the afternoon, the place of setting likewise shifted backwards to the north, and came behind the orchard. At noon he was twice as high as the southern oak, and every day at noontide the shadows gradually shortened. The nightingale sang in the musical April night, the cowslips opened, and the bees hummed over the meadows.

Last of all, the sweet turtle-doves cooed and wooed; beauteous June wearing her roses came, and the sun shone at the highest point of his great circle. Then you could not look at him unless up through the boughs of a tree. Round the zodiac of the elms, and the little oak, the great oak, the ashes, and the orchard, the sun revolved; and the house, and the garden path by the strawberries—the best place to see—were in the centre of his golden ring.

The sward on the path on which Bevis used to lie and gaze up in the summer evening was real and tangible; the earth under was real; and so too the elms, the oak, the ash trees, were real and tangible—things to be touched, and known to be. Now like these, the mind, stepping from the one to the other, knew and almost felt the stars to be real and not mere specks of light, but things that were there by day over the elms as well as by night, and not apparitions of the evening departing at the twittering of the swallows. They were real, and the touch of his mind felt to them.

He could not, as he reclined on the garden path by the strawberries, physically reach to and feel the oak; but he could feel the oak in his mind and so from the oak, stepping beyond it, he felt the stars. They were always there by day as well as by night. The Bear did not sink, the sun in summer only dipped, and his reflection—the travelling dawn—shone above him, and so from these unravelling

out the enlarging sky, he felt, as well as knew, that neither the stars nor the sun ever rose or set. The heavens were always around and with him. The strawberries and the sward of the garden path, he himself reclining there, were moving through, among, and between the stars; they were as much by him as the strawberry leaves.

By day the sun, as he sat down under the oak, was as much by him as the boughs of the great tree. It was by him like the swallows.

The heavens were as much a part of life as the elms, the oak, the house, the garden and orchard, the meadow and the brook. They were no more separated than the furniture of the parlour, than the old oak chair where he sat, and saw the new moon shine over the mulberry tree. They were neither above nor beneath, they were in the same place with him; just as when you walk in a wood the trees are all about you, on a plane with you, so he felt the constellations and the sun on a plane with him, and that he was moving among them as the earth rolled on, like them, with them, in the stream of space.

The day did not shut off the stars, the night did not shut off the sun; they were always there. Not that he always thought of them, but they were never dismissed. When he listened to the greenfinches sweetly calling in the hawthorn, or when he read his books, poring over the *Odyssey*, with the sunshine on the wall, they were always there; there was no severance. Bevis lived not only out to the finches and the swallows, to the far-away hills, but he lived out and felt out to the sky.

It was living, not thinking. He lived it, never thinking, as the finches live their sunny life in the happy days of June. There was magic in everything, blades of grass and stars, the sun and the stones upon the ground.

The green path by the strawberries was the centre of the world, and round it by day *and* night the sun circled in a magical golden ring.

Under the oak on New Formosa that warm summer night, Bevis looked up as he reclined at the pure white light of Lyra, and forgot everything but the consciousness of living, feeling up to and beyond it. The earth and the water, the oak, went away; he himself went away: his mind joined itself, and was linked up through ethereal space to its beauty.

Bevis, as you know, did not think: we have done the thinking, the analysis for him. He felt and was lost in the larger consciousness of the heavens.

The moon moved, and with it the shadow of the cliff on the water beneath, a planet rose eastwards over their new Nile, water-fowl clucked as they flew over.

Kaak! Kaak! Another heron called, and his discordant piercing yell sounded over the water, seeming to penetrate to the distant and shadowy shores. The noise awoke him, and he went down to the hut. Mark was firm asleep, the lantern burned in the niche; Pan had been curled up by the bedside, but he lifted his head and wagged his tail, thumping the floor as he entered. Bevis let down the curtain closing the doorway, put out the lantern, and in three minutes was as firm as Mark. After some time, Pan rose quietly and went out, slipping under the curtain, which fell back into its place when he had passed.

QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

CHAP. I. (*a*) What difficulties did Bevis have to cope with in getting his raft to the lake?

(*b*) What are the following, and how are they used: staple —gimlet—lever—lasso?

CHAP. II. (*a*) How do you caulk a vessel? And how did Bevis caulk his raft?

(*b*) What is a 'ha-ha' fence? Draw one.

CHAP. III. (*a*) How did Bevis and Mark propose to make gunpowder? Were they right?

(*b*) 'The bailiff shook his head and grunted: it could not be done.' Explain this.

CHAP. IV. (*a*) How did Bevis 'blaze' a trail? What other ways are there of doing it?

(*b*) What fish are named in this chapter. What are they doing?

(*c*) Describe Bevis's astrolabe. What is a degree?

CHAP. V. (*a*) Explain: bennet—pollen—quarry—malarious odours.

(*b*) Draw a map of the New Sea—copying it from the map in this book. Fill in the names as you read on.

CHAP. VI. (*a*) What are 'gix' and 'banyan'?

(*b*) 'That 's the roc from Sindbad's island.' Explain this; or if you cannot do so, read about it in *The Arabian Nights*.

CHAP. VII. (*a*) What is a wood-pigeon's nest made of? What colour are the eggs? How do you blow an egg?

(*b*) 'They are little men—pigmies, you know.' Find out all you can about the real pigmies. Herodotus knew about them. So did H. M. Stanley.

(*c*) What is a 'coombe'?

(*d*) 'I 've a great mind to be Charlemagne.' 'Then I shall be Roland.' Read all about Roland in a book of stories about the days of Charlemagne.

CHAP. VIII. (*a*) Explain, and show us, how the governor taught the boys to swim. (Do not write about it—tell us.)
(*b*) Why did the governor decide not to use a band round the chest in teaching the boys to swim?
(*c*) Draw pictures to explain the strokes.

CHAP. IX. (*a*) What kind of dog was Pan? Draw a picture.
(*b*) What were flints used for in old days?
(*c*) How did the boys make slings—and arrows—and darts?

CHAP. X. (*a*) What is a boomerang, and how does it work?
(*b*) Explain why Bevis's arrow missed the jack.
(*c*) Draw a picture of a catamaran.

CHAP. XI. (*a*) 'The rig was to be fore and aft.' Explain by means of a picture.
(*b*) Explain 'the alchemist, the astrologer, the enchanter.' Look up the words in the dictionary.
(*c*) How did the boys first try to make a fire?

CHAP. XII. (*a*) How did they succeed in making a fire?
(*b*) What is a tiller, and how does it work?
(*c*) Look out bird's-foot lotus, veronica, and honeysuckle in a botany book. Draw pictures.

CHAP. XIII. (*a*) Write down the names of the boys with their Roman names opposite. This will make the Battle easier to follow.
(*b*) What is the meaning of 'a cohort each,' and 'two eagles each'?

CHAP. XIV. (*a*) What sort of poetry is 'King Estmere threwe his harpe asyde'? Do you know any other poems like this?
(*b*) What do you know about the *Odyssey*—which is quoted here in translation?
(*c*) Find out what this means: 'Off he went, having bribed Scylla, but he met Charybdis in the gateway.'

CHAP. XV. (*a*) What happened at the real Battle of Pharsalia?
(*b*) Explain 'A tail! a tail!'
(*c*) Show that Bevis was a 'sportsman.'

CHAP. XVI. (*a*) Show that Ted—for the moment at any rate—was not a 'sportsman.'

(*b*) How did Bevis escape? Tell the story aloud.

CHAP. XVII. (*a*) 'Now the way Val Crassus and his cohorts came to hunt for Bevis was like this . . .' Like what?

(*b*) What do you think about the Battle? Could it have happened like that, or is it too good to be true?

CHAP. XVIII. (*a*) How did Bevis come to be shipwrecked?

(*b*) Explain exactly how you would light a fire in a high wind, provided your box of matches was dry?

CHAP. XIX. (*a*) Explain exactly how Mark managed to escape from prison.

(*b*) What is the real name for what are usually called bulrushes?

CHAP. XX. (*a*) What had Ted done after the Battle?

(*b*) What is a yellow-hammer like?

CHAP. XXI. (*a*) What is the principle of tacking? If you do not know and cannot follow from the book, you must ask for an explanation. What does 'sailing close-hauled' mean? And 'wearing ship'?

(*b*) 'What you really want to know is never in a book, and no one can tell you. By and by, if you keep it steadily in memory, and ever have your eyes open, you hit on it by accident.' Give an example of this from your own experience.

CHAP. XXII. (*a*) What was the real reason for their failure to tack? And how did Bevis find out, and put it right?

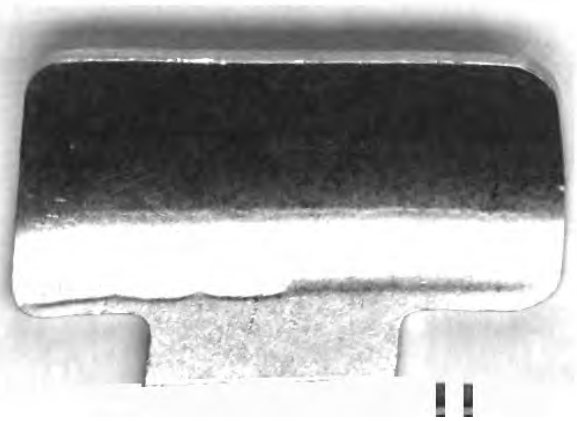
(*b*) Draw a picture of an anchor, and explain how it works.

CHAP. XXIII. (*a*) Explain 'Bevis began to see that much depended upon the moment he chose for coming about.'

(*b*) 'The saucy *Arethusa*.' Do you know a song about that? Look it up.

(*c*) Why did they call the boat *Pinta*?

CHAP. XXIV. (*a*) Bevis's Zodiac. Get a star-chart and look up all the stars and constellations that Bevis saw.

(*b*) Get into the way of looking for the planets and stars and constellations on fine nights.

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